



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senator Ritchie Urges Action From River Regulators

PATTY RITCHIE May 5, 2011

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Wants Better Notification System When River Nears Flood Stage

State Senator Patty Ritchie is calling on the Hudson River-Black River Regulating District to institute a better notification system for residents and businesses whose homes and businesses are threatened by spring floods along the Black River in Jefferson County.

“The Black River reached its 5th highest crest on record this week,” Senator Ritchie said Wednesday afternoon after visiting Carthage to see first hand how the rising waters have

affected businesses like Gamble Distributors, which was forced to move over a million dollars in inventory to safety. The company's owners estimated the flooding cost the firm \$15,000 and lost business.

"Earlier Wednesday I met in Albany with top officials from the Regulating District to talk about the agency's procedures when the river approaches flood stage," Senator Ritchie said. "I was shocked when they conceded they had not taken any steps to alert businesses, homeowners or local officials about the potential for property damage as the river approached flood stage."

"Despite the record rainfall in recent weeks and the river reaching 50 year levels, they told me they did not consider this out of the ordinary," Senator Ritchie said. "I intend to call a meeting with emergency officials, local officials, officials with the agency and others to talk about developing a notification system so that people who may be affected when the Black River rises can react more quickly, save their property and keep their families safe."

On Saturday, the Black River crested at 12.7 feet at Watertown--its highest level since the 1998 ice storm--and was above flood level on four separate days this week, according to NOAA. Flood level is 10 feet, according to NOAA. With the forecast calling for additional rain, officials are predicting it could reach flood stage again by Friday.

"We owe it to businesses and property owners to be proactive when the Black River is rising so they can make plans," Senator Ritchie said. "We have the technology already in place to provide the kind of early notification people need," including email, text, broadcast TV, radio, automated phone dialing and Internet news sites that are viewed by thousands.

"We are all accustomed to announcements concerning school closings, cancellations and other emergencies. We should have the ability to provide notifications concerning

potentially property damaging floods to homeowners and businesses," Senator Ritchie said.

Senator Ritchie directed her staff to stay in contact with officials in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties to monitor the affects of the record rainfall on area communities, and offer assistance if emergency officials need the state's help.