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**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OPENS CATSKILL
LANDS AND RESERVOIRS FOR CERTIFIED GUIDED TOURS**

Certified Guides Provide Hunting, Fishing, and Hiking Expertise and will Help Boost Local Economies

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced a new program that will allow New York state-certified outdoor guides to utilize City-owned land and reservoirs in the Catskills for the first time. The program for certified guides underscores DEP's ongoing effort to encourage low-impact recreation on City-owned property in the watersheds that will support the tourism economy in the Catskills. Outdoor guides, long a staple of the Catskills, offer services for hire that include instructing or aiding visitors in fishing, hunting, or hiking.

“Professional guides offer a valuable service for those who are seeking outdoor recreational opportunities in the Catskills,” Commissioner Strickland said. “By opening City-owned properties to these outdoor experts, DEP hopes visitors, including New York City residents, will find new places to enjoy the excellent fishing, hunting, and hiking in the scenic watershed.”

Outdoor guides that want to offer services on City-owned properties must be certified to do so by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Among other requirements, the state program requires all guides to be certified in first aid, CPR, and water safety. Guides also must pass a state exam. Guides who are interested in utilizing City-owned land can call DEP at (800) 575-LAND. Visitors interested in choosing a guide may also call that number to ensure a guide is certified to offer tours on City-owned properties. DEP will not charge a fee, but guides will be required to complete an application and provide a copy of their state certification. Seasons for guide services will coincide with state hunting and fishing regulations, and the City's recreational rules.

DEP established the program for guides after consulting with tourism agencies and other partners across the Catskill and Delaware Watersheds. In recent years, the City has sought to boost tourism in the Catskills by establishing a recreational boating program at four of its reservoirs, starting a pilot program to use electric trolling motors for fishing on Cannonsville Reservoir, and opening more than 52,000 acres of land that can be used without a permit for hunting, hiking, and other low impact outdoor activities. Opening those properties for outdoor recreation was among 100 initiatives outlined in *Strategy 2011-2014*, a comprehensive strategic plan to help ensure DEP is the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. At the same time, DEP has continued a rigorous program of water quality

monitoring to ensure that recreation activities do not affect the high quality of the City’s drinking water.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8.3 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam, and Westchester counties. 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 employs nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$68 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.5 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 over \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

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