

## **Township of Bernards, Somerset County**

### **Passaic River De-snagging Grant Narrative**

#### **SUMMARY:**

Bernards Township took the approach of taking photographs and GPS coordinates of snags that the public has either complained about, or our own staff thought very problematic. It was in no way meant to be a comprehensive documentation of all snags in the Passaic River and tributaries in Bernards' waters. Bernards Township is hopeful that the grant application will produce permitting and methodologies for the removal of lesser obstructions that were not documented. It is our intent to team with our neighbors in Morris County to remove lesser debris fields by our own staff during low flow river periods.

The Passaic River in Bernards is a recreation attraction. The upper reaches are Category 1 Trout Producing waters. As the river exits the Great Swamp, the quantity of public land access attracts many fishing and kayak enthusiasts. The area between the Maple Avenue/Basking Ridge Road and Haas Road/Stonehouse Road bridges is one of the most fished areas of the entire river system. The NJ Division of Fish and Game stock trout at both bridges.

This area also contains some of the only white water stretches of the river during high water as the Passaic enters and exits the gorge. The obstructions in this stretch are major and are an extreme public safety hazard. Numerous canoe/kayak accidents have occurred in this stretch, including the serious one detailed in the article at the end of this document (this event cost significant resources, and put 1<sup>st</sup> responders in danger as well). These snags are numbers 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. It is believed that Old Mill Road in Long Hill Township is the only viable site for conducting the removal of this large amount of debris.

This area of the Passaic is exhibiting river bank erosion due to the blockages. In addition, just upstream from these blockages are the footings for NJ Transit's commuter rail trestle for their Morris and Essex Line's Gladstone Branch.

Further downstream on the Passaic are blockages 5, 6, 7, and 8 in the vicinity of the Bernards Township's Historic Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead riverfront property. This property is listed on the State and National Historic Register. Convenient river access for staging the removal of debris can occur here.

The other snags listed in our documentation are on Harrisons Brook, a tributary for the Passaic. Snags #1, #2, #14, #15 are in flood prone residential areas. Snags #3 and #4 can cause flooding on the important thoroughfares of Somerset County Routes #512, and #525. We believe access to these areas would be simple.

**PRIORITIES:**

For the public safety, historic preservation and recreational reasons listed above, our top priorities are the snags numbered 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 5, and 6 which are bank to bank blockages.

Passaic River snags numbered 7, and 8 while important are lesser priority due to their size and partial blocking.

Harrisons Brook snags have priority in the following order: 14, 3, 2, 1, 15, 4.

**TOWNSHIP PLEDGE OF CASH AND IN-KIND MATCHES:**

The Bernards Township Committee has agreed to offer a total of \$20,000.00 in matching funds. This match is comprised of \$15,000.00 cash, and \$5,000.00 in in-kind help. The in-kind match will consist of DPW crew and equipment of waste containers, chipper operations, hauling, and disposal.

In addition to the above match, it is anticipated that our DPW personnel will also utilize the permitting received in the grant to remove minor undocumented snags and debris consisting of firewood, branches, and small trees which are prevalent in the Passaic, and its tributaries of Harrisons Brook, and Dead River.

Any questions regarding this important initiative can be directed to me.

Bruce D. McArthur, Bernards Township Administrator

908-204-3098

[bmcarthur@bernards.org](mailto:bmcarthur@bernards.org)

1 Collyer Lane

Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

# Man, 4-year-old granddaughter rescued from rushing Passaic River after kayak capsizes

Comments

Print ([http://blog.nj.com/somerset\\_impact/print.html?entry=/2013/06/man\\_granddaughter\\_rescued\\_from\\_a\\_swift\\_passaic\\_river\\_after\\_their\\_kayak\\_capsized.html](http://blog.nj.com/somerset_impact/print.html?entry=/2013/06/man_granddaughter_rescued_from_a_swift_passaic_river_after_their_kayak_capsized.html))  
 (http://connect.nj.com/user/wjobrien/index.html) By [Walter O'Brien/NJ.com](http://connect.nj.com/user/wjobrien/posts.html)  
 (http://connect.nj.com/user/wjobrien/posts.html)  
[Email the author](#) | Follow on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/NJcomsomerset>)  
 on June 11, 2013 at 6:22 PM, updated June 11, 2013 at 6:29 PM



[Follow on Twitter](#)

0

Share

0

Pinterest

Email

## BERNARDS

(<http://nj.com/bernards>) — Thanks to the heroic efforts of a township police officer and firefighter, a man and his 4-year old granddaughter whose kayak capsized were saved from the rushing waters of the Passaic River as his daughter watched from the riverbank, police said.

