

Supervisor Lesko and Councilman Panico Announce Town Purchase of Open Space in Forge River Watershed

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Farmingville, NY - Supervisor Mark Lesko and Councilman Dan Panico have announced that the Town recently acquired 9.75 acres of wooded property located at the headwaters of the Forge River in Mastic as part of the Town's open space preservation initiative. The property is diagonally across from the Jurgielewicz Duck Farm and adjacent to the Woodlea Nursery. The development rights for both properties were purchased by the Town and County in 2008 and 2009.

The Forge River has a history of water quality issues and is classified as "Impaired Waters" due to the excessive levels of nitrogen entering the river. Nitrogen sources include storm water discharges, unsewered high density residential development and the river's own sediments which were deposited during decades of extensive duck farming that employed minimal waste treatment.

"Restoring the Forge River back to health is a very difficult task, but we are making progress by acquiring the properties that have a direct impact on the watershed," said Supervisor Mark Lesko. "In addition to the benefit of preserving nearly 10 acres of natural woodland, we can help to prevent overdevelopment that would increase nitrogen contamination of the river."

"Preserving this property will have a direct impact on the future health of the Forge River by alleviating potential nitrogen loading attributable to the development on this parcel. The restoration of the Forge River is of paramount importance to me and is an important factor to restoring the vitality of the surrounding community," commented Councilman Dan Panico. "While this is a good step in that direction, I will continue to work toward the ultimate goal of cleaning this river by working with the Forge River Task Force, Save the Forge River, and our other levels of government to accomplish this goal."

The Town of Brookhaven and the US Army Corps of Engineers will cooperatively work together to develop a Feasibility Study that will identify existing conditions in the Forge River and then identify range of opportunities that will be the basis for recommendations to address the River's impairments; some of this work will be supported by a financial contribution by Suffolk County. This project will build upon the Watershed Management Plan that the Town is developing with funding from the New York State Department of State. The Feasibility Study will provide the basis for development of plans and specifications for projects that will address the impairments.

The previous owners of the property had filed a plan to subdivide the land and construct seven new homes before the Town stepped in to acquire it for \$745,000.

During Supervisor Lesko's administration, the open space preservation initiative has resulted in the acquisition or purchase of development rights for hundreds of acres of ecologically sensitive land including many parcels in the Pine Barrens and the Carmans River watershed as well as large tracts of farmland throughout the Town.

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