

Culvert collapse chokes access in South Salem



The culvert under Oscaleta Road after debris was cleared and a channel carved. THANE GRAUEL PHOTO

By JEFF MORRIS AND THANE GRAUEL

A culvert under Oscaleta Road in South Salem collapsed Sunday morning, limiting access to several neighborhoods.

The road already was reduced to one lane after one side showed significant deterioration. That lane had been blocked off with orange barricades and traffic controlled with stop signs; one of the barricades wound up at the bottom of the collapse.

Oscaleta Road is now closed to all vehicular and pedestrian traffic between Twin Lakes Road to the north and South Shore Drive to the south.

The span had allowed water to flow between Lake Waccabuc and Lake Oscaleta under the road. There were concerns about the flow of water being interrupted after the collapse, particularly with heavy rains forecast.

By Tuesday, the Lewisboro Highway Department had removed the collapsed debris where the culvert had been, including broken chunks of asphalt, and carved a gravel-lined channel through the bottom. Water was passing through the channel Wednesday afternoon.

Chain-link fencing had been installed around the channel, apparently to keep people from trying to cross on foot.

With Oscaleta Road completely closed, Hawley Road through North Salem is the only access to the neighborhoods that include Twin Lakes Road, North Lake Circle, Orchard Drive, Cove Road, Lakeview Road, Old Pond Road, Shady Glen Court, Waterview Court and Stuart Lake Road.

“This morning I received a call from both our Highway Superintendent and LPD Sergeant about the collapse of the Oscaleta Road Culvert,” Town Supervisor Tony Gonçalves said Sunday on Facebook. “I met them both on-site together with folks from SSFD. Highway Department closed the road and secured the area around the collapse.”



Oscleta Road after the culvert collapse on Sunday. TOWN OF LEWISBORO PHOTO

“For your safety, please do not climb into or attempt to cross the collapsed area,” Gonçalves said.

He noted that the crossing already was in the process of being replaced, in the preliminary design phase, with a \$1.4 million state grant in hand and a design firm, Tectonic, under contract.

“They are the ones spearheading all the associated work that is required per DOT, there has been environmental studies, geotechnical and survey work,” Gonçalves said.

He said a community information session was already set for Thursday, March 26, at 7 p.m., at the Lewisboro Court in the former Lewisboro Elementary School.

Temporary fix?

“We will look to see if we can expedite the above schedule and for that we will have to discuss with DOT and Tectonic to see what is possible under the guidelines of the grant,” Gonçalves said. “Both have already been advised of the collapse.”

“In parallel,” Gonçalves said, “we are working with our county and state partners to see what other options may be available to us for any potential assistance for a temporary/emergency repair. For example can we bring in a temporary structure which will span the width of the culvert and be safe enough for one lane of travel, etc. This will be in coordination with our highway superintendent. We will keep you updated as much as possible.”