

### *Congressman Has Received Assurances that Cutter will Remain in Village*

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) has received assurances that the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter WIRE will continue to remain in Saugerties, New York. The flood waters caused by Hurricane Irene deepened the Esopus Creek, allowing for safe passage of the vessel throughout the coming winter months. Nevertheless, Hinchey is now working with the Coast Guard and the Army Corps to develop contingency plans in the event that the creek unexpectedly becomes too shallow at a later date. The congressman is also working to convince the Army Corps to dredge parts of the creek to maintain safe passage of the vessel in future years.

"I've been monitoring this situation very closely and hosted meetings with the Army Corps and Coast Guard in New York and Washington to ensure that the WIRE will remain in the Mid-Hudson Valley," said Hinchey. "Perhaps the only good thing that came of Hurricane Irene is that the Esopus Creek grew about a foot deeper, ensuring that the Coast Guard Cutter can continue to be stationed in Saugerties. I have received assurances from the Army Corps and the Coast Guard that there is no immediate risk of the boat being moved away from Saugerties. I have also worked with the Corps and the Guard to develop contingency plans to ensure that the Cutter will remain in our region, particularly in Saugerties, over the long run."

While Hinchey has been assured that the Esopus can currently accommodate the Cutter, he continues to work with the Coast Guard and Army Corps to identify ways to keep the channel deep enough so that the Cutter can remain in Saugerties for years to come. Dredging would likely be the preferred option to ensure a safe creek depth. At the same time, Hinchey is continuing to establish contingency plans that would temporarily relocate the Cutter elsewhere in the Mid-Hudson Valley should conditions in the creek suddenly shift.

Hinchey and his staff have hosted meetings in Kingston, New York and Washington, D.C. with the Army Corps and the Coast Guard. He also dispatched a key staff member to a high level meeting in Staten Island, New York to discuss the steps being taken to ensure the WIRE remains in the Mid-Hudson Valley. Hinchey initiated the conversations in early August, prior to Hurricane Irene, through a letter to the Army Corps and Coast Guard. The text of that letter follows:

August 4, 2011

Mike Enschede, Chief of Operations  
Jim Walker, Chief of Navigation  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (CECS-C)  
Government Accountability Office Building  
441 G Street, NW, Attn: CECS-C  
Washington, DC 20314

Commander Bion Stewart  
U.S. Coast Guard  
B-320 Rayburn House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chief Enschede, Chief Walker & Commander Stewart:

I am writing to request a brief meeting with both the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard in order to discuss the future of the Cutter WIRE, which is currently stationed in Saugerties, New York. It is my understanding that without mitigation to the existing federal navigation channel in the Esopus Creek, the Cutter WIRE will be forced to find an alternative berth, likely well outside of the Mid-Hudson Region. The relocation of this small, but extremely important Cutter will undoubtedly have negative consequences for the region and I believe that every effort should be undertaken to prevent these detrimental impacts from occurring.

The Esopus Creek federal navigation channel was last dredged in 1988. However, since that time considerable sediment has been accumulating in the channel, reducing the depth and making navigation increasingly difficult. Although the most recent Army Corps of Engineers survey found that high flows this spring may have flushed some of the sediment out, changing the maximum depth from eight feet to eight and half feet, the depth still remains an issue for the Cutter. I have been advised that the Cutter has a seven foot draft but that it does not normally operate in water less than twelve feet, which is its actual navigational draft. While the improvements generated by the high flow rate this spring may have temporarily improved the situation, the long term solution still requires that either the Army Corps dredges the creek or that the WIRE establish an alternative home port.

While I understand that federal budget constraints have reduced the funding available for operation and maintenance of Army Corps civil works projects and made competition for these resources more competitive, I believe it is essential that we work to find a solution that will enable the WIRE to continue its core mission in the Mid-Hudson region. Relocation will delay response times and slow the flow of commerce during inclement weather. It may also result in diminished navigational safety at other times. Its absence will also be felt by the law enforcement community and during the numerous search and rescue missions that occur in the region.

I am hopeful that this joint discussion will enable us to better understand all of the obstacles as well as the potential options that will allow the Cutter WIRE to remain stationed in Saugerties. Please contact my District Representative Lori DuBord who will assist in coordinating this meeting. Ms. DuBord can be reached at (845) 331-4466 or via e-mail at [lori.dubord@mail.house.gov](mailto:lori.dubord@mail.house.gov).

Thank you for your consideration in this regard.

Sincerely,

Maurice D. Hinchey