

Crews clear debris from a clogged Peckman River

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WOODLAND PARK — Crews using heavy equipment began removing huge trees and debris of all kinds that was clogging the Peckman River where it joins the Passaic as part of a larger post superstorm Sandy cleanup.



TYSON TRISH/ STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bob O'Neill, of the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission, hooks up a fallen tree to a crane that will remove the debris at Peckman River where it meets the Passaic River in Woodland Park Wednesday, March 27, 2013.

The work, continuing today, began with Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission crews Wednesday pulling out big objects obstructing the flow of the rivers to prevent catastrophic flooding. The work is important in an area that lately has been battered by flooding, said Keith Kazmark, the Woodland Park mayor.

“Any work that we can do to clear out the river, we’re interested in,” he said, citing the heavy flooding impacts following Tropical Storm Floyd in 1999.

Other projects are underway throughout the Passaic River Basin in an effort to increase the flow through the rivers and streams to reduce chances for flooding.

Commission crews have worked throughout the winter removing obstructions like trees that were knocked into the Passaic River and its tributaries by the high winds and floods

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of superstorm Sandy last fall and Hurricane Irene in 2011, said the commission's executive director, Michael DeFrancisci.

More than 2,000 tires were removed from the Passaic River in Paterson. Crews also retrieved a capsized boat — the RV Riverwatch — that became stuck in the river during Hurricane Irene beneath the Rutgers Street Bridge between Belleville and North Arlington.

And in Elmwood Park, the commission spent more than a week cleaning up Dundee Island, extracting enough trash and debris to fill a 30-yard garbage container to the brim. Several 150-gallon chemical containers were found and removed by the state environmental protection workers. The Dundee Dam, which spans the river between Clifton and Garfield, catches a lot of litter and debris from storms, commission officials said.

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