

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



## Targeted Watersheds Grant

# Saw Mill River, NY



A major initiative is underway to "daylight" sections of the Saw Mill River in Yonkers, which were previously buried underneath buildings. This photo shows the river underneath businesses.



Riffles along a more intact section of the Saw Mill River.



Saunders High School and St. Christophers' students working with Lehman College professors, collecting fish for the 2008-2009 fish study.

## Groundwork Yonkers

### The Watershed

The Saw Mill River originates as a wetland in the suburbs of Chappaqua, New York, before meandering through high density residential and industrial areas, where it eventually empties into the Hudson River far downstream. For more than a mile in downtown Yonkers, the river is buried underground, although it remains visible in basements and beneath train stations. Historically, the Saw Mill River played an important role in the establishment of towns along its banks. The Otis Elevator Company once called the Saw Mill River home, as did other industrial operations, such as carpet mills.

### Issues

The Saw Mill River, with its industrial legacy, contains high concentrations of metals, PCBs and DDT. Natural aquatic life cannot survive in portions of the river due to pollution, channelization, and high flows. Of the many challenges facing the Saw Mill River, Groundwork Yonkers and the Saw Mill River Coalition will focus on stream contamination, loss of riparian habitat, and land use development pressures.

### Project Activities

- **Raw Sewage Discharges:** High levels of fecal coliform appear to be coming from raw sewage discharges that empty into the storm sewers from homes and businesses and from leaking pipes at a wastewater treatment plant. To reduce the bacteria, the Coalition will form a work group to develop a corrective action plan.
- **Floatables:** Students will create an anti-litter campaign and talk to residents about keeping gutters free from trash and fertilizers.
- **Daylighting the River:** Plans are in place to "daylight" the portion of the Saw Mill River that is buried underground. The Saw Mill River Coalition will work to develop a cohesive landscape plan and interpretive signage along the river's walking trail.



### Saw Mill River Watershed

#### Project Partners:

- Local municipalities
- Westchester County Planning Department, Parks Department and Soil and Conservation District
- New York Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York Department of Transportation
- Army Corps of Engineers
- US Geological Survey
- National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program
- Scenic Hudson
- Riverkeeper
- Pace University—Environmental Center
- Manhattan College
- Hudson Basin River Watch
- Beczak Environmental Education Center
- Yonkers Downtown/Waterfront Business Improvement District

#### Funds Leveraged

EPA Grant: \$889,183

Match in non-federal funds and in

kind services: \$331,404

- **Riparian Restoration:** Volunteers will help restore degraded portions of the river where native trees are overtaken by invasive vines.

#### • Better Site Design and Land Use

**Planning:** A training program on Better Site Design will be conducted for local decision makers to help them make better land use decisions. Workshops will be held to incorporate recommendations into local codes. Additionally, GIS mapping of the watershed resources will be improved, including more accurate land use information.

#### For More Information Contact:

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EPA's Targeted Watersheds Grant program is a competitive grant program designed to encourage collaborative, community-driven approaches to meet clean water goals.

For more information about the selected watersheds, please visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/twg>

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