



**Fall Foliage**

Ashokan Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DEP Issues 30-day Service Termination Notifications**

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today issued 30-day service termination notifications to 11 residential water and sewer customers who have defaulted on payment agreements. This is part of a pilot program designed to increase collection rates on water bills. Currently, the City is owed \$589 million on overdue water bills.

Water service for these customers will be terminated beginning September 4th, unless they settle their amount due in full. Customers who enter into payment agreements must certify the accuracy of their billing history and agree to keep current with all scheduled payments.

DEP has not routinely performed shut-offs in the past, except in cases where leaking pipes threatened surrounding infrastructure. These first 11 accounts are part of a pilot program designed to refine collections procedures for overdue accounts.

Service termination is a key component of DEP's ongoing transformation of its Bureau of Customer Service (BCS), the bureau responsible for metering water, issuing bills, and collecting revenue. The transformation, which began last summer, has two main parts: expanded customer assistance and a stronger set of enforcement tools and revenue collection strategies, such as service shut-offs and stand-alone lien sales for customers who do not pay.

Already, customer access has improved. DEP has expanded call center hours to be more convenient for customers, dramatically reduced customer call wait time, reduced the response time for written customer inquiries, added online bill payment to DEP's web site, and begun notifying customers of unusual increases in water consumption.

DEP is also piloting two automated meter reading technologies, and will begin city-wide installation in the spring of 2008. Automated meter reading is used throughout the country and will provide DEP and its customers with more comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate account information.

Additionally, DEP will soon receive customer service

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improvement recommendations from Booz Allen Hamilton, a nationally recognized consulting firm engaged to analyze and review all aspects of BCS operations, procedures and policies. These recommendations will serve as a foundation for future BCS organization and build upon the ongoing success of DEP's existing customer service initiatives.