



Home

Customer Services

- › [Pay Online](#)
- › [Ways to Pay Your Bill](#)
- › [eBilling](#)
- › [Account Information](#)
- › [Customer Assistance](#)
- › [Service Line Protection Program](#)
- › [Water Rates](#)
- › [Property Managers & Trade Professionals](#)

Water Utilities

- › [Drinking Water](#)
- › [Wastewater](#)
- › [Stormwater](#)
- › [Harbor Water](#)
- › [Long Term Control Plan](#)

The Watershed

- › [Watershed Protection](#)
- › [Watershed Recreation](#)

Citywide Initiatives

- › [Regulatory Reform](#)
- › [Environmental Education](#)
- › [Conservation Programs](#)
- › [Air Pollution Control](#)
- › [Noise Codes & Complaints](#)

Business and Professionals

- › [Forms & Permits](#)
- › [Support for Businesses](#)
- › [Doing Business with DEP](#)
- › [Asbestos Abatement](#)
- › [Construction, Demolition & Abatement](#)

About DEP

- › [Inside DEP](#)
- › [News](#)
- › [DEP Featured In...](#)
- › [Stories from DEP](#)
- › [Press Releases](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 16-80  
August 3, 2016

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# NYS DEC and NYC DEP Announce Order on Consent to Upgrade Wastewater Treatment Facilities and Improve Air Quality

## City to Invest Approximately \$360 Million to Build New, Cleaner Burning Engines at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant as well as Upgrades to Bowery Bay Facility and Citywide Pump Stations

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced a final Order on Consent regarding upgrades to wastewater treatment facilities and the 2011 fire at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP).

Work to be accomplished under the Order will improve performance and reliability at both the North River and Bowery Bay WWTPs, as well as numerous pumping stations. The innovative technology being installed at North River and Bowery Bay will ensure that the Plants are consistently capable of capturing and treating twice their design capacity during rain events to reduce the amount of sewer overflows into receiving waters. DEP will also annually submit to DEC its Citywide and comprehensive wastewater “asset management” program, which helps to anticipate needed repairs, treatment upgrades, and maintenance to reduce the potential for breakdowns, and resulting pollution events in the future.

“This Consent Order resolves numerous issues, including the massive 2011 North River wastewater treatment plant fire and associated sewage spill into the Hudson River,” said **DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos**. “I am pleased with the City’s agreement to share their system-wide program to better assess sewage treatment infrastructure to eliminate pollution risks before a breakdown—fostering on-going compliance. The end result will be the cleaner water and air we all desire. Additionally, New York City will fund a new community greenhouse and educational garden in Riverbank State Park to benefit the community adjacent to the North River plant.”

“Testing shows that New York Harbor is cleaner today than it has been in more than a century, and we look forward to investing an additional \$360 million to continue this important progress,” said **