



ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEADLY ESOPUS CREEK HAZARD GONE FOR NOW



A close up of wood in pile number one.

Shandaken, NY – “The Strainer” consisting of enormous tree trunks and other debris washed downstream by natural erosion and flooding events created a deadly hazard in the Esopus Creek that claimed the life of Jordyn Engler on September 5, 2015.

Ken Ronk, Chairman of the Ulster County Legislature, praised Ulster County Soil & Water staff for the clean-up of debris left on the banks of the Esopus Creek in the Town of Shandaken and thanked Legislator John Parete (D) for bringing this important issue to the attention of the Legislature.

Parete envisioned this project as a model to ensure the safety of popular waterways used by residents and tourists throughout Ulster County.



Fishermen approximately 100 yards upstream from the operation

“This project has been an example of intergovernmental cooperation,” said Ronk. “The efforts of Governor Cuomo, the National Guard, the NYSDEC, Ulster County Soil and Water and the Ulster County Legislature all did their part.”

“First responders risked their lives trying to reach her,” Parete said, recalling the Engler tragedy. “Sadly this is not the first life lost to this hazard. It was a situation that could not be ignored.”

Days after the Engler drowning and with Hurricane Joaquin bearing down on the region, Governor Andrew Cuomo recognized the seriousness of the issue. As a precautionary measure the Governor took advantage of an emergency declaration made by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and directed the National Guard to remove the Strainer debris from the creek in anticipation of flooding expected from the storm.

At the request of the Ulster County Legislature, representatives of Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District (UCSWCD) inspected the site on October 8, 2015 and concluded that the debris that had been removed was in danger of washing back into the creek. UCSWCD suggested working with NYSDEC to secure permission to remove the debris from the bank of the Esopus Creek permanently. The Ulster County Legislature approved funding for the work in the 2016 county budget.

“Some of these trees were as big as a truck,” said Parete. “If they washed back down stream they would recreate the strainer and further jeopardize life and limb“

Experts warn that “The Strainer” was created by an ongoing process of erosion and warn swimmers, tubers, fishermen and even people in boats, canoes and kayaks to avoid areas of the creek where debris builds up.

“Soil and Water is doing a beautiful job,” said Ronk, noting that they subcontracted with Rothe Lumber Corp of Saugerties to grind the debris and will reseed the area to help reduce erosion.

“I am thankful that this hazard and eyesore has been removed,” said Ronk. “We want to ensure that all of our residents and visitors have a safe and fun filled experience here in Ulster County.”
