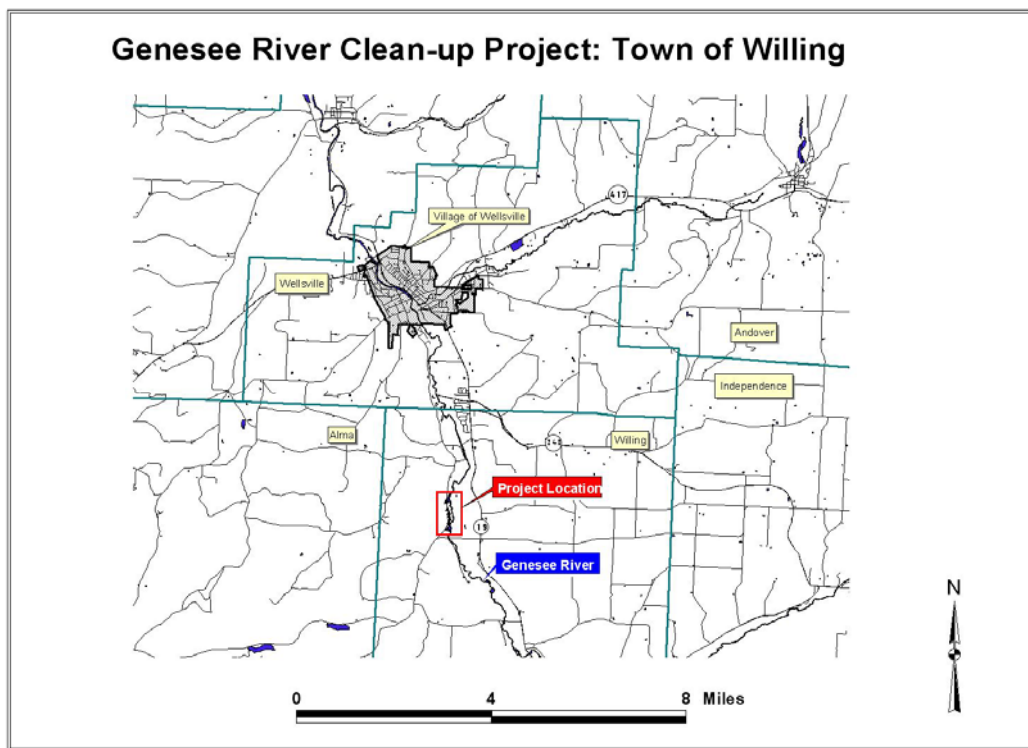


Volunteers Help to Protect the Genesee River's Water Quality

Setting

A rainy Saturday morning located within the Town of Willing (Allegany County) was the setting where several groups came together to clean up a blighted area along the banks of and lower floodplain of the Genesee River. The area located off of the River Rd. has been a problem dump site within the flood plain of the Genesee River for years. The Village of Wellsville, NYRWA, Allegany County, Boy Scout troops from Wellsville, Scio, Andover and Angelica, the Town of Willing Fire Department, and local residents all volunteered either their time and/ or resources (equipment) to help complete the project.



Dumped material off of River Rd. (Town of Willing)

Planning for the Event

As with all successful outreach projects, deliverables have to be set. The Village of Wellsville Water Department and NYRWA formally planned out what they wanted to accomplish and then how they were going to get the project done. The first deliverable was based on protecting public health and reviving the natural resource's condition. The Village was concerned with its drinking water source quality based on the nature of materials that had been dumped and its close location from the Village's water intake (miles upstream from the intake). The second deliverable wanted was the project making a positive statement to the surrounding community. It was the hope of the Village that the project would show the magnitude of the current situation, and the work required to clean the area up. This would bring attention to the area and hopefully deter future dumping within the area. Third, the Village Water Department and NYRWA discussed the resources that would be required to complete the project. The magnitude and the types of material at the dump site made it evident that this situation couldn't be rectified without the cooperation of others.

The next task was to assemble a group, hopefully a large work force, to effectively clean the dump site. In order to make a loud public statement the Water Department wanted to utilize locals who had a vested interest in the community. Discussions were held and the consensus choice was local boyscout troops. This decision was based on two main reasons. Reason one was that as an organization the Boy Scouts have had a long history of being excellent environmental stewards. Reason two was the Boy Scouts are a highly visible organization. The Village Water Department and NYRWA knew if they were to become involved, it would be hard for municipalities to deny the asked-for assistance. Contact was made to the District Commissioner of the Allegheny Highlands Council, the project was described, a site visit ensued, and then a verbal commitment of assistance was pledged by the commissioner on behalf of the Boy Scouts.

