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DEP Announces Two Month Shutdown of Shandaken Tunnel for Preliminary Work on Intake Chamber

Planned work at Schoharie Reservoir is part of \$47 million rehabilitation of intake

Work includes a system to draw water from multiple depths within Schoharie Reservoir

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced an eight-week shutdown of the tunnel that carries water from Schoharie Reservoir to the Esopus Creek and Ashokan Reservoir. The shutdown, which is scheduled to last from March 1 - April 30, will allow divers to safely enter the intake chamber at Schoharie Reservoir and take detailed measurements to support a \$47 million upgrade of its waterworks.

The timing and duration of the shutdown was planned in close coordination with experts from the state Department of Environmental Conservation. Because the tunnel contributes additional water to the Esopus Creek, the shutdown was planned to coincide with the period of spring rains and melting snow that have historically provided the greatest quantity of natural flow within the creek. The temperature of water in the creek will also not be a concern during early spring.

The work this spring will support design and construction for the full-scale rehabilitation of the Shandaken Tunnel Intake Chamber. That facility controls the flow of drinking water from Schoharie Reservoir into the Shandaken Tunnel, which travels 18 miles through the Catskill Mountains. That tunnel discharges into the Esopus Creek to help refill Ashokan Reservoir throughout the year.

The rehabilitation project includes replacing eight sluice gates that control the flow of water into the tunnel by opening and closing large waterways. The gates within the intake structure were installed during the 1920s when Schoharie Reservoir was built. Three of the gates are currently stuck because they broke off their lifting mechanisms and became wedged in place. Before the gates can be removed and replaced, skilled divers must descend about 130 feet into the chamber's shaft, using sonar equipment to take precise measurements of the gates and the grooves that guide them. These measurements will be used to fabricate new gates, lifting mechanisms and other infrastructure to restore the full function of the intake chamber.

Construction of the project will require future shutdowns and safety precautions. The tunnel will be shut down for two months in 2019 while workers install a plug and bypass system within the intake structure. The plug will block the flow of water into the Shandaken Tunnel and prevent divers from being pulled into the tunnel while they remove and replace the old gates. The bypass system will allow DEP to safely move up to 100 million gallons of water each day through the plug without harming the divers or their work.

DEP will replace the sluice gates once the plug is installed. That work will take approximately two years, from 2019 to 2021. DEP's ability to move water from

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Schoharie Reservoir into the Esopus Creek will be limited during that time. While the gravity-fed bypass pipe can convey up to 100 million gallons of water each day, its capacity at any given time will depend upon reservoir elevation.

A portion of the limited-capacity bypass system will be left in place and modified after the rehabilitation of the Shandaken Tunnel Intake Chamber is finished. The pipe will be connected to an articulating arm, which can pivot up and down, giving DEP the ability to draw water from multiple depths within Schoharie Reservoir for the first time. The current intake structure only draws water from the bottom of the reservoir. In the future, this intake will help DEP convey higher quality water from Schoharie Reservoir and extend the life of its cold-water bank that supports the trout fishery on the Esopus Creek. Workers plan to partially core a 5-foot-diameter cylinder through the outer wall of the intake chamber this spring in preparation for the bypass pipe.

The rehabilitation project also includes upgrades to the interior and exterior of the Shandaken Tunnel Intake Chamber. These include new energy-efficient windows, additional insulation, and the removal of lead paint from inside the chamber. The inside of the building will be refurbished to include offices for approximately 12 DEP employees at Schoharie Reservoir.

The rehabilitation project is expected to finish by the end of 2021. The shutdowns planned by DEP could be modified in the case of extreme weather or other unforeseen circumstances. DEP will consult with state regulators as each shutdown period approaches, and it will keep local residents and elected officials informed of the project as its plans proceed.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of high-quality water each day to more than 9.5 million New Yorkers. This includes more than 70 upstate communities and institutions in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties who consume an average of 110 million total gallons of drinking water daily from New York City's water supply system. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and other professionals in the watershed. In addition to its \$70 million payroll and \$166 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.7 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program with \$18.9 billion in investments planned over the next decade that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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