

LANSGING COMMUNITY NEWS

Serving the Town and Village of Lansing, Cayuga Heights, King Ferry & Genoa
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 NOVEMBER 28, 1996 ♦♦♦ Vo. I No. 7



- Michael A. Padula (195-199) Page 2
- Public Hearing On Village Home Occupation Law Page 2
- Brahm's To Boogie-Woogie Page 5

Town Board Examining A Southern Flood Control Strategy

BENDWAY WEIR - A series of small dams (or other obstructions) placed across a bend in a stream to channel the flow of water.

By Matthew Shulman

After hearing Highway Supt. Pete Larson and Tompkins County Agricultural Resources Conservationist Harry Mussell discuss the potential for using the "Bendway Weir" control technology to curtail future flood-related damage along the Salmon Creek waterway, Town Board members expressed interest in evaluating whether this new strategy might be tried in Lansing.

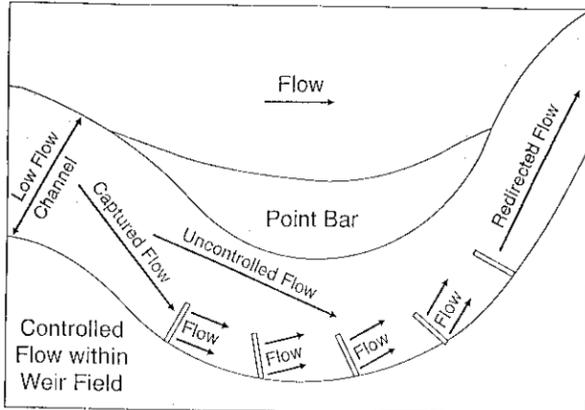
The "Bendway Weir" technology was developed and tested for 10 years at the US Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station (WES) in Vicksburg, Mississippi to minimize flooding along smaller waterways. Because the use of weirs has not yet been tried in New York or any other Northeast state, the Town Board wants to get more data before deciding if this low-cost approach truly offers a permanent solution to the persistent flooding experienced in the Salmon Creek watershed.

The Problem With Salmon Creek

A 25-year history, based on data from the National Weather Service, the US Geological Service's Water Resources Division and the Town of Lansing Highway Department, shows that Salmon Creek has experienced serious flooding eight times in the past twenty-five years with damage exceeding well over \$500,000. Of greatest concern is the fact that three of these incidents have occurred this year.

On January 19, the combination of nearly 2 inches of rainfall plus more than 27 inches of snowmelt within 24 hours created a 50-year flood along Salmon Creek. Less serious, but important, flooding also occurred in May and October.

Because of the topography that drains water to the Salmon Creek from 22,000 acres in Lansing and additional territory in Cayuga County, rising creek waters don't have



BENDWAY WEIR SYSTEMS that have proven successful in controlling streamflow, reducing erosion and improving fish habitat in Mississippi. The Lansing Town Board is reviewing the technology as a possible strategy to protect Lansing's Salmon Creek.

many broad floodplains that would normally reduce the height of a flood crest and reduce the velocity of the water flowing down the creekbed.

The fast-moving high water (and the debris it tosses about) not only create short-term flooding damage, but also do significant erosive damage to the streambanks and adjacent property. As if this weren't bad enough, this process also damages fishery resources and carries large amounts of soil and sediment downstream which eventually load Cayuga Lake.

Any permanent solution will have to address all three problems: flood damage, erosion and soil loss, and sediment loading

A Three-Part Solution

When Tompkins County was declared a federal disaster area last winter, Lansing's Highway Department received approximately \$200,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to repair damage to roads, bridges, ditches and streams caused by the January flooding throughout our town. This work has largely been completed.

Immediately thereafter, the State Emergency Management Organization (SEMO) announced a competitive grant program to finance flood hazard mitigation efforts. Lansing's proposal was one of 350 submitted to SEMO and one of only 45 approved by SEMO this August and sent on to Washington for FEMA review and federal approval.

In layman's terms, this second phase of Lansing's flood control efforts will largely be stream channel maintenance and consist of removing snags and other debris from the creek and adjacent banks.

"Floods don't move streams," said Mussell. "Full stream banks move streams." By removing debris, the water's transit time from the county line to the lake will be speeded up. This will reduce the flow volume that currently backs up to produce the short, but dangerous, "spikes" of flooding that have traditionally plagued Salmon Creek.

Getting the debris out of Salmon Creek will also help stop the stream bed from meandering, or moving around. "If you can slow water on the outside of a bend in the creek, the channel will remain relatively straight," explained Mussell. "The same volume of water will move more quickly with less flooding and there'll be less erosion."

