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**DEC Announces Signing of Jamaica Bay Water Quality Agreements****New York City to Improve Treatment Systems and Invest in Restoration Projects**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced the signing of two parallel agreements to significantly improve water quality and habitat in Jamaica Bay. The agreements continue several years of joint efforts to clean up the bay by DEP and DEC, with the active participation of a civic and environmental coalition, including the Natural Resources Defense Council and Jamaica Bay Eco-Watchers, which were named in one of the legal settlements announced today.

The agreements require DEP to invest in heightened nitrogen treatment systems at four New York City wastewater treatment plants that discharge into the Bay, at an estimated cost of \$100 million. DEP will also dedicate \$13 million in Environmental Benefit Projects (EBPs) and \$2 million to restore marsh island habitat in this nationally prominent ecosystem.

The agreements also require New York City to adhere to a schedule for plant treatment upgrades and provide for the civic and environmental coalition's continued involvement in the cleanup. The agreement between DEC and DEP also will keep on track the multi-year program to improve water quality in Long Island Sound through nitrogen treatment upgrades.

"Jamaica Bay and Long Island Sound are national treasures that have been harmed by nitrogen discharges that cause algae blooms, low dissolved oxygen levels and impaired water quality," said DEC Commissioner Joe Martens. "This agreement will be the turning point where the Bay is placed squarely on the path to recovery. Thanks to our strong

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partnership with Commissioner Holloway and the DEP team and the support of Attorney General Schniederman, we're able to give the citizens of New York the water quality and the water environment they deserve."

"Jamaica Bay is unparalleled as an environmental, recreational and economic resource for New Yorkers," said Attorney General Schniederman. "The commitment that the City of New York is making to the future of the Bay by cutting nitrogen inputs and restoring critical marshland is substantial. Today's agreement is truly a landmark in efforts to protect and restore the health of this crown jewel of New York City's natural resources."

"The signing of this historic agreement will benefit generations of New Yorkers and millions of tourists who want to enjoy one of New York City's hidden gems," said New York City Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway. "And we have not waited for the drafting to be complete to get to work. We are already removing roughly 8,000 pounds more of nitrogen per day than would be the case without this agreement; when it is fully implemented, we will have cut nitrogen discharges from our treatment plants by at least 50%. Mayor Bloomberg has made the restoration of Jamaica Bay a top priority, and this agreement shows that we can make it happen much faster when we work together. I want to thank DEC Commissioner Martens and his team, and all of the environmental stakeholders for coming to the table to develop this extraordinary plan."

This agreement continues several years of joint efforts by DEP and DEC with the support of the Office of the Attorney General and active participation of numerous civic and environmental coalition including the Natural Resources Defense Council, NY/NJ Baykeeper, American Littoral Society and Jamaica Bay Eco-Watchers, to improve water quality.

"After decades of degradation, New York City's crown jewel of green spaces is getting a real chance to bounce back," said Peter Lehner, Executive Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "We're finally providing Jamaica Bay with an opportunity to do what nature does best: heal itself. The agreements will help the Bay reverse its legacy of disappearing marshlands and polluted water, once again restoring it to glory for the wide array of wildlife and New Yorkers alike who take refuge here every day. The dedicated staff at DEC and DEP, who worked collaboratively with NRDC and others, deserve much credit for giving the Bay this second chance it so richly deserves."

Dan Mundy, Sr., of the Jamaica Bay Ecowatchers said. "This historic agreement is a model for showcasing how all stakeholders can come together to achieve the common goal of saving this unique estuary," "We commend Commissioner Holloway and the NYC DEP for investing the necessary funding to ensure the future of this city's largest open space and most important natural resource for future generations and applaud DEC and our partners' efforts to bring these negotiations to a successful conclusion.

Chris Len, NY/NJ Baykeeper Staff Attorney, said, "Baykeeper celebrates today's agreement, which culminates years of work with the New York City DEP and the New York State DEC. We foresee large strides over the coming years for Jamaica Bay's water quality and habitat. This shows what can happen when regulators work with the non-profit sector to solve apparently intractable problems. Other states should look at what we've done here today and use it

as a model for environmental cooperation and achievement."

Don Riepe, Jamaica Bay Guardian, American Littoral Society, said, "Jamaica Bay has been designated as Critical Fish & Wildlife Habitat by NYSDEC and an Important Bird Area by National Audubon. This agreement will greatly improve water quality and enhance habitat by reducing the amount of nitrogen coming into the bay which, we believe, is a probable major source of marsh dieback."

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, a component of the Gateway National Recreation Area managed by the National Park Service, is a 31-square-mile water body which includes portions of Brooklyn, Queens and Nassau County. Popular for fishing and bird-watching, Jamaica Bay is one of the focus areas of the America's Great Outdoors program, the Obama Administration's initiative to develop a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda.

The Bay is a diverse ecological treasure that supports multiple habitats, including open water, salt marshes, grasslands, coastal woodlands, maritime shrub lands, and brackish and freshwater wetlands. These habitats support nearly 100 fish species, 325 species of birds and many reptile, amphibian and mammal species. Over the past several decades, Jamaica Bay's marsh island habitats have been disintegrating at an accelerated rate.

Excess nutrient nitrogen in salt water systems is a major cause of algae growth and associated low oxygen conditions that can cause fish kills, wetland habitat decay, odors and bio-slimes – sometimes referred to as a nitrogen "dead zone." These conditions often impact both Jamaica Bay and Long Island Sound during warmer weather. Ninety percent of the nitrogen going into the Bay comes from municipal sewage treatment plants.

Highlights of the modified Nitrogen Judgment include:

- ▶ By 2020, New York City will have completed upgrades to its four wastewater treatment facilities that discharge to Jamaica Bay. The agreement contains both a schedule of major milestones and limits that the treatment plants will meet. The upgrades will reduce the amount of nitrogen discharged to the Bay daily by approximately 20,000 pounds, which equals approximately 50 percent of the nitrogen entering the Bay.
- ▶ New York City will establish a \$13 million environmental benefit fund to support planned and future U.S. Army Corp of Engineers salt marsh wetland restoration projects. In addition, \$2 million will be paid to DEC's Marine Resources Account.
- ▶ In anticipation of the agreement DEP has already prepared and submitted, in conjunction with DEC, a request that EPA designate Jamaica Bay as a marine "No Discharge Zone." If approved by EPA, boat operators would be prohibited from dumping the contents of their sewage holding tanks into the Bay.

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