

Flood-control action demanded

Regional board seeks update on Peckman

By **MATTHEW KADOSH**
STAFF WRITER

A federal plan to manage flooding along the Peckman River in Little Falls, Woodland Park and Cedar Grove may be unveiled by next fall, but the local flood control board is growing impatient and may seek an early look at the measures.

The Army Corps of Engineers' plan for the river, which emerges in West Orange, and winds through Verona, Cedar Grove, and Little Falls before it meets the larger Passaic River in Woodland Park, began with a study Congress authorized in 2000.

As of February, \$4.4 million in state and federal dollars had been spent on the Peckman Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration Project, according to the corps. In addition, about \$291,000 has been proposed in President Obama's 2014 budget to fund an independent review of a plan to mitigate flooding on the river.

The Passaic Valley Regional Flood Control Board wants to know where the project has gone since the corps last toured the river in June.

"When will we actually see activity in

the river?" said Nicholas Agnoli, the board's chairman. "We badly need an update so we can tell our towns when construction is going to start on this project. This project began in response to Tropical Storm Floyd, which happened in 1999."

If information from the corps doesn't come soon, the board intends to formally request it, Agnoli said.

Alicia Gould, project manager for the corps, said in an email that it had originally anticipated recommending that a diversion culvert be built to take floodwater from the Peckman to the Passaic River, that a portion of the Peckman channel be modified to reduce flooding and that flood walls be installed around the Great Notch Brook, which floods frequently near the Best Buy and Kohl's parking lot off Route 46 in Woodland Park.

However, the corps is updating the plan's engineering aspects and a cost-benefit analysis for it, Gould said. Then, the corps will look to its funding partner, the state Department of Environmental Protection, for feedback and present the plan to the flood board, she said.

Gould expects a "draft report" of the plan will be released for public review at

the end of next summer.

Agnoli wants to ensure that the project suits the needs of the towns and is not too narrow in scope.

He said more homes have been flooded by the river in recent years, especially along Cedar Grove Road in Little Falls during Tropical Storm Irene.

In addition, more homes have cropped up in the flood zone, according to flood maps from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, he said.

In Little Falls alone, 260 homes are in the 100-year flood zone of the Peckman, Agnoli said, citing a digital map analysis of the FEMA floodplain and Passaic County map data.

"When people hear federal flood-control project, and it's just a small improvement here or a small improvement there, it may not get a good reaction," he said.

In the short term, the flood control board is working on grant proposals for three projects that would manage flooding in other ways along both the Peckman and Passaic rivers in Little Falls, said Councilman Joseph Maceri, the board's Little Falls representative.

The grants, estimated by the DEP in the amount of \$100,000 each, would go to-



Members of the Army Corps of Engineers and local officials inspecting the Peckman River in Little Falls in May.

DEMITRIUS BALEVSKI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

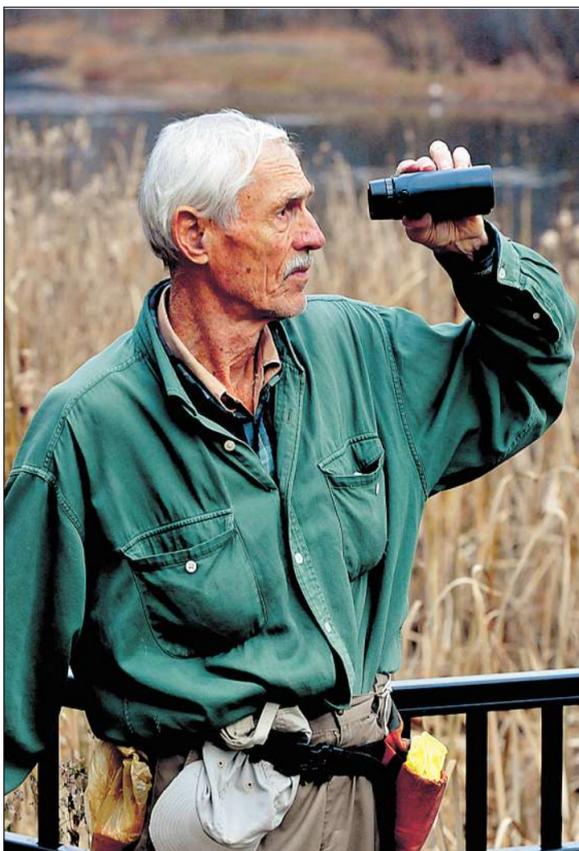
ward desilting and desnagging portions of the river.

Agnoli said he also is composing a proposal on behalf of Woodland Park, for which his board handles flood matters, and that Cedar Grove, which the board

also represents, is applying for the same grant without the board's assistance. The proposals are to be submitted to the DEP by Saturday.

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SIGNS OF LIFE AS WINTER LOOMS



Peter Both of Little Falls looking at a Great Blue Heron in Barbour Pond in Woodland Park on Friday. Both, 81, is a hiker and a member of Friends of Garret Mountain Reservation.

STAFF PHOTOS BY DON SMITH



City in race with time to fix ice rink

By **STEPHANIE NODA**
STAFF WRITER

ENGLEWOOD – The City Council has approved hiring a company that will fix the John T. Wright Arena's ice rink flooring by the end of the month, but it is still struggling to find a contractor to replace the screening as the arena's opening approaches.

City Manager Tim Dacey said a rejection of screening bids will not put the proposed mid-December opening of the arena in jeopardy. Meanwhile, the council awarded a \$65,442 contract to West Berlin-based North Eastern Hardwood Floors to fix the arena's aged, decaying flooring.

