

'LET MY PEOPLE GO'

New tide gates look to solve old problems

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off Washington Avenue, Traycon sits a stone's throw away from the Moonachie Creek, and thus within a volatile range when the rains come. "One day, we looked out the window and rather than seeing our employee cars, we saw geese," said Sandee Goldberg, vice president of administration for Traycon. "We're right there, so we get it."

Some companies, according to the Traycon vice presidents, can't deal with the rising waters. "Would you rent after seeing a place like this?" Cialone asked as he pointed to the broken pavement of his parking lot.

The vacancy signs advertising tens of thousands of available square footage up and down the industrial district seem to prove his point.

When it floods in the Traycon parking lot, trucks that are either coming or going are forced to park on

Barell Avenue. One time, gas canisters that are normally carried in by the loading dock had to be brought in through the front door.

"We were paralyzed," said Goldberg, adding that the mosquitoes and stench from the stagnant water were almost unbearable.

Cialone said the company would soon have to resurface the parking lot; it has already relocated a Dumpster for easier garbage removal.

Almost 90 percent of the Meadowlands sit at just 2 feet above sea level. According to topographical work by the NJMC's Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute, the Carlstadt industrial area is one of the lowest-lying areas in the 14-town district. If waters rise 2 feet above sea level, the banks of the Hackensack River crest, causing incidental flooding along the creeks and wetlands of the district. If the tide gates fail at 2 feet above

sea level, then large sections of the industrial district are under water. Whether it's the area around Commerce Boulevard, Meadow Lane or Jomike Court, the Hackensack River would expand through Bashes and Moonachie creeks to cause rising water in the basements and parking lots of local business owners.

At 4 feet or 8 feet above sea level, almost the entire industrial district, as far west as Route 17, would be submerged. More than 5,000 homes and 2,000 businesses fall within a Federal Emergency Management Agency special flood hazard area.

These new gates look to stanch the flooding as best as possible, but commission workers warn that the floods will never completely stop.

Open Sesame!

The tide gates look like large squares that cover culverts, or tunnels, that

snake their way under the Turnpike. A solitary chain dangles above them to assist staffers if any debris disrupts the flow of waters. Positioned directly above the tide gates, and within view of passing tractor-trailers on the Turnpike, are solar-powered sensors that relay tidal information back to the NJMC headquarters in Lyndhurst. The sensors are part of another fact-finding initiative — spearheaded by Gotham Analytics, a company associated with the commission's business accelerator.

Brian Thumpayil, a commission engineer, played a critical part in drawing up designs of the tide gates and inspecting their construction progress. Creamer Sanzari Joint Venture served as the contractor of the project, which sits just off an access road on property managed by Williams, a company that operates a Transco liquefied natural

gas storage facility on a tract of land in the easternmost portion of Carlstadt.

The Moonachie Creek site has two gates that measure 12-by-20 feet, while the Bashes Creek culvert has one gate that measures 10-by-10 feet.

The new structures follow on the heels of a \$5.5-million project that saw the construction of new tide gates on the Rutherford-East Rutherford border near Route 17. The next phase of the expansive project, according to Lee, is the replacement of the West Riser tide gates in Moonachie, which should help the flooding of Teterboro Airport. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates

the airport, has contributed \$552,000 to that \$1.5 million project.

For now, NJMC staffers are playing Moses and banking on these new makeshift corks to stanch the floods that have plagued Carlstadt business owners.

Cialone, who has been with Traycon since the late 1960s, just wants something to work. "We've been told so many stories," he said. "All I want is a dry parking lot."

The ultimate solution may be found in the coming clouds. "We'll have to wait and see what happens when the next big storm comes," Goldberg concluded.

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TOP PHOTO BY JOHN SOLTES; BOTTOM PHOTO SUPPLIED BY TRAYCON

The new tide gate on Bashes Creek, top, looks to help with the flooding problems in the Carlstadt industrial district. In 2007, Traycon Manufacturing Company experienced an unexpected lake in its parking lot (below).

By John Soltes
EDITOR IN CHIEF

CARLSTADT — In 2007, the employees at Traycon Manufacturing Company in Carlstadt decided to go fishing.

They took a break from their engineering posts and desk jobs and headed onto a small outside platform sporting a simple table and four chairs. They hooked up a pole and cast their line into the body of water before them. The bobbers and bait of that makeshift fishing session resulted in a big catch: an enormous carp that was hooked at just the area where the employees normally parked their cars.

"It was about yay big," said Al Cialone, vice president of operations for Traycon, as he stretched his hands from shoulder to shoulder.

When the rains reign

When it rains in the Meadowlands, it pours at Traycon, a business that makes conveyors for the food service industry. But fishing in the parking lot may be a hobby of the past for this 22-person company.

In an effort to help the flood-prone area of the Carlstadt industrial district, where Traycon is located, the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission recently installed two new tide gates at culverts along Bashes Creek and Moonachie Creek near the Hackensack River. The new tide gates, which cost \$414,000, are



part of a multi-million-dollar investment by the NJMC to address the flooding problems in the local area.

"The tide is the biggest factor when it comes to flooding," said Wai Lee, chief of stormwater management for the NJMC, as he brought *The Leader* on an exclusive tour of the new tide gates. "If you eliminate the tidal flooding, you solve the majority of the problem."

The low-lying area of the Carlstadt industrial district, which is centered on Washington Avenue, is often submerged when high tides couple with nor'easters or heavy downpours. During high tides, when water levels swell some 4 or 5 feet, the new gates should stop water traveling from the

eastern portion of Carlstadt (right near the New Jersey Turnpike's western spur) to the businesses on or near Washington Avenue. The new development should help, but it does not mean flooding will still not occur.

"You only protect from the tidal events," Lee said. "Fluvial flooding, or runoff from the storm itself, will continue."

Traycon is in a precarious position. The company is one of the only businesses to be located almost directly in the middle of the Richard P. Kane Natural Area. Located at 555 Barell Ave., a dead-end street

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PHOTO BY JOHN SOLTES

The new tide gates on the Moonachie Creek in Carlstadt