But stream channel maintenance may not, by itself, be enough. "You have to have a total package," said Mussell. Overfilling of the streambed remains a concern along Salmon Creek. "Rip-rap gets undercut and is washed downstream," Mussell described. "You end up with the same problem, or worse, because you've put in larger projectiles that the stream throws around when the water gets high and fast." And this is where the "Bendway Weir" concept comes in.

The "Bendway Weir" Technology

"Conventional bank stabilization methods such as rip-rap are designed to protect streambanks by resisting the force of flowing water," explains an article in the September/October issue of *Erosion Control* magazine. "Bendway weirs, on the other hand, redirect the force of the river or stream away from the outer bank and toward the inner part of the bend." This moves the deepest part of the channel toward the middle of the stream and water velocities are slowed down near the eroding outer bank.

Bendway weirs are constructed of office desk-sized boulders that are placed in the streambeds at specific heights and angles and tied into the streambanks. As you can see in the drawing above, the weirs shift the flow of water to cut away a portion of the point bar on the inside of the bend and cause sediment to build up around the weirs. "The critical part," said Mussell, "lies in designing the placement of weirs in the stream and determining their angles relative to the desired flow of the channel."

Interestingly, the bendway weir system is a self-regulating system. For a certain time the weirs cause the point bar to move back and result in sediment being deposited on the outside bank. Once the sediment has reached a predetermined level around the weirs, they cease to function. The water flows over the weirs and the sediment slowly shifts back to the inside bank. The elegant part of this solution is that though the channel continues to move to a natural rhythm, the range of movement is controlled to minimize the frequency and severity of floods that occur when streambank erosion occurs.

Larson and Mussell have identified six sites (and a

(Continued on page 6)

"Lansing Community Hotline" To Give 24-Hr Touch-Tone Access To Local Info

By Martha Laux

She doesn't just wait quietly by the phone. The computer system in the living room handles that. Resting under an aerial photograph of her French Hill Road home is the control center of *The Lansing Community Hotline*, a part of Tania Johnson's new business, Tele-Comp Services. On November 14, it started taking calls.

When Tania's husband, Ray, retired and bought a computer, he urged her to do something with it since she already had some computer skills. And when her son, Rob, proposed a telephone information business, she thought it sounded like fun.

Tania looked at several telephone information business structures before choosing Computer Business Services, Inc. of Sheridan, Indiana. As she started working her way through a stack of two-inch thick training manuals, Rob helped her deal with several technical problems that came up along the way. Then Tania began the part of the business she enjoys most — talking with community members to arrange for services and sponsors for the hotline.

The hotline is a service that can help keep people informed daily on what's happening around Lansing. Call it 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to check on everything from transportation for senior citizens to school lunch menus. Just dial the central number 533-4214, and make your selections on your touch-tone phone from a menu of services. Best of all, it's free to the caller, unless you're calling long distance to Lansing.

Once you dial the main number, 533-4214, you just have to follow the instructions for using the hotline. The recorded message recites a "menu" of items and provides a two-digit code number for each. By keying in the code number on your touch-tone phone you can get the needed information any time of day or night.

Off to do some shopping on a snowy day? Check on the current road conditions by dialing the central number and choosing extension 12 at the prompt. Want to check your watch and learn how cold it is outside? Try the time

and temperature at extension 10.

Missed last night's game at the high school? Listen to a familiar voice from the athletic department giving you the score by keying in 40 for Lansing School news; selecting 403 for Lansing School sports information; and then selecting the number for your sport.

Currently, you can hear today's specials at several local restaurants by choosing 51. Johnson expects that more restaurants and other businesses will provide information on the hotline as its popularity grows. Businesses and organizations interested in arranging for remote access can do so by calling the central number and then selecting 953. Through remote access, businesses can provide their own messages and update them as desired.

Individuals can also arrange for special services. If you need a wake-up call or a reminder of your anniversary, just ask. Johnson also will provide a latch-key children's program through which parents can arrange to have the system call their home to check on their kids at a designated time. If there is no response, the system will notify the parents.

Johnson's weekly listing in the Lansing Community News will regularly update the services available on the hotline. A brochure will be published in early 1997. As you try the hotline, Johnson wants to hear your wish list. Let her know what information you'd like added by leaving a message at 533-4214, extension 952.

As with any technology, there are bound to be glitches along the way. If you have any trouble using the system, please let Johnson know at extension 952. She expects that she and the community will all be learning together.

One extra incentive for calling the hotline is that you may be the caller of the month. This month's lucky caller, chosen randomly, will receive a gift certificate to The Rink.

"What I'd like to emphasize is that it's fun," says Johnson. "It's fun to call and fun to run. I enjoy making this work for people."

NOTICE

Next week's Lansing Community News will contain coverage of Lansing farmers' participation in last Saturday's Cornell Cooperative Extension/T.C. Ag and Farmland Protection Board workshop "Working Together To Secure A Future for Agriculture in Tompkins County."

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