



Tom Beach and Brian Sidle oversee the placement of a box culvert. *(Photo provided)*

Jackson Creek flood attenuation, fish habitat project had plenty of helpers

Special to The Odessa File

SCHUYLER COUNTY, Feb. 14 -- This past year, New York State Senator Tom O'Mara assisted Schuyler County by providing a direct, line item in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District. The funding was utilized to construct the Jackson Creek flood attenuation and fish habitat project in the Town of Cayuta.

This project removed two vastly undersized culverts under Decker Road in Jackson Creek and replaced them with a large box culvert. The intent of this project was to eliminate a large flooding risk to nearby County Route 13. Along with the flood attenuation aspect, the project also aided fish passage in Jackson Creek, which is a direct tributary of Cayuta Creek. The work, says SWCD spokesmen, would not have been possible without the funding assistance from Senator O'Mara.



This project, SWCD said,, showcased "a true shared service effort." A key component of the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District's methodology is cost-effective project implementation for the region and its taxpayers; such an approach, officials say, was crucial to the success of this project.

A SWCD press release explains: "A great deal of assistance was provided by the Town of Cayuta Highway Department, especially Tom Beach and Brian Sidle, who were instrumental in making this a successful project. Tom coordinated: locations for placement of excavated material; trucking assistance from surrounding towns; and landowner easements. Tom himself hauled material in and out and provided a tremendous amount of labor, wherever it was needed on the project. Brian also hauled material, and his previous experience with Silverline Construction made him a key person to assist in the actual placing of the box culvert itself. Anytime a hand was needed Brian was there to help.

"The Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was also an integral part of the project. The Chemung County SWCD provided an excavator, dozer, and loader for the project. They also provided their equipment operator, Todd Jansen, whose expertise made the job possible. Having just completed a similar box culvert installation in Chemung County, Todd could take a leadership role on the project. He worked jointly with Schuyler County Soil and Water



Conservation District's equipment operator, Jim Barrett, which made for an extremely efficient project. Jim Barrett's dedication and expertise is second to none. Both operators, each having well over 30 years' experience, meant there was little need of communication or direction -- each knew the task at hand.

"The project was also assisted by many other agencies. The Schuyler County Highway Department provided all the signage necessary for closing the road, and provided a truck to haul material for several days. The Towns of Van Etten and Newfield also provided trucks on multiple days for hauling material. The Town of Horseheads helped to move equipment onto and off of the site. The Town of Hector provided an excavator for use on the project. The Town of Montour provided a trash pump that helped keep the site dry by pumping water around it.

"This group effort is organized on nearly every project that is implemented by the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District so that funds go farther and more areas can be addressed by the grant dollars brought into our region. The Schuyler County Soil and Water District thanks all those individuals and departments that made this important project possible, especially Senator Tom O'Mara."

Photos in text:

Top: Jackson Creek under Decker Road after completion of the project.

Bottom: Schuyler County SWCD equipment operator Jim Barrett. (*Photos provided*)