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Department of Environmental Protection to Begin Site Work for Rondout-West Branch Bypass Tunnel

Work Will Begin this Month in Newburgh and Wappinger, Creating about 160 Local Jobs

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced that site preparation work will begin this month for the Rondout-West Branch Bypass Tunnel, a roughly \$1 billion project that will repair leaks in the Delaware Aqueduct. DEP contractors will begin working at sites in Newburgh and Wappinger, where two new shafts will be built to allow for the construction of the 2.5-mile bypass tunnel.

“Repairing the leaks in the Rondout-West Branch Tunnel remains DEP’s top priority for construction in our water supply system,” Strickland said. “This project will create good construction jobs for residents of the Hudson Valley, and it will ensure that New York City continues to have a safe and reliable water supply system for decades to come.”

In 2012, DEP purchased several properties located off Route 9W in the Town of Newburgh, just north of Pine Road, where it will build one of the shafts. Site preparation work there will consist of tree removal, grading, stormwater protection measures, and the extension of utilities to the worksite. City contractors will also make road improvements, such as installing turning lanes and a new traffic signal near the site entrance, to help vehicles enter and exit the work site more safely.

The shaft construction site in the Town of Wappinger, off River Road North, will be built on property already owned by DEP. Preparation work there will consist of grading, stormwater protection and the extension of utilities to the work site. Preparation work at both sites is expected to continue through 2014, when construction of the shafts will begin. The shafts in Newburgh and Wappinger will be 900 and 700 feet deep respectively, and they will be more than 30 feet in diameter.

DEP has been in regular contact with local government officials to update them on the project’s timeline, and has committed to continue that open communication through the entire life of the project.

The site work and bypass construction will be done through a project labor agreement that was negotiated with the Hudson Valley Building and Construction Trades Council. The agreement is expected to create roughly 160 jobs for local tradesmen and women while saving the City between \$16 million to \$23 million over the duration of the project. The savings come from reducing labor costs for shift work, standardizing holidays across all participating trades, and implementing a Worker’s Compensation Alternative Dispute Resolution Program.

Additionally, the agreement protects against delays or disruptions that could potentially arise from labor disputes.

The Rondout-West Branch Tunnel – a section of the Delaware Aqueduct that runs from Rondout Reservoir to West Branch Reservoir – is a critical component of the New York City water supply system. The 85-mile Delaware Aqueduct conveys more than 500 million gallons of water per day from Cannonsville, Pepacton, Neversink and Rondout Reservoirs – approximately half the city’s drinking water – and it serves about one million residents of Orange, Putnam, Ulster and Westchester Counties. Residents of the towns of Newburgh and Marlborough are supplied directly by the Rondout-West Branch Tunnel. Construction of the water bypass will allow for repair of the Delaware Aqueduct, where leaks result in the loss of up to 35 million gallons of water per day.

The Rondout-West Branch Tunnel repair is central to the City’s “Water for the Future” program, a \$2.1 billion initiative to both repair the Delaware Aqueduct and upgrade other parts of the City’s water supply system. It is also part of *Strategy 2011-2014*, the far-reaching strategic plan that outlines 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. The plan is available on DEP’s website at www.nyc.gov/dep.

DEP manages the city’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight 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 approximately 750 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and other professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$68 million payroll and \$153 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 a planned \$13.2 billion in investments over the next 10 years that creates up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/nycwater.

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