

# Flood project continues despite crossed wires

By JoAnne Castagna

Construction restarted on the \$331 million Green Brook Flood Control Project in New Jersey after a three-month halt due to a controversy between the State of New Jersey and utility companies.

After a decade of relative inactivity, the Green Brook Flood Control Project moved forward last year.

In early 2000 the central New Jersey flood relief project, covering portions of Somerset, Union and

a project, the Corps discovered active utility wires, active sewer lines, and cable lines on or near the existing bridge.

The Corps notified the State of New Jersey that the utilities had to be removed and relocated before the bridge could be demolished. In accordance with the project cooperation agreement between the Corps and the State of New Jersey, the utility relocations on this project are the responsibility of the non-federal sponsor, in this case the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and it is the State's responsibility to pay the utility companies to remove and relocate them.

Federal requirements deem that if the utility companies do not have a compensable interest, basically showing proof that they own the lands where the utility lines are located, then they are not entitled to compensation. In this case, the State statutes apply, which are very ambiguous on this issue.

The State tried to work this out with the utility companies for several months before the Corps issued a stop work in March on the contract with Scarfar Contracting

Inc. Scarfar won the \$4.2 million contract to construct the temporary bridge, which was already completed at the time of the stop work order, and to demolish and construct a new Green Brook Bridge.

## CONSTRUCTION RESUMES

The utility companies agreed to remove the wires, pipes and cables and relocate them to the temporary bridge. In July the stop work order was lifted and the contractor was able to resume work. However, issues for compensation are still being worked out between the State and the utility companies. (continued on next page)



Green Brook Flood Control Project, East Main St. Bridge Demolition, Oct. 17, 2001.

Middlesex counties, received \$1 million from Congress and the first of several contracts to begin the first phase of the project was awarded in 2001.

During the first element of the project, the Green Brook Bridge will be demolished and replaced with a higher bridge, which will ultimately tie into levees to be built in the area along the Green and Vosseller Brooks in the Borough of Bound Brook. As a result of the devastation caused by Tropical Storm Floyd in 1999, there was an outcry from local residents. The state agreed to provide a temporary bridge linking Bound Brook and Middlesex until the permanent bridge is completed.

During the plans and specifications phase of

**Greenbrook (cont'd)**

On Aug. 4, during the anniversary dedication ceremony, which remembers the victims of the 1973 and 1999 floods, the beginning of this long-awaited project was visible. According to Bill Slezak, P.E., Chief of Civil Works, the project is moving forward on schedule despite the issues being worked out between the State and the utility companies.

Yvonne Spraggins, project manager, said a temporary bridge connecting East Main Street in Bound Brook and Lincoln Boulevard in Middlesex has been erected, and nearby sewer work is done. According to Spraggins, workers have started to demolish the existing bridge. A new, higher bridge is scheduled for completion in October 2002. The utilities removed from the Green Brook Bridge and temporarily relocated will be put back on the new bridge.

**COMMUNITY NEEDS**

The public is looking forward to the much-needed flood protection. The Corps, in cooperation with the State and the Green Brook Flood Control Commission is working in collaboration with the community to move the project forward. At the request of residents, the Corps is attempting to buy out homes on Prospect Place in Middlesex Borough. Federal approval is still needed on this matter because these homes originally received funding for flood protection, not to be bought.

The federal government has been very supportive of the project. Mike Ferguson (NJ, 7th District), also has confidence that the Green Brook Flood Control Project will receive an appropriation for 2002.



Photos: Felix Chavere

Demolition continues of East Main Street Bridge, Bound Brook.



Crews pave the temporary bridge approach in Middlesex Borough.

