

2023 WINTER NEWSLETTER



GROUNDWORK
Hudson Valley

Saw Mill River
COALITION

As a new year begins, the Saw Mill River Coalition would like to share all that was accomplished in 2022!



STEWARDSHIP ON THE RIVER

The Saw Mill River Coalition and Groundwork Hudson Valley collaborates with river community stewardship groups to restore the Saw Mill River floodplain through trash cleanups, invasive species removal, and native plantings. In 2022, with the help of 362 volunteers and the Groundwork Hudson Valley Green Team,

these stewardship groups removed 351 garbage bags worth of trash from the Saw Mill River, saved hundreds of trees from invasive vines, and planted 120 native trees and shrubs along the Saw Mill River. Additionally, benches, butterfly gardens, and bird houses were installed on the trails of and throughout Westchester County Parks.

Learn more about what our volunteers have been up to [here](#).

A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Village of Hasting-on-Hudson

This past year the Village of Hasting-on-Hudson launched a village-wide **Adopt-A-Spot Program**. A program where the village partners with volunteers to “adopt” a traffic island, park adjacent roadway, or section of a public park to care for through tending plants and removing litter. This program will improve the quality of life of village residents while enhancing the natural ecosystems.

Village of Ardsley

The Village of Ardsley is working on a **Parks and Recreation Master Plan** to promote recreational opportunities while enhancing the parks, facilities, and natural resources of the Village. Additionally, new opportunities for the community to connect with the Saw Mill River in V.E. Macy park have been created through new viewing and seating areas.

Village of Pleasantville

In 2022 the Town of Mt. Pleasant Conservation Advisory Council received a grant from the **NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program to create a Natural Resource Inventory**. This inventory will map areas of high ecological and environmental services such as parks, trails, wetlands, brown fields, and bio-corridors. These maps will

Village of Dobbs Ferry

Juhring preserve has been undergoing a long term-invasive removal project led by the Dobbs Ferry Conservation Board. The board trains volunteers in the proper removal of Japanese knotweed and Japanese barberry bushes, thereby empowering volunteers to continue the removal process in their spare time. The removal of these species is crucial to restoring the Saw Mill River floodplain as it frees space and resources for natives to thrive.



Town of New Castle

The Town of New Castle received a \$1.05 million grant from the **FEMA FY2020 Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities** project to decommission the Upper Minkel Dam and restore the surrounding riparian area. The removal of this high hazard Class C dam will help to mitigate flood damage caused by the dam while allowing aquatic life to once again migrate through this corridor.

then act as a resource for the Town in planning and protecting these areas.



TREE-FOR-TRIBES

Tree-for-Tribs, a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation program that supports native plantings along stream banks, sponsored five planting events in the Saw Mill River watershed this past year. These events took place at Upper Tarrytown Lake led

by the Village of Tarrytown; Chauncey Park led by Groundwork Hudson Valley and the Dobbs Ferry Conservation Advisory Board; Farragut Parkway led by Hasting Conservation Commission, the Hudson Vine squad, Hasting DPW, and the Groundwork Hudson Valley Green Team; and Jean Craighed George Park led by the Town of New Castle. All together, 224 trees and 552 shrubs were planted along the Saw Mill River.

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF DAYLIGHTING

The year of 2022 marked the 10th anniversary of Daylighting the Saw Mill River. More than 20 years ago the plan to uncover the Saw Mill River was first proposed, after being buried under a parking lot for nearly 100 years. Today, in place of that parking lot is Van Der Donck Park. This restored ecosystem has become a home for many species, and a space for Yonkers residents to connect with nature.



National Geographic featured the daylighting of the Saw Mill River in the September issue of "America the Beautiful", highlighting it as a "hard-won" conservation effort.

FUNDING FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

FEDERAL

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

The Inflation Reduction Act, signed into Law August 16, 2022 by President Biden, will invest \$369 billion in the fight against climate change. The Inflation Reduction Act will specifically help stormwater management and river restoration by investing:

- \$1.9 billion to improving natural infrastructure and stormwater management related to surface transportation in disadvantaged areas
- \$1.5 billion to plant trees, establish urban forests, and expand green space in cities
- \$50 million for the development and enhancement of urban parks

STATE

ENVIRONMENTAL BOND ACT

After being approved by New York voters, the largest environmental bond act in New York history went into effect this past November. The \$4.2 billion Environmental bond Act will invest in restoration and flood risk reduction, water quality improvements and resilient infrastructure, open space land conservation and recreation, and climate change mitigation. Additionally, the state is requiring that 35 percent of these funds are allocated to environmental justice communities.

