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## Statement from Commissioner Vincent Sapienza on the Operations Support Tool Study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine

The following is a statement from New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Vincent Sapienza on the independent review of the Operations Support Tool (OST), which was released today by The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

“DEP is proud that a panel of experts from across the country strongly endorsed the Operations Support Tool for guiding the operation of New York City’s drinking water supply, managing risks such as droughts and turbidity events, and planning for the future effects of climate change. We are especially grateful that the National Academies found OST to be ‘one of the most advanced and complex support tools for water supply operations of its kind in the world.’

“The City also appreciates the many good recommendations that experts provided to improve and maintain OST in the years ahead. We understand that working with the National Weather Service to improve forecasting will be key to the success of OST, and keeping the model updated with our most recent data will maximize its accuracy. These and other recommendations in the report underscored that DEP’s investment in our digital infrastructure is crucial to the well-informed operation of our water supply now and in the future.

“The expert review also highlighted the need for investment in our workforce, specifically to pass down decades of knowledge and expertise to the next generation of DEP employees. OST is a model that compiles the vast scientific information needed for decisions we make every day, but those decisions are ultimately made by people. DEP is fortunate to have some of the best engineers, scientists and planners of any water utility in the world. The report correctly notes that their institutional knowledge must be captured to train future employees who will manage OST and the nearly 300 facilities that comprise New York City’s water supply.

“I want to thank the National Academies and its expert panel for their thorough and honest review of OST.”

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of high-quality water each day to more than 9.6 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

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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 \$19.1 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](http://nyc.gov/dep), like us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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