Realizing equipment would be needed in addition to manpower the core group of planners (Village Water Department, NYRWA, and the District Commissioner) contacted the local newspaper. The planner's intent was to get an article written that described the problem dump site and the challenges that would be faced cleaning the site. The article was published and soon after a response by the Allegheny County Legislative Public Works Committee was sent stating that disposal fees would be waived and equipment would be provided. In addition to the County resources the Village of Wellsville promised to provide needed equipment.

Lawmakers to help Boy Scouts, others clean up Genesee River

By MELANIE STREETER
THE TIMES HERALD

BELMONT — Allegany County legislators want to do what they can to help the Boy Scouts and other volunteers clean up several sites along the River Road in the town of Willing that are fouling the Genesee River watershed.

Legislator Dwight Fanton, R-Willing, chairman of the Public Works Committee, told other committee members this past week about the upcoming project. With a potential late spring timeline, Scouts and volunteers will clear away debris tossed from the side of the road, an ongoing problem in that area.

"It's been an informal dump for years," Mr. Fanton said. "The Boy Scouts want to do this as a community project, and they will need our help, probably with equipment to haul the bigger stuff, and some hoppers for disposal."

The largest concentration of debris is located on a bank, directly under a sluice pipe that runs spring water under the road. The pile includes old washing machines, rusted out gas tanks, mattresses, tires and animal carcasses, along with bags of trash and other types of refuse. Water from the spring tumbles through the garbage before reaching the river.

Cleaning up the mess is a project first proposed by Joshua Bossard, a source water protection specialist with New York Rural Water Association, and Dana Harris, Wellsville Water Treatment Plant superintendent.

Mr. Bossard conducted a study of potential pollution sources for the village water intake last year. He found a number of sites along the River Road that need to be cleaned up.

He and Mr. Harris contacted Steven Allen, the Boy Scouts' Seneca District commissioner.

Mr. Allen said the project offers a variety of opportunities for the Scouts, and he hopes to conduct the cleanup in conjunction with a camping weekend at the scouts' property in Willing. He said he will also ask Cattaraugus County Scouts to join in the effort.

"It's amazing, the response we've seen from the community," said Mr. Harris. "The Willing Fire Department has also signed on to help out."

Mr. Bossard said he has a number of meetings planned in coming months to iron out more details. He said a meeting with state Department of Environmental Conservation officials March 8 will help determine whether any special permits are needed.

He also plans to meet with Boy Scouts officials again, and to meet with the Allegheny County Board of Legislators and the Willing Town Board.

"This project is really gaining momentum," Mr. Bossard said.

Clean Up Day

Saturday May 6th was the day that was agreed upon by the core planners to perform the clean-up event. As with many scheduled outreach events things didn't go as originally planned. The challenges started with the inclement weather. The weather had caused the planned entry point (down within the floodplain off of River Rd.) inaccessible with mechanized equipment. The original plan was to remove the larger items (tires, washing machines, automobile parts, refrigerators, etc) with a Village-owned back-driving the materials along a county-owned trail (approximately one mile) up to the two 40 cubic foot dumpsters that had been provided by the County Public Works Department. The conditions had to be dealt with due to the fact that rescheduling with the volunteers (Boy Scouts) would have been near impossible due their other scheduled obligations.

Fortunately the local volunteers had a solution for the removal of the larger items. Regarding the tires and moderately sized items the solution was to form a human chain up along the bank. One-by-one, items were passed up the slope to a staging area off of the road in which items were separated into piles (tires, white goods-metal, and trash). This process took most of the day which was a testament to the amount of debris that had been dumped in the area over the years. At the same time the human chain was going on, individuals had to remove the materials from the staging area and transfer them to the dumpsters (which had been placed one mile south of the landing area-based on the original entry point). A few volunteers had then scouted and found a second entry point that would be accessible with an ATV and attached trailer. This small group (comprised of adults) then took multiple trips to remove the large materials via the ATV. This work starting at 8:30 am went on until approximately 3:30 pm.



Summary

When all was said and done the volume of debris removed from the project area had filled two 40 cubic foot dumpsters as well as five separate full-sized truck filled trips to the local transfer station. Trying to put a dollar amount on the debris removal proved to be difficult- here is the approximated breakdown of services. The 35 volunteers putting in a full workday equated out to approximately \$1,630.00. Material removal costs for the 500 plus tires were roughly \$750.00. Costs for the removal of the white goods and the general debris could not be estimated based on the fact that Allegany County does not normally allow the dumpsters to be rented and filled for private use. With that being said, at the conclusion of the clean-up event there was literally tons of material taken to the local landfill.



Volunteers that helped with debris removal

The Village of Wellsville Water Department and NYRWA would like to extend a sincere thank you to all of the volunteers that provided the needed labor and equipment. As mentioned before this project could not have been completed without the support of everyone involved. The challenge in the future will be keeping this area and adjacent areas along the Genesee River clean from malicious dumping.



Pictures of the project site, post clean-up