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DEP Offers Free Rain Barrels to New Yorkers

Program Helps Reduce Pressure on City's Sewer System by Collecting Rain Water and Helps Homeowners Reduce Water Use

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today launched the Rain Barrel Giveaway Program, an initiative to help alleviate pressure on the city's sewer system during storms by helping New Yorkers to capture and reuse rainwater. Rain barrels can individually capture thousands of gallons of water each year to be used by homeowners for irrigation and gardening purposes, rather than letting it run into catch basins where it can contribute to a combined sewer overflow. During heavy storms, the sewer system often reaches capacity and must discharge a mix of stormwater and wastewater — called a combined sewer overflow, or CSO — into New York Harbor. DEP will distribute a total of 1,000 free rain barrels in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island to single- and two-family homeowners. Each rain barrel has the capacity to collect up to 55 gallons, assisting single- and two-family homeowners who, on average, devote up to 40% of their total water usage to watering gardens and lawns during the summer. Rain barrels can also help reduce localized street flooding and the demand on the city's drinking water system during drought conditions.

"Distributing free rain barrels is a great way to help protect our harbor waters, and help homeowners prevent potential flooding and save money," said Commissioner Holloway. "These rain barrels will capture thousands of gallons of water that would have otherwise flowed into the streets, leading to flooding and increasing the likelihood and intensity of combined sewer overflows. This is exactly the kind of smart, local investment envisioned in the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan that Mayor Bloomberg launched last September. By investing in green alternatives to capture stormwater, we can reduce the city's long-term sewer management costs by \$2.4 billion over the next 20 years, helping to dramatically improve water quality, and hold down future water bills."

The rain barrel program saves customers money for watering lawns and gardens that would otherwise come

MORE INFORMATION

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Construction, Demolition & Abatement

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from their taps. The installation of rain barrels requires minimum work and little maintenance. Rain barrels connect directly to the existing downspout to collect water for irrigation needs; homeowners then connect a hose in the spigot of the rain barrel for irrigation purposes such as watering lawns and gardens. DEP will provide residents with an easy-to-use installation kit. The rain barrels need to be disconnected from the downspout to avoid freezing during the winter. The Rain Barrel Giveaway Program initially began as a pilot program in 2008 with 250 rain barrels given to Queens homeowners and was expanded because of the public's overwhelmingly positive response. In 2009, the program offered 750 barrels to homeowners who applied for it.

barrels will be given away on a first-come, first-served basis, one per household. Eligible residents must live in a single-family or attached two-family home to be eligible for this program. Interested homeowners can call 311 for more information, or they can visit DEP's website at www.nyc.gov/dep. The Rain Barrel Giveaway Program will distribute barrels at the following times and locations:

Brooklyn: Saturday, April 16; 9:00 am – 2:00 pm at Marine Park Parking Lot, Avenue U.

Queens: Saturday, April 30; 9:00 am – 2:00 pm at Cunningham Park, 196th Place and Union Turnpike.

The Bronx: Saturday, May 7; 9:00 am – 2:00 pm at Pelham Bay Park, Middletown Road Parking Lot on Stadium Avenue.

Staten Island: Saturday, May 7; 9:00 am – 2:00 pm at College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Boulevard.

The Rain Barrel Giveaway Program is part of the *NYC Green Infrastructure Plan*, launched by Mayor Bloomberg in September 2010 that will improve harbor water quality by capturing and retaining stormwater runoff before it enters the sewer system. The plan, which includes \$2.4 billion in green infrastructure, will reduce sewer overflows by 40% by 2030. This approach will also save \$2.4 billion over the next 20 years because it will reduce more costly investments in traditional sewage retention projects, like tanks and tunnels.

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.

Reducing stormwater runoff from new and existing development is part of *Strategy 2011-2014*, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. The new plan, the product of nearly one year of analysis and outreach, builds on *PlaNYC*, Mayor Bloomberg's sustainability blueprint for New York City. 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. 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. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater.

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