



It's the Thanksgiving season, and I would like to say thanks to a few individuals and groups that got together on short notice to get something done that needed immediate attention.

Just above the junction of Oquaga Creek and the West Branch of the Delaware River, high waters from a storm in October caused two good-sized maple trees to fall into Oquaga Creek. The root balls diverted the force of the swollen creek toward the bank, causing more erosion and eating away the road to a river access used by fishermen and river enthusiasts. The big threat, however, was sitting just on the other side of that dirt road about 30 feet away: the Village of Deposits sewage treatment plant!

Jim Serio, real estate broker in Hancock, and Deposit Mayor John O'Connor were trying to figure out how to prevent further damage that the next flood would bring. They faced an all-too-common dilemma--no money. Mayor O'Connor had estimates, but the cost was way too high for the Village to handle alone, so Jim got busy to see what he could do. In a short period of time, Jim was able to extend the time period for work, buying more time to put the project together. He found a source for the stone needed to stabilize the bank, but aside from one lead for cash he was short on money.

Jim called me and asked if Friends of the Upper Delaware could help. I met Jim and Mayor O'Connor at the site. I was shocked when I first arrived at how severe and close the damage was to the sewage treatment plant. Something had to be done here ASAP. I was able to commit some time and money from FUDR, but not enough to do the entire job. With the clock ticking on our DEC permit, we had to move quickly.

The stone donor fell through, which was really disappointing and created one more hurdle for us to overcome. I had worked with Donny Wheeler of Wheeler Excavating on some personal projects and thought that Donny, being a local Deposit boy and a friend of mine, might help us. Did he ever help. Donny met us at the site and looked over the requirements of the DEC scope of work. We told Donny we had to have this done in three days. He replied, "That's what I love about you Plummer. You always give me plenty of lead time. Yeah, I guess I can get it done. I'll get my machine over here first thing."

Serio and I scrambled looking for more money. Jim scored with a friend Leonard Solomon, owner of Dream Catcher Lodge, on River Road in Deposit. Jim and I both contacted Trout Unlimited. Colin Soule from the Al Hazzard Chapter and Dave Plummer from the Dave Brandt chapter both offered help. We explained the situation and time sensitivity, and Colin came through in a very generous way, with Dave Plummer's group waiting as backup.

This all took a bit more time than we expected, so we had to call on another friend, Assemblymen Cliff Crouch. We needed one more extension to complete the job and asked Cliff to call DEC and see what he could do. Cliff was in California with his daughter, who was having a baby, but he found the time and contacted Dave Lemon at NYDEC. And we got our extension.

Donny did the work required, and then some. He turned the big maples around, chained them together and secured them to the bank. He then backfilled and placed stone to reinforce the bank. Don went above and beyond by bringing in more stone and crusher-run to improve the road down to the access. I thanked him when I saw the final bill. It was much less than anticipated. I asked him if this was right, and he said, "Listen, Dan, I don't fish much, but I do hunt, so I'm glad I could help here."

This project worked because we all joined in and helped. Isn't that the way it should be? Thanks to all the folks who made this possible. Happy Thanksgiving!

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