

## PVSC answers distress call

May 29th, 2013



*Photo courtesy of PVSC*

A Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission River Restoration crew came to the rescue of Belleville residents threatened with potential flooding from the Third River last week.

Two downed trees – believed to have been toppled by Superstorm Sandy last October – were stretched 25 feet across the width of the river, where branches and debris were collecting, causing waters to rise precipitously at high tide and prompting fears that, at some point, they would spill over into nearby homes and the Fairway Park ballfields and playground.

PVSC didn't learn of the problem, however, until the agency was alerted by a call from Belleville Town Manager Kevin Esposito on May 16, according to agency spokeswoman Hollie A. Gilroy.



*Photo courtesy of PVSC*

In response, a River Restoration team went there “to initially survey the site, document all possible blockages and then schedule the crew and equipment for a time when we could have access to the property,” Gilroy said.

Last Wednesday, a crew deployed PVSC's 30-ton crane to haul out the first tree and debris and then chopped it up through a wood chipper, Gilroy said. The next day, the crew repeated the process with the second tree. Each had a 30-inch diameter and weighed 20,000 pounds.

Toughest part of the operation for the crew, said Gilroy, was "working in waist-deep water" to position the fallen trees for lifting.



*Photo courtesy of PVSC*

Offering some perspective on the length of time it took to respond to the logjam, Gilroy said: "PVSC frequently patrols the local municipalities [along the banks of the Passaic] looking for debris or areas of concern. And, we reached out to every municipality before and during Sandy to pledge assistance for debris removal. However, we often don't learn of a potential problem until we are notified by a local official, resident or town manager or [public works supervisor]."



*Photo courtesy of PVSC*

PVSC has been sending River Restoration crews out along the Passaic since 1998.

— Ron Leir