"It would be an improvement

Contractor for screens needed

on the flooring that we have now, not just because of age, but coverage [as well]," said City Engineer Ken Albert. "We are also reinforcing the flooring structure in the locker rooms."

Previous to the Nov. 12 flooring contract approval, the council rejected bids for flooring and screening because both exceeded the funds budgeted for them. When the screening bids were rejected for the second time in October, officials re-advertised for a new system that was less complicated.

The two bids the city received – \$150,620 and \$383,280 – were

still too high, said Albert. Because officials have gone out to bid three times, they are now eligible under public bidding laws to negotiate with vendors to try to lower the price, Albert said.

Damaged by Sandy

To move on the screening as fast as possible, Albert suggested that the council authorize Dacey to award a contract to a bidder provided the deal is less than \$100,000.

"It's a little unorthodox, but at the same time, we want to get this rink up and running," he said.

If a vendor was selected for a

council vote at its meeting Tuesday, Dacey said, installation of the screening would be completed around mid-December, the same time the rink is set to open.

City officials have spent a year debating about what repairs should go into the ice rink after Superstorm Sandy damaged the arena's roof only a few weeks before the rink was set to open for the 2012-13 winter season. After months of debate, the council decided to fund \$960,000 worth of work that includes roof repairs, new perimeter netting, flooring, dasher boards, steel painting below the arena's ceiling and netting the interior.

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Englewood aims to lighten up downtown shops

Hopes free bulbs draw traffic

By **STEPHANIE NODA**
STAFF WRITER

ENGLEWOOD – The city's Economic Development Corp. will provide free LED bulbs to any downtown store owner willing to leave their storefront lights on until midnight, an effort to make the downtown more inviting to window shoppers after dark.

"Why aren't we providing a town where it's fun to stroll around?" asked Adam Brown, chairman of the EEDC.

"Half the fun of going to New York [City] is window shopping, so how do we create a culture of window shopping when people don't like walking down dark blocks?"

'Ribbon of light'

Palisade Avenue already is illuminated by streetlights, and Brown is hoping business owners will keep the lights on in their shop windows to "create a ribbon of light" that will encourage further window shopping. Even if a store is not open at the time, shoppers might return during the daytime to grab a piece of merchandise that may have caught their eye, he said.

"If they illuminate their displays, there's excitement every weekend – seven days a week," said Brown.

He said the organization hopes to take advantage of the "quarter of a million" people a year who come to the Bergen

Performing Arts Center, or bergenPAC, and crowd the city's restaurants at night.

In a nighttime survey of downtown storefronts, it was found that about 70 percent of storefronts keep their lights on at night, said Brown.

Many stores that turn off their lights are located west of the railroad tracks, said Brown.

Since then, the EEDC has established a relationship with vendors and are ready to request orders for light bulbs for business owners who agree to keep their storefronts illuminated until 11 p.m. or midnight, said Brown. The EEDC does not plan to pay for added electric cost for such store owners, but Brown said it would cost storeowners "only pennies" to keep lights on for a few hours during the night.

Art galleries possible

Another EEDC initiative in the works aiming to make downtown streets look attractive during both day and night is opening art galleries in vacant storefronts, said Brown.

Not only would the art create "something lively" in the those storefronts, such as the former Victoria's Secret location in the heart of the downtown, but it would give local artists and students a place to showcase their works in the community, he said.

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Deal near for 2 towns to share inspectors

HO-HO-KUS – Council members could approve a shared-service agreement next month with Midland Park that would merge both boroughs' construction departments.

According to Ho-Ho-Kus officials, when the council meets Dec. 17, it will vote on a resolution that would establish a third inter-local agreement with Midland Park.

The shared construction department, borough officials said,

would save both towns time and money.

The agreement has been in development for months, with officials from Midland Park soliciting input on the proposal to those in Ho-Ho-Kus.

Midland Park is one of two towns that approached Ho-Ho-Kus this fall about setting up a combined construction department.

— Chris Harris

38th: Process includes hand counting of mail-in ballots

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lots on that machine and the totals for each candidate.

The next step would take place at the Election Board offices in Hackensack, where officials would check by hand all of the approximately 2,500 absentee or mail-in ballots that were cast in the district.

"It can be a long, drawn-out process," DeBari said.

Candidates are allowed to examine the mail-in ballots that were counted as well



SCARPA

as others that were rejected, often because a voter forgot to sign the ballot.

"You'd be surprised how many people do not sign," DeBari said.

"If the signature is not there, we don't count them," she added.

And finally, election officials would again have to go through about 900 provisional ballots that were cast by voters when a question was raised on Election Day

about their registration.

Often these are ballots cast by people who recently moved or who asked for a mail-in ballot and then decided instead to vote in person.

The results then are sent to the judges in each county for a final ruling.

DeBari said the voting machine totals do not vary much but sometimes a handful of votes will change as a result of the recount of paper ballots.

The last major recount of an election in Bergen County occurred in 1996 when the results of a freeholder race were



EUSTACE

703 votes out of about 387,000 ballots cast.

The recount involved about 39 hours of

called into question.

That resulted in the first-ever recount of ballots from all 70 towns in the county.

In that race, Republican Freeholder Anthony Cassano held a lead over Democratic challenger Michael Guarino of

recounting votes at a cost of about \$25,000.

In the end, the challenger picked up just 13 votes and the outcome of the election remained the same.

"It was just a very difficult night," then-County Clerk Kathleen Donovan was quoted as saying in a November 1997 story.

"We call it the election from hell," she added, noting that exhausted elections workers had to start all over again.

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