

## Passaic River cleanup takes aim at tons of tires

OCTOBER 20, 2014, 6:00 PM LAST UPDATED: MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2014, 6:00 PM

BY MINJAE PARK

STAFF WRITER | THE RECORD

For the third year, the Passaic River is getting a cleanup of illegally dumped tires and other debris in a effort to mitigate flooding and offer a more pleasing view.

In a Monday morning gathering, Paterson Mayor Joey Torres and Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr. joined Michael DeFrancisci, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission executive director, to inspect and praise the commission river restoration staff's ongoing effort to remove tires from the river and recycle them.

"The recycling and reusing of it is a win-win for all," Torres said, pointing to the benefit to the river and the recycling of the tires.

In the past four weeks, the four or five staff members on site have removed 1,000 tires, the commission said.

"In warmer months exposed tires are known to attract mosquito nesting and local floods are also exacerbated by tire and debris buildup," Pascrell, a Democrat from Paterson, wrote in a letter Monday to Bob Martin, the state environmental protection commissioner. Pascrell said he's concerned about the "health risks and flooding concerns."

Torres said he hopes to open the river for recreational uses such as canoeing, kayaking and fishing. He said the cleanup also is part of creating a walkway along the river that stretches from the Great Falls to the Paterson-Clifton border.

The cleanup this year is centered on the Bunker Hill section of Paterson. The tires are picked up and recycled by Bridgestone, which has a program to recycle used tires. The tires can be used as fuel, to manufacture park equipment and benches and to create asphalt, Torres said.

Cleanups in the past two years have resulted in the removal of 2,059 tires and 101.51 tons of debris from the area near the Lafayette Street and River Street intersection, and 2,075 tires and 8 cubic yards of illegally dumped concrete from Fair Lawn Memorial River Park, the commission said.

In his letter, Pascrell praised the DEP for cracking down on illegal dumping on state parks and recreational lands. He said he hopes the agency "will duplicate these successful efforts to prevent illegal dumping in the Passaic River."

Email: [parkm@northjersey.com](mailto:parkm@northjersey.com)