At about 2:45 p.m. Sunday, Sgt. Glen Amerman of the Bernards Township Police was called to the Passaic River between Haas Road and South Maple Avenue on the report of three stranded kayakers, according to Chief Brian Bobowicz of the Bernards Township Police.

John Schulenburg of Basking Ridge and his 4-year-old granddaughter were trapped in the rushing waters following the flipping of their kayak, Bobowicz said. The granddaughter lives with her mother in Long Hill Township, Bobowicz said.

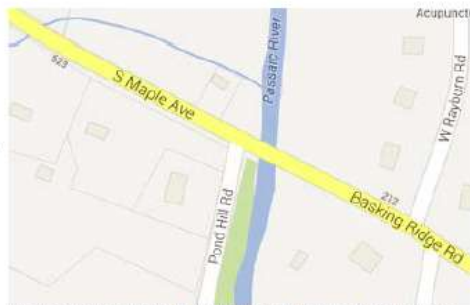
Schulenburg's daughter, Molly Schulenburg, also of Basking Ridge, had managed to make it to the riverbank in her own kayak, Bobowicz said.

"Sgt. Amerman and Liberty Corner Asst. Fire Chief Pete Aprahamian risked their own safety to wade out to the victim and bring them to shore," Bobowicz said.

Amerman said that while on his way to the scene, he contacted the county to make sure that the fire department and a water rescue unit were on their way, and also arranged for other officers from Bernards to head to the South Maple overpass on the Long Hill border "in case the victims were being whisked down the river."

"I pulled into a Pond Hill Road residential driveway and headed down the steep embankment toward the river," Amerman said. "The river was very swollen due to the storms over the last 48 hours. There were multiple large trees down across the river making channels of swift moving water that had made crossing the river extremely difficult."

Amerman said that Schulenburg, who was not wearing a life vest, was trapped in the middle of the river holding onto his 4-year-old granddaughter, who was wearing a life vest. Schulenburg's kayak was caught in a tree, Amerman said.



The Passaic River at South Maple bridge in Basking Ridge, Bernards Township.

Google Maps

"I was concerned that John was going to lose his footing and the current was going to take his granddaughter and himself down the river," Amerman said. "There were more trees and brush further down the river that they could have gotten stuck under."

Amerman said he quickly took off the heavy parts of his uniform and walked into the river, leaving his weapon with officers onshore.

"I waded through chest deep water to get as close as I could to John and his granddaughter," Amerman said. "Pete Aprahamian entered the water to assist me. Pete and I were able to tie a rope to the second kayak and I pushed the kayak to John. John put his granddaughter in the kayak and I pulled it back to me."

Amerman and Aprahamian took the 4-year-old out of the kayak and handed her off to the other rescue personnel, then sent the kayak back to John so he would have a flotation device to hold onto in case the fast-moving waters sent him further downriver.

Schulenburg held onto the kayak as Amerman lowered him down the river to an island closer to the riverbank, at which point he was able to make it to shore, Amerman said.

All the victims were checked out by Liberty Corner First Aid Squad with no injuries, Amerman said.

Liberty Corner Fire Department, Somerset Medical Center Mobile Intensive care unit and the Bedminster-Far Hills Swift Water Rescue Team also assisted, Amerman said.

"My very humble compliments and praise for Sgt. Amerman and Asst. Chief Aprahamian," Bobowicz said. "They professionally faced dangerous and life-threatening conditions to save this multigenerational family. To say I am impressed is an extreme understatement."