

# When the Saw Mill River Floods

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To the Editor:

Your June 20 article about residential flooding problems along the Saw Mill River and one of its tributaries illustrates the necessity for watershed-wide planning and for communities all along the river to work together in developing wise land use practices.

Upstream modifications to the flood plain, such as the filling in of a wetland, the addition of a parking lot or some other high-impact development too close to the stream channel, can cause problems downriver. Water needs to go somewhere, and when it storms, the rain can either seep into the ground, or, finding surfaces it cannot penetrate, such as concrete roadways and impervious rooftops, will make its way to the river, carrying debris, road salt, automotive chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides and other forms of water pollution it gathers along its path.

Trees can create an umbrella effect and stem the deluge, and green

spaces can soak up the precipitation, but when these natural resources are continually cut down and paved over without thought to consequence, everyone pays the price in the form of flood insurance and tax dollars to amend the problems.

The population density in the Saw Mill River watershed is double that of Westchester and 10 times that of New York State. It is sandwiched by two parkways and shares a border briefly with the New York State Thruway. Many industrial and commercial endeavors are located along the river. With so many people and so much property to be concerned for, with the health of the river to be considered and with the federal mandate for municipalities to protect water quality by preventing storm water pollution, all of us need be aware, responsible and cooperative.

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Yonkers

*The writer is coordinator, Saw Mill River Coalition.*