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DEP Awards \$2.6 Million for Green Infrastructure Projects

Five Awardees Selected for their Innovative Methods to Manage Stormwater Runoff

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today announced the winners of the Flushing and Gowanus Green Infrastructure Grant Initiative. The five winning applicants were awarded a total of \$2.6 million to implement innovative green infrastructure projects to manage and capture stormwater runoff during wet weather in order improve harbor water quality. The grant program – announced in December 2009 – selected the applications most likely to succeed and be replicated on a large scale as the City develops its plan to reduce combined sewer overflows, which occur when combined stormwater and wastewater is diverted into New York City's surrounding waterways during heavy storms.

"Mayor Bloomberg is making unprecedented investments to reduce combined sewer overflows and improve our harbor water quality, now at its best in 100 years," said Commissioner Holloway. "Traditional grey infrastructure investments like holding tanks have gotten us far, but a successful strategy must include green infrastructure projects that capture stormwater at the source, and at the same time beautify our communities and improve New Yorkers' daily quality of life. The projects we are funding with these grants will test promising techniques to capture stormwater and green the Cityscape, and we hope to use them as models throughout the five boroughs. Congratulations to all of the grant winners for making great proposals, and working with us to build a more sustainable city."

The five awardees are as follows:

- ▶ **Manhattan College:** \$660,440 for the installation of a modular green roof project on New York Hospital. It will be designed to control runoff from a 1 to 1.5-inch rainfall on a half acre roof.
- ▶ **Columbia University:** \$389,187 for a Greenstreets stormwater capture system in Rego Park that will remove

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nearly 2,500 square feet of impervious surface and replace it with permeable pavement and vegetation to capture runoff from a three acre-watershed.

- ▶ **Regional Plan Association:** \$600,000 for Sponge Park™ bioretention basins under the Long Island Expressway near the Van Wyck Expressway. One is 1,963 square feet and has the capacity to store approximately 34,000 gallons from a 2 inch rainstorm, and the second is approximately 9,900 square feet and has the capacity to store approximately 170,000 gallons.
- ▶ **Gowanus Canal Conservancy:** \$583,470 for the 6th Street Green Corridor Project that will build seven curbside swales ranging from 400 square feet to 1,200 square feet along 6th Street and 2nd Avenue in Brooklyn. The project will capture approximately 40% of the runoff generated within the seven-swale area, which is over 45,000 square feet of street and sidewalk surfaces.
- ▶ **Unisphere, Inc.:** \$386,551 for treatment wetlands and rain gardens for treating stormwater entering Meadow Lake. This project will construct two 5,000-square-foot treatment wetlands that will receive runoff from two one-acre portions of a parking area at the southwestern edge of Meadow Lake in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Each treatment system is designed to capture over 36,000 gallons for each 1 to 1.5-inch rainstorm or a total of over 72,000 gallons for each storm.

"We're excited about conducting this study on a green roof at New York Hospital, which is within the Flushing Bay watershed. The benefits of green roofs in controlling and treating stormwater will be assessed through the planned monitoring, thereby providing data for planning and designing other installations in the city. In addition, Manhattan College environmental engineering students will get hands-on experience working closely with the subcontracting consulting firm, HDR," said Guy Apicella, HDR Water Resources Modeling Section Leader.

"I am so pleased to be able participate in the transformation of New York City's infrastructure from gray to green and to remake this small piece of the City into a model stormwater capture park that meets the needs of its community and our shared environment. Our site sits in a dense residential area and will be seen and appreciated by thousands of people. I hope that it provides an opportunity for both local residents – and for the design and engineering students working with me on the project – to 'kick the tires' on a signature green infrastructure project and to see up close sustainable design practices at work," said Kate Orff from Columbia University's Landscape Lab.

"New York City DEP is becoming a leader in addressing difficult water quality issues through innovative planning and technology," said Robert Pirani, Vice President for Environmental Programs at Regional Plan Association. "RPA and our partners at dlandstudio are proud to be partnering with the City in cleaning stormwater and heavy metals flowing from the Long Island Expressway to Flushing Bay. This pilot application of Sponge Park™ Street Swale Infrastructure could be a model for managing stormwater along other highway infrastructure throughout the City and metropolitan area."

"In 2009 the conservancy conducted the Gowanus Basin Environmental Priority Summit. Based on a survey of 300 property owners, we learned that more than 70% of local stakeholders want to see the Gowanus watershed restored to create new open space and waterfront access opportunities, and of course, a cleaner canal. That knowledge has led straight to the 6th Street Green Corridor project, which reduces the amount of rainwater that gets into the sewer system and represents the most environmentally sustainable solution to Gowanus Canal CSOs. We welcome the challenge," said Gowanus Canal Conservancy Vice Chairman John C. Muir.

"Unisphere Inc. is grateful for receiving this wonderful grant from DEP. The funding will be used for sorely needed stormwater treatment, which will help alleviate the flooding problem in the lake area and will help us continue the effort of greening Meadow Lake – making it more environmentally friendly for people who use the park," said Unisphere, Inc. Executive Director Estelle Cooper.

The Flushing and Gowanus Green Infrastructure Grant Initiative was undertaken in connection with the settlement of an enforcement action taken by New York State and the Department of Environmental Conservation for violations of New York State law and regulations. Under an Environmental Benefits Project Plan approved by DEC, DEP and the State Department of Environmental Conservation have worked together to foster participation by local environmental groups in the design and implementation of cutting-edge green infrastructure technologies. To advertise the program, DEP requested grant proposals from environmental organizations and academic institutions for innovative and replicable green infrastructure stormwater capture systems. Eight grant applications were submitted by the March 3, 2010 deadline and five were ultimately selected.

Each awardee will have one year to fully build the project and will then be required to monitor the project for three years and track relevant data in order to evaluate its success. The projects selected will ultimately provide critical information on whether green infrastructure projects are an effective tool to help reduce combined sewer overflows and improve New York City's harbor water quality.

Green infrastructure uses vegetation, soils, and other structural elements to absorb and evaporate water and to mimic natural areas and hydrologic cycles. These types of projects are a key component of PlaNYC's sustainability effort because they also shade and cool the city, improve air quality, and increase property values. These characteristics, the minimal energy and manpower required for operation, and the relatively quick installation mean that green infrastructure can be cost-effective and provide immediate benefits.

The City has 30 demonstration projects to test the performance and costs of green infrastructure over time and to determine how to best encourage their widespread adoption. The demonstration projects underway or planned by DEP and its partners include swales and tree pits, which allow water to pool in underground holding areas until it can dissipate; blue roofs, which slow roof water from draining too quickly and overwhelming storm sewers; and permeable pavement, which allows water to seep through it and be absorbed into the ground rather than becoming runoff.

DEP manages the City's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8 million in New York City. New York City's water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the City, and comprises 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. 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.

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