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NEWS

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PVSC CONCLUDES RESTORATION WORK ON SADDLE RIVER; *Year-Long Abatement Plan and Removal of “Sandy” Debris Will Help Prevent Flooding*

(Newark) – The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission (PVSC) announced today that the agency, along with the Mosquito Control, Division of Public Works of Bergen County (BCMCD), has completed a comprehensive cleanup of the Saddle River. The work, which was initiated last April, began with a survey and crafting of an abatement plan working in concert with county officials. The de-snagging work commenced in August and was completed on May 13, 2014. The plan and debris removal was in to response to flooding concerns and the potential for environmental impacts caused by debris deposited by Superstorm Sandy.

The survey, conducted over the course of several weeks by staff from both PVSC and BCMCD, identified 19 sites along the seven mile stretch of waterway in Paramus, Rochelle Park, Saddle Brook, Lodi and Wallington that posed varying degrees of concern. The scope of the project had grown from the original 19 sites to over 35 different areas that have now been de-snagged. The additional sites were identified while de-snagging work was on-going at the original survey sites; these most likely were due to environmental conditions like wind and rainfall.

All sites were addressed – including the additional areas that developed over the course of the cleanup; the PVSC and BCMCD immediately cleared one site that posed the most immediate flooding threat in August, 2013 because it warranted high priority action.

“Last April, PVSC began a survey of the Saddle River in cooperation with officials in Bergen County to identify any areas containing debris, fallen trees and other material that could exacerbate flooding of the Saddle River. We surveyed the area, developed a plan, and have worked judiciously to help alleviate debris that could pose flooding problems for neighboring towns,” said PVSC Executive Director Michael DeFrancisci.

PVSC has been in constant communication with mayors and local officials in PVSC’s service area throughout the past year and half regarding problems as a result of Superstorm Sandy. The agency has been working diligently to assess what areas pose safety and environmental hazards, and remediate those as quickly as possible.

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As part of the survey, PVSC and the BCMCD itemized and documented all problem areas along the River using GPS and photography equipment. Both agencies prioritized the problem areas and began to remove the various blockages in the river. These efforts will increase the Saddle River’s ability to convey water, and will help mitigate flooding and potentially adverse effect to many Bergen County communities along the Saddle River. The PVSC and BCMCD warned that the maintenance of the waterway is a laborious project that requires constant attention. At a later date, crews may have to return to the area to monitor the condition of the river.

“I’d like to thank the BCMCD for joining PVSC in collecting data for this survey and working with us to address this important project. Together we have conserved and protected our local waterways, and help local residents who are understandably concerned about future potential flooding,” said DeFrancisci.

According to DeFrancisci, PVSC River Restoration crew used specialized equipment to assist in the removal of the obstructions. Many of the blockages- including fallen trees, boats, and other vegetative matter - threatened to block the waterway’s flow. Much of the debris was deposited in the river as a result of the region’s recent hurricanes – particularly Superstorm Sandy.

The Saddle River Survey project is part of the PVSC’s statutory mandate of relieving the streams and rivers within the PVSC five-county District of pollution and obstructions. The PVSC has embarked on an intensive, strategic post-storm cleanup campaign to free the Passaic River of blockages, help with flood control and maintain the quality of the River and its tributaries.

“PVSC is proud to assist in providing cleaner and safer waterways for members of the community to enjoy,” said PVSC Commissioner Kenneth J. Lucianin. “PVSC remains committed to evaluating and protecting the tributaries that feed the Passaic River and understands the importance of partnering with agencies such as the BCMCD to ensure the long-term viability of these restoration efforts.”

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In order to protect and preserve local streams and rivers from water pollution, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission operates one of the country's oldest and largest treatment plants for the wastewaters of northern New Jersey, serving over 1.4 million people in five counties.