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MAYOR BLOOMBERG, STATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION COMMISSIONER GRANNIS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY AND PRESERVE MARSHLANDS IN JAMAICA BAY

Upgrades Will Help Cut Nitrogen Discharges Nearly in Half

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis, Deputy Mayor for Operations Edward Skyler, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway and Natural Resources Defense Council Executive Director Peter Lehner today announced an agreement to improve the overall water quality and mitigate marshland loss in Jamaica Bay through a total of \$115 million in new investments. The City will dedicate \$100 million to installing new nitrogen control technologies at wastewater treatment plants located on Jamaica Bay. These investments, made in concert with \$95 million the City already has committed for nitrogen control upgrades, will reduce the nitrogen loads discharged into Jamaica Bay by nearly 50 percent over the next ten years. The City also will invest \$15 million for marshland restoration projects around the bay. As part of the agreement, the State Department of Environmental Conservation will exempt the City from \$45 million in potential penalties for construction delays in nitrogen upgrades at other wastewater treatment plants and those dollars will be invested in future clean water projects. Jamaica Bay Eco-Watchers President Dan Mundy; American Littoral Society Northeast Chapter Director Don Riepe; and NY/NJ Baykeepers Executive Director Debbie Mans joined the Mayor at the announcement - the three organizations played a central role in forging the agreement announced today. The Mayor also was joined at the announcement by City Council Environmental Protection Chair James F. Gennaro and Major Mike Clancy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"Jamaica Bay is without question one of the most bountiful wildlife habitats in the entire Northeast," said Mayor Bloomberg. "It is important to the people who live in the area for its rich biodiversity, the recreation it offers, and the protection the marshlands provide from flooding. This agreement is an outstanding example of government and citizens' groups working together to meet a major goal of our sweeping PlaNYC agenda: improving the quality of waterways around the city."

"Jamaica Bay is a national treasure that has been degraded and put

at risk because of excessive pollutants harming its delicate tidal ecosystem," said New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Grannis. "This agreement puts in place a critical and comprehensive program to bring back the bay - improving water quality, restoring it as a premier wildlife refuge, and continuing to provide generations of New Yorkers with a refuge of their own."

"This agreement demonstrates that we ultimately get better outcomes when the City, State and environmental stakeholders work together as partners to solve complex problems," said Deputy Mayor Skyler. "Rather than collecting documents and writing motions for a judge in a legal fight that could have lasted years, we spent the last few months at the table with NRDC and its clients and we were able to develop a mutually agreeable plan for improving water quality in Jamaica Bay for future generations to enjoy."

"This groundbreaking agreement demonstrates our long-term commitment to improving water quality by investing in cutting-edge technology and ecological restoration of New York City's natural habitats," said Environmental Protection Commissioner Holloway.

"This effort will drastically reduce the nitrogen discharges that are a natural by-product of the 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater that New Yorkers produce every day. And that means more dissolved oxygen that fish and other aquatic life need to flourish. This agreement is a model of what we can achieve when the City, State, NRDC and other environmental stakeholders work together to tackle complex problems."

"Today, New York government and environmentalists have shown we can work together effectively to clean up Jamaica Bay, the crown jewel of the city's natural resources," said Executive Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council Peter Lehner. "This preliminary agreement represents a true green solution. And it packs a one-two punch, not only working to revive a struggling ecosystem, but also restoring an invaluable green space for New Yorkers in our own backyards."

"EPA applauds the state and city for reaching an agreement will dramatically improve water quality in Jamaica Bay - a true wonder right in the city's own backyard," said U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 2 Administrator Judith Enck. "The terms of this settlement will reduce the amount of nitrogen going into the bay and restore some of its cleansing marshes. It will greatly improve water quality in this wildlife refuge, which is home to an amazing array of wildlife, from endangered sea turtles to almost 20 percent of the North American bird species that either migrate through or reside in Jamaica Bay. EPA particularly commends the commitment to restore wetlands on the bay."

Nitrogen is a naturally-occurring component of all wastewater. Although it is not a pathogen and poses no risk to human beings, high levels of nitrogen can degrade the overall ecology of a waterway. High levels of nitrogen can lead to reduced levels of dissolved oxygen in waterways and excessive algae growth, especially in warm weather months. Currently, the 240 million gallons of wastewater handled each day by the four wastewater treatment plants on Jamaica Bay result in the discharge of approximately 40,000 pounds of nitrogen each day. The Rockaway Peninsula closes-off Jamaica Bay and prevents the circulation of oxygenated water, which exacerbates nitrogen impacts in the bay, as compared to surrounding waterways.

The Department of Environmental Protection's wastewater treatment plants were not originally designed to remove nitrogen. Upgrades that will address this issue include retrofitting existing equipment,

introducing new nitrogen-reducing chemicals to the treatment process, and adding additional aeration tanks. The wastewater treatment plants that will be upgraded are: the 26th Ward and Coney Island Wastewater Treatment Plants in Brooklyn and the Rockaway plant in Queens. The first upgrade will be operational in 2015, and all improvements will be completed by 2020. The agreement also provides for interim nitrogen reduction measures that will improve water quality beginning this spring.

Jamaica Bay has experienced marshland loss due to many factors, including sea level rise, a loss of sediment and fresh water flows and reduced tidal activity from the extension of the Rockaway peninsula. The City's \$15 million investment will be spent on saltwater marsh restoration projects in the interior of Jamaica Bay. Since 2002, the City has invested \$37.4 million to reclaim more than 440 acres of environmentally sensitive land adjoining Jamaica Bay and plans to remediate nearly 100 additional acres. The City will leverage its new \$15 million investment in the bay's marshlands by applying for Federal matching funds, which could net an additional \$30 million in funding for Jamaica Bay marshland preservation projects.

As a part of the agreement announced today, the City and State worked together to eliminate \$45 million in potential penalties in connection with nitrogen upgrades at the City's Upper East River and 26th Ward plants. The Department of Environmental Protection is now on track to complete all upgrades by 2017.

The City and State have also agreed to additional water quality improvements by pursuing the proposal of Jamaica Bay for designation as a "No Discharge Zone." Such a designation would provide significant protection for the bay from the release of sewage from boat toilets and holding tanks. This would further reduce the amount of nitrogen and other pollution that negatively impacts the area's wetland habitat.

Jamaica Bay is a 31-square-mile water body with a broader watershed of approximately 142 square miles, which includes portions of Brooklyn, Queens, and Nassau County. The bay is a diverse ecological resource that supports multiple habitats, including open water, salt marshes, grasslands, coastal woodlands, maritime shrublands, and brackish and freshwater wetlands. These habitats support 91 fish species, 325 species of birds, and many reptile, amphibian, and small mammal species.

In addition to the efforts announced as part of today's agreement, New York State has been working closely with city, state and federal officials on several initiatives to help restore Jamaica Bay, including the re-establishment of approximately 70 acres of wetland habitat at Elders Point. The Elders West project underway now will deposit 237,000 cubic yards of clean sand to create 40-45 acres of marshland habitat, and will complement the successful Elders East project completed in 2007 which restored approximately 30 acres.

The Department of Environmental Protection manages the City's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents. New York City's water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the City. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,400 miles of sewer lines take wastewater to 14 in-City treatment plants. The Department of Environmental Protection also manages storm water throughout the City, and ensures City's facilities comply with the Clean Water Act.

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