LOCAL

HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY WATERSHED PROJECTS

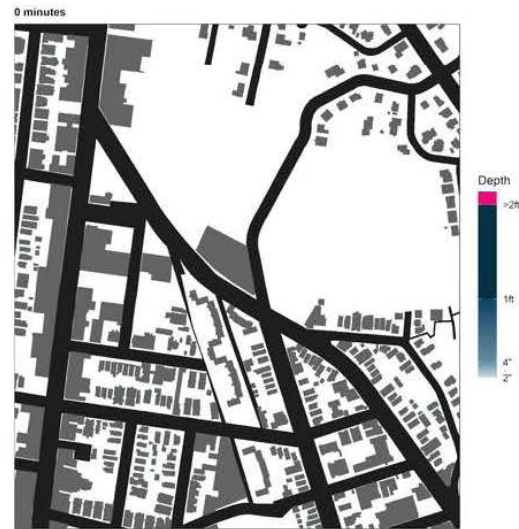
On October 13, 2022 the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation announced \$1.4 million in grants for projects pertaining to flooding, environmental stewardship, river access, and education in the communities of the Hudson River Estuary Watershed. Groundwork Hudson Valley was the recipient of two of these grants, which will fund their STEM Career Pathway Fellowship Program, and a Flood Vulnerability Modeling and Climate Resilience project with The New School Urban System Lab.

ASSESSING URBAN FLOOD RISK

Groundwork Hudson Valley is once again collaborating with The New School Urban Systems Lab to assess Urban Flood Risk



Modeling of a 10-year storm along McLean Avenue in Yonkers.



Modeling of a 100-year storm along McLean Avenue in Yonkers

Groundwork Hudson Valley first collaborated with The New School Urban Systems Lab on a [Yonkers based project in the Summer of 2021](#). This project, co-led by research fellow Pablo Herreros Cantis and Director Timon McPhearson, identified and predicted areas where flooding will become more severe with climate change. Additionally, the project evaluated the flood mitigation potential of different green infrastructure

interventions in these areas. Now Groundwork Hudson Valley and The New School Urban Systems Lab are working to expand the project to the greater Saw Mill River Watershed. The results of this project will allow for more intentional flood mitigation planning, while taking social equity into consideration to ensure interventions will be implemented where they are needed most.

CREATING CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

As extreme precipitation events become more common due to climate change, stormwater infrastructure continues to be challenged, putting flood prone communities at risk. In response to this issue, efforts were made all throughout the Saw Mill River Watershed this past year to better manage stormwater.

City of Yonkers

In 2022, the City of Yonkers completed a \$3 million flood mitigation project with the goal of creating safer and more climate resilient communities. The project involved raising the Odell and Clunie Avenue berms that act as a barrier between the Saw Mill River and the adjacent avenues. The raising of these berms will prevent flooding for up to a 100-year storm. The project also removed dams along the Saw Mill River and regraded the riverbanks along Executive Blvd and Nepperhan Ave, increasing the floodplain's capacity.

Westchester County

On June 3, 2022 Westchester Executive George Latimer announced the completion of the South County Trailway restoration project. The project restored 6.4 miles of trailway stretching from Barney Street in Yonkers to Route 119 in Elmsford. The work included restoring drainage systems, reconstructing asphalt, and planting native vegetation along the trailway. Signs, benches, traffic control gates, and railings were also installed increasing the safety of the trailway. The South County Trailway runs for 14.1 miles before meeting the North County Trailway. Together these trailways span the entirety of Westchester County, providing 31.1 miles of trailway for recreation.



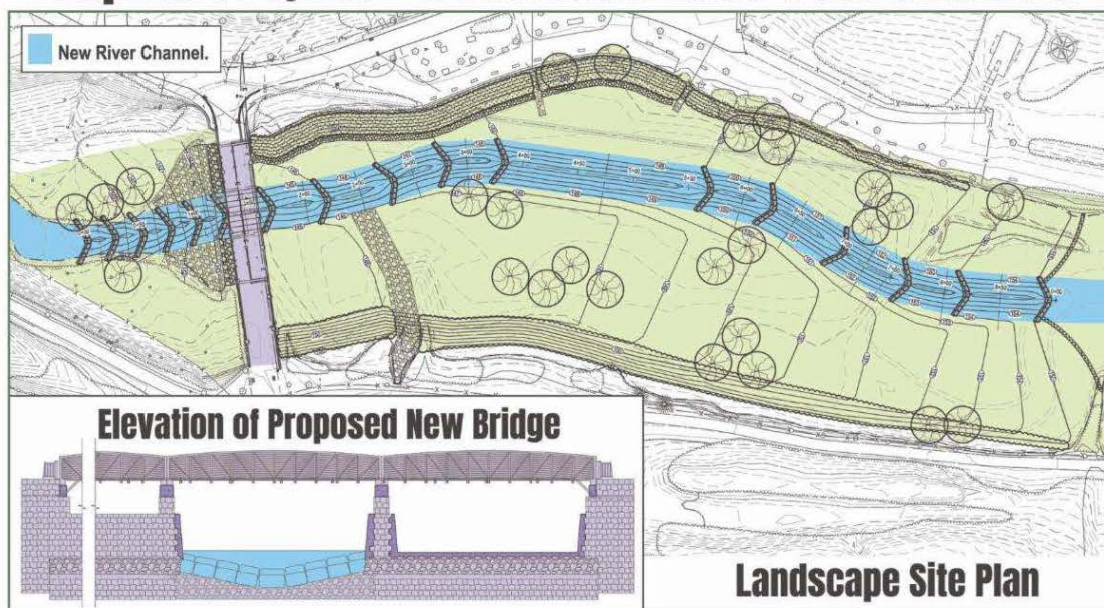
New York State Department of Transportation

Westchester County is undergoing a flood mitigation project led by the New York State Department of Transportation, referred to as the **Lower Westchester Bridge Bundle**. The goal of this project is to improve roadway sustainability and safety by reconstructing and improving drainage along flood prone roadways. As part of this project, NYSDOT is implementing flood prevention measures on a 1.3 miles stretch of the Saw Mill River Parkway between Taconic State Parkway and Pleasantville Road. This stretch of roadway will be elevated and stabilized with an embankment to divert water from the roadway. This embankment will also reconnect the surrounding wetlands, while reducing the amount of settlement the parkway will experience in the coming years. Furthermore, the bridge that carries the Saw Mill River Parkway over the Saw Mill River in the Town of Mount Pleasant will be elevated to accommodate for up to a 100-year flood.

A MOVEMENT TO REMOVE DAMS

Westchester County Parks removes the Woodlands Lake Dam at Great Hunger Memorial Park as part of \$4.9 million river restoration project.

Capital Project - Woodlands Lake Dam Removal



Westchester
gov.com

NATIONALLY ACCREDITED
PARKS
WESTCHESTER COUNTY



There has been a worldwide movement in recent years to restore rivers through the removal of dams, and the Saw Mill River Watershed is no exception. In the first week of August 2022, Westchester County Parks began a \$4.9 million river restoration project centered around the removal of the Woodlands Lake Dam at Great Hunger Memorial Park in Irvington. In the 12 to 14 months to follow, a portion of the existing dam will be removed, new pedestrian bridges will be installed, and the river and floodplain will be restored to its natural state.

The initial discussion of the removal came after the New York State Department of Conservation Dam Safety Division deemed the dam to be under violation. With the increase in extreme rain events the lake had the potential to crest the dam putting the surrounding areas at risk. With repairs being more costly and only reducing the dam's classification to high hazard, Westchester County decided to remove the dam to ensure the safety of downstream communities.

Although the dam removal project was initiated out of necessity, the numerous recreational and environmental benefits should not be ignored. The removal of this barrier and the reshaping of the river to create weirs and pools will support the passage of fish and other aquatic life. Meanwhile, the native trees, shrubs, and ground cover that will be planted to stabilize the stream banks will provide habitat for wildlife. Additionally, the dam removal will prevent flooding in the wetlands upstream, which play a key role in water quality, erosion control, and reducing stream flows during large rain events.

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