

A Celebration of Water Resources



Last Thursday, DEP hosted an awards ceremony for participants in the 28th Annual *Water Resources Art and Poetry Contest*. 675 students (grades 2-12) from New York City and Watershed communities were honored for creating more than 580 original pieces of artwork and poetry that reflect an appreciation for New York's water resources. The

students' artwork was displayed at the ceremony, which also included performances and poetry readings. To see additional photos from the ceremony, [click here](#). You can also view the complete list of the 39 winning submissions [here](#). Finally, the original works of art the students' poems can be viewed by visiting DEP's [Flickr](#) page.

Spotlight on Safety

Good Housekeeping

Did you know that an effective housekeeping program can help to prevent accidents, fires, and occupational diseases? Therefore, it is essential that all DEP employees keep a clean and sanitary work space, and it is the supervisor's task to ensure that these responsibilities are complied with.

Good housekeeping provides benefits such as:

- Helping to control property damage
- Minimizing unnecessary janitorial work
- Making working conditions more pleasant

Furthermore, proper housekeeping impresses visitors and reflects a well-run organization. For more information, please read the Facilities Management and Construction's memo on [Keeping Work Spaces Clean and Safe](#).

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EHS liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city. CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH PIPELINE. HELP IS ON THE WAY. 🙌

Commissioner's Corner

James Roberts, DEP's Deputy Commissioner of BWSO, is a guest commentator this week.

DEP invests billions of dollars to construct and maintain the City's drainage systems. However, as our climate changes, New Yorkers have experienced an increase in the frequency and intensity of storm activity and there are steps homeowners can take to protect their properties from flooding.

Last week, we released a new guide to help homeowners protect their properties and valuables against flooding from heavy rainfall and sewer backups. DEP's *Homeowner's Guide to Flood Preparedness* provides information about some of the common causes of flooding and tips about flooding solutions that range from installing check valves that prevent water from backing up through connections to the local sewer system and installing barriers to block water from flowing into low lying driveways. It also includes simpler fixes, such as reducing the amount of paved area on a property, clearing catch basins ahead of storms, regularly maintaining sewer connections, and installing proper roof drainage and downspouts.

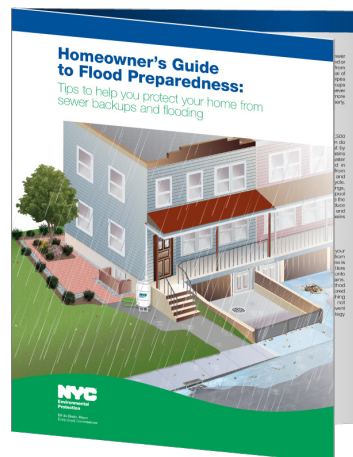


up of congregations located in South East Queens, Sunnyside and Woodside.

The *Homeowner's Guide to Flood Preparedness* builds upon an extensive public outreach campaign to inform New Yorkers about one of the leading causes of sewer backups—the improper disposal of grease from cooking oil. Over the past year, grease buildup accounted for more than 60 percent of confirmed sewer backups. The outreach campaign began last year and included the development of a public service announcement video, door-to-door canvassing in neighborhoods with recurring grease buildup in the sewers, and a year-long collaboration with the New York City Housing Authority to provide intensive educational outreach about the proper disposal of used cooking oil.

As part of that pilot program, residents of one building in a Manhattan housing complex served as a control group and received DEP's standard educational materials, while residents of another building in the development participated in additional meetings, workshops, and events focused on grease. The sewer service lines from both buildings were inspected and cleaned prior to the program, and crews will re-inspect the lines at the pilot's conclusion to measure the relative improvement as a result of the intensive curriculum.

For additional information about protecting your property from flooding and to view the new guide or to download a copy, [click here](#).



The new flood preparedness guide was rolled out at a meeting of nearly 300 members of the Empowered Queens United in Action and Leadership (EQUAL) organization at St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Saint Albans. EQUAL is made

Focus on the Field



Over the last 30 years, the Bureau of Customer Services' (BCS) **Steven Wallace** has witnessed the evolution of how DEP measures water use and bills its' customers, from flat rate billing to universal metering and—most recently—to Automated Meter Reading (AMR) devices. This sea change has helped to promote water conservation and enhance DEP's relationship with its customers, but when a device is not working properly Wallace is usually the person tasked with finding the solution.

Wallace was born and raised in the Bronx where he attended Herbert H. Lehman High School. He studied at Queens College while working for a general contractor in the evenings and joined DEP in 1984 as an inspector. At that point in time, only large buildings throughout the city had meters to accurately measure their water use. The following year, DEP began the initiative to make water metering universal throughout the five boroughs.

Over the next decade, DEP installed hundreds of thousands of meters, which kept Wallace and his colleagues busy. As an inspector in the Bronx he would follow contractors to each property to ensure that the meters were installed properly and reading the water consumption accurately. In 1989 Wallace became a supervisor and in 2005 he became the deputy chief in Manhattan. In 2007 he was promoted to his current title, Chief Inspector for the Technical Services Unit, where he has 26 inspectors under his charge.

Each day they fan out across the city to help ensure that DEP is getting an accurate water use measurement from every property.

In 2009, DEP began installing AMR devices that allowed for the remote monitoring of water consumption. This has helped to reduce the number of estimated bills by 79 percent and the number of billing disputes by 49 percent. Most recently, Wallace has been helping to oversee the program which is installing new water meters at large properties throughout the city. As meters age their accuracy diminishes, and DEP is currently upgrading the meters at up to 200 buildings every week.

"Empowering customers with the information they need to understand their water consumption and how they are being billed is the most effective customer service initiative we have," said Wallace. "The nature of my work is that I'm usually addressing an issue that's not easily corrected, but when we get an AMR up and working and relieve the resident's uncertainty, they are always grateful, and that makes the work very satisfying."

"From troubleshooting a technical problem on an account to approving a contractor's installation for payment, Steven's experience and knowledge make him an invaluable asset," said Director of the Technical Services AMR Unit **Michael Roach**. "He also has a good rapport with his colleagues and is heavily involved in training the new inspectors who have recently arrived."

Wallace still lives in the Bronx, now in the Throgs Neck area. He has been married to his wife **Yvonne** for 27 years and they have two sons. His eldest is a public school teacher in the Bronx and his younger son is a sophomore at Cornell University. In his spare time Wallace enjoys jogging with the family dog Sammy at Orchard Beach and, this being a Tuesday, it's date night at the movies for the Wallaces.

A Room With a View



Last week the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation banded two newly hatched bald eaglets at the Gilboa Dam. The two eaglets hatched last month inside the nest, located only a few hundred feet from the dam's west support wall. Bald eagles built the nest alongside Gilboa Dam in 2011. Careful monitoring and limitations on construction activity near the nest during the eagles' breeding season helped two eaglets hatch from the same nest and successfully fledge in 2013. Those eagles, now a year old, have recently been seen fishing nearby in Schoharie Creek.

Boating Season Begins in Catskills



This Friday, DEP will kick off the 2014 recreational boating season on four city reservoirs in the Catskills. The popular outdoor program, now in its third full year, has attracted thousands of boaters to paddle or sail on the Cannonsville, Pepacton, Neversink and Schoharie reservoirs. 2014 will also mark the second year of the boat rental program, administered by the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC), which allows local businesses to store and rent recreational boats alongside the

reservoirs. The convenience of rental boats attracted more than 300 boaters last year, supported local businesses with thousands of dollars in new revenue, and significantly improved access for visitors to the Catskills. Boaters this year will also have the opportunity to earn a Catskill Reservoir Paddler patch from CWC to commemorate their visit to the reservoirs.

New Storm Sewers for Far Rockaway



Yesterday, DEP announced that a \$22.5 million upgrade to the sewer and water delivery systems in Far Rockaway will begin this summer. Few streets in the project area are equipped with catch basins or storm sewers and those that do exist cannot adequately drain precipitation from the roadways, which can result in flooding during heavy rain storms. The upgrade will add nearly a mile of storm sewers, install 79 catch basins, and replace more than a mile of existing sanitary sewers. While the

roadway is opened to upgrade the sewer systems, the City will also replace more than a mile of distribution water mains. To read more about the project [click here](#).

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov