

Storms Leave Embankment in Critical Condition

A series of severe storms moved across New York State in May and June of 2004, dumping significant rainfall in Schoharie County. Fast rising and rapidly moving stream water left the Bear Gulch Brook embankment, adjacent to the town garage in the town of Richmondville, in need of serious repair. However, before those repairs could be completed, the embankment incurred additional damage when another storm moved through the area in April 2005. Along with heavy snow melt, the storm again created fast rising and rapidly flowing stream water, leaving the embankment in critical condition.



DESCRIPTION

The swollen stream's strong current pushed large boulders and concrete blocks four feet in diameter out from the base of the embankment, which had been in place to prevent such flooding disasters from taking place. Furthermore, the town's sewer line ran adjacent to the stream and had become vulnerable to damage, as the embankment lent it protection before the washout occurred.

ISSUES

The town's initial grant application following the 2004 disaster only reflected the funding allotted by FEMA to repair the embankment prior to the 2005

disaster. A new grant application that encompassed the additional damages sustained during the

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second disaster was needed to safely restore the embankment to acceptable conditions.

In addition, when the town had initially attempted to repair the embankment, they were not given sufficient funding from FEMA to make all the necessary repairs.

The town almost lost equipment and personnel over the steep embankment. Despite this obvious safety hazard, FEMA did not include funding for a crane or the proper heavy equipment required to safely complete the project.

SOLUTIONS APPLIED

Adjusters International persuaded FEMA to approve significantly more funding than what was originally granted. This funding was secured by using a proven method of mitigation that had been successfully implemented on other embankments in the county. This mitigation involved the stacking of concrete slabs, which were recycled from the repair work of a nearby highway and came at no extra cost to the town's recovery efforts. The slabs were then pinned in place to strengthen the embankment, enabling it to withstand future episodes of severe stream swelling. This technique also provided the necessary protection for the town's sewer line.

Also within the new grant application was funding for the proper equipment and safety measures that were vital for the repair project. This included the use of a crane and the construction of an access ramp.

OUTCOME

In the end, Adjusters International's persistence helped the town recover almost seven times the amount of funding FEMA had initially granted them. As a true indication of success, the restored embankment not only met the satisfaction of the applicant, but of FEMA and New York State as well.

