

Paterson's Great Falls to go dry on Thursday



The Great Falls in Paterson. (Tim Farrell | The Star-Ledger)



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PATERSON — The Great Falls is the second-largest waterfall in Northeast, behind only Niagara Falls.

On Thursday, they'll be completely shut down.

The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission is having Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, which operates a hydroelectric plant at the falls, divert the entire Passaic River through the plant so commission workers can clean up debris that's built up along the shores and in the rocks above the falls.

"As one of the largest wastewater facilities in the country, it is PVSC's mission to act as good environmental stewards at all times," said Greg Tramontozzi, PVSC executive director. "Routinely cleaning up the Great Falls is a critical part of that process."

PVSC conducts a cleanup of the Great Falls at least once a year. The debris that builds up in the falls includes fallen trees, tires and other garbage.

It causes blockages, Doug Scancarella, a spokesman for PVSC, said. PVSC has cleaned the falls 20 times since 1998, when the River Restoration Program started.

The program covers various parts of the river as well as Newark Bay and its tributaries.

Under the right conditions, Eagle Creek is able to open its three electricity-generating turbines to pull all of the water from a dam on top of the 77-foot falls down through the plant and release it below the falls, Brian Davenport, superintendent of river restoration and facilities for PVSC, said. Too much rain can ruin things: The PVSC has had to cancel similar cleanups when the volume of water was too high for the plant to corral.

The Great Falls have been a National Historic Landmark since 1976 and [became a National Historical Park](#) in 2009.

The cleanup Thursday is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

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