



**US Army Corps
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Little Mill Creek flood reduction project completed in Wilmington

Senator Carper, DNREC Sec. Small, U.S. Army Corps' Lt. Col. Bliss, New Castle County Executive Gordon tour work with local legislators and business owners

WILMINGTON, Del., Sept. 21, 2015 – Today, U.S. Senator Tom Carper, DNREC Secretary David Small, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Philadelphia District Commander Lt. Col. Michael Bliss, and New Castle County Executive Thomas Gordon were joined by state legislators and members of the local business community to celebrate the completion of the Little Mill Creek Flood Risk Management project in Wilmington. The project is the culmination of years of work by federal, state and local officials, business owners and citizens to reduce flooding to the 40 businesses and commercial properties along the creek.

Little Mill Creek, a tributary of the Christina River, has a long history of recurrent flooding. The majority of the flood damage has been attributed to development in the floodplain and numerous bridges and culverts that have obstructed flood flows.

"Flooding has been a serious problem in this community and throughout our state – damaging homes and businesses and affecting the local economy," said Governor Jack Markell. "The infrastructure improvements made along the Little Mill Creek will not only alleviate flooding, but are also important to the economic growth and prosperity of the businesses in the area. I want to extend my thanks to the many project partners and property owners who worked diligently to bring this project to fruition."

"For many years, flooding has caused costly damages to the businesses here, and I'm so glad federal, state and local partners could work together to get the funding to fix this devastating problem," said Sen. Carper. "This project has been years in the making, but at last we are here today at its completion, which will provide relief for business owners and residents who have long dealt with flooding."

"Delaware's small businesses do more than sell us goods and services – they support and strengthen our communities, and when the waters of Little Mill Creek rise, these local businesses are forced to slow or stop operations and reduce service to their customers," said Sen. Chris Coons. "I am delighted that through the partnership and cooperation between federal, state and local officials and citizens the construction has been successfully completed."

"Businesses can't be successful if they're worried about being washed away in a rainstorm or flood. These threats prevent owners from making investments that grow their businesses and create jobs," said U.S. Congressman John Carney. "This project improved the infrastructure and greatly reduced the possibility of flooding for dozens of businesses, making a positive impact on the Little Mill Creek area."

The flooding has resulted in several federal and private watershed studies that led to the flood abatement project. The most recent study, completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, proposed significant channel improvements for two separate portions of Little Mill Creek. The first phase of the project, completed in 2007, was designed to reduce flooding to residential properties along the upper portion of the creek – from the Kirkwood Highway Bridge to the CSX Wilsmere Railroad Yard Bridge.

Today's event and tour highlighted the second phase of the project – channel improvements completed on the lower portion of Little Mill Creek, extending from the Maryland Avenue Bridge (Route 4) downstream to the Amtrak Railroad Bridge in Wilmington. This phase deepened and widened the existing creek channel to increase flow capacity, thus reducing flood damages to more than 40 businesses and commercial properties along Germay, Meco and Brookside Drives.

In his remarks, Sec. Small commended Sen. Carper and Delaware's Congressional Delegation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, state and county leadership and the local business community who helped make the project a reality. "Before improvement to the creek could begin, it took the collaborative efforts of everyone involved to address several challenges and find solutions," said Small. "This project employed innovative technologies that evaluated and then remediated toxic contaminants in the Meco Drive ditch and along Little Mill Creek that were adversely impacting the health of the creek. Investments in water infrastructure, like this one, maximize both the long-term environmental health of our waterways and the economic benefits of our communities."

"I'm proud of our team who worked to bring this project to completion," said USACE Philadelphia District Commander Lt. Col. Michael Bliss. "Through their efforts and collaboration between multiple levels of government, the community, and our contractor, we've built an important project that will mitigate flooding."

County Executive Gordon said the Little Mill Creek project was a fine example of various agencies working together for the common good: "We are implementing a powerful solution for Little Mill Creek flooding not just for the citizens of New Castle County but for the environment as well. We must always be mindful of the ecosystem. We are grateful to Delaware's congressional contingent, the Army Corps, the Governor and the General Assembly for their help."

"This was a massive project that was critically important to do right," said Senate President Pro Tem Patricia Blevins, who represents Elsmere. "Candidly, we all wish this would have been finished sooner, but the cleanup of the soil was obviously a vital final step. I'm grateful to all the agencies involved in this project, but I'm particularly thankful to the local businesses that made some real sacrifices to help get this project over the finish line."

"This project was about giving some peace of mind to the business owners who back up to the Little Mill Creek," said Sen. Robert Marshall, representing Wilmington West. "Running a small business is hard enough without having to worry about Mother Nature flooding you out on a regular basis, and I'm hopeful those days are behind us once and for all."

Rep. Larry Mitchell became involved with this project in 2006 as a newly elected Representative, learning of the impact this project would have on the residential and business community. "With the persistence of all the stakeholders, a very dangerous situation was corrected and to this date we have not experienced the destruction of property or the level of danger our neighbors experienced in the past," said Rep. Mitchell. "We continued work on the lower portion of Little Mill Creek, which impacted multiple businesses that continued to experience flooding, and we have successfully addressed concerns to our business community. I can't thank everyone involved that has improved the quality of life and assisted in protecting our businesses and preserving economic growth."

"We're grateful to have this work done," said Doug Suiter, who has run his business near the creek since 1981. "The property owners in the area look forward to the benefits that this project is going to provide."

Work included widening the right bank of the creek from approximately 381 feet below the Maryland Avenue Bridge (DE State Route 4) for a length of approximately 500 feet. Riprap was placed along the right bank for toe protection. Channel modification then resumed further downstream where the channel was widened to 30 feet and deepened by 3 feet, which included clearing and widening of both channel banks for a length of approximately 1,670 feet (to approximately 100 feet upstream of the Amtrak railroad bridge).

Approximately 30,000 cubic yards of channel bottom and bank materials were excavated from the project area, transported, and disposed of at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington Harbor South Confined Disposal Facility (CDF).

The banks along the creek were stabilized and native trees and shrubs planted to further slow floodwaters and improve the natural ecosystem. The total cost of this phase is \$7.6 million, with 65 percent provided by federal funds and 35 percent from state and county funds.

The project was managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with RC&D, Inc. of Pawtucket, Rhode Island serving as contractor.

Photo Attached: View of the completed Little Mill Creek flood reduction project that reduces flooding to 40 businesses and commercial properties along the creek.