



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Helps to Kick Off Pocantico River Restoration Project in Sleepy Hollow

PETE HARCKHAM July 27, 2020

| ISSUE: **SLEEPY HOLLOW, ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES, CLEAN WATER**

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Sleepy Hollow, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham helped kick off the long-awaited Pocantico River Restoration Project today at a news conference held at Devries Park in Sleepy Hollow, NY. Along with Sleepy Hollow Mayor Ken Wray, Harckham welcomed award-winning landscape architect Margie Ruddick, who recently moved to the village, as the lead designer of the project.

Last year, Harckham secured a \$250,000 state grant for the restoration project in Devries Park, through which the Pocantico River flows. The project will put the river at the center of a stretch of parkland featuring walking and biking trails, all of which will connect to nearby historic landmarks and other parks and greenways.

“We are celebrating today the rebirth of a natural landscape in one of the nation’s most historic villages,” said Harckham. “This remarkable community-based effort will offer residents and visitors boundless opportunities for recreation and relaxation, habitat restoration amid an abundance of nature and a greater appreciation for Sleepy Hollow’s rich legacy in American life. I am proud to have helped this project along, and I look forward to traversing the new paths along this river after the project is completed.”

Restoring the Pocantico River and rehabilitating Devries Park are key elements of a village-wide effort at creating a “flow” between Sleepy Hollow’s economically diverse neighborhoods and its well-established commercial streets with reimagined public spaces and popular tourist sites, like the Old Dutch Church, Philipsburg Manor, Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. The Devries Park trails will also link to parkland trails that are part of Edge-on-Hudson, a mixed-use, transit-oriented development now being built on the site of the former General Motors assembly plant.

“Senator Harckham understands how vital the Hudson Valley rivertowns are to the New York State economy, and that attention must be paid to our parks and waterways,” said Wray. “These are not mutually exclusive concepts. The Pocantico River, which takes its final run through Devries Park before meeting the Hudson River, is home to numerous aquatic species. We need to restore its vitality. The support from Senator Harckham has allowed us to think systematically and comprehensively about the complexities of this park.”

Ruddick, the winner of the 2013 Copper Hewitt National Design Award in Landscape Architecture, is world-renowned for pioneering designs that fuse nature, art, ecology, culture and infrastructure. She is responsible for the transformative design on New York's Queens Plaza, and one of her current projects is a 44-acre mixed-use development on the Upper Harlem River. Having recently moved to Sleepy Hollow, Ruddick will be unearthing the old Horseman Trail and designing new pathways through Devries Park along the Pocantico River.

"This project is about restoration on many levels: restoration of the mouth of the Pocantico River, which has struggled with water quality and invasive species since it was diverted into a small culvert to create space for the expanded GM plant in the 1920s; restoration of the connection between the surrounding communities and the river; and restoration of native habitat," said Ruddick. "This work will transform what is now largely inaccessible, a kind of backwater, into a refuge for residents of Sleepy Hollow and beyond, as well as for the many varieties of wildlife that will find food, water and shelter there."

Also speaking at today's event were Paul Gallay, president of Riverkeeper, who noted that Sleepy Hollow is at the forefront of land stewardship in the region; and Waddell Stillman, president of Historic Hudson Valley, which is partnering with Sleepy Hollow to remove the invasive weeds in the Pocantico River. "We are all good neighbors and ready to help each other," Stillman said.

A video of the press conference is archived on Senator Harckham's Facebook page.

Last week, the State Legislature passed a landmark bill Harckham sponsored that will protect fragile drinking water supplies and Class C streams like the Pocantico River—state protections made necessary after the Trump administration rolled back federal environmental laws. Harckham's bill aimed at reducing road salt seepage into New York's watersheds was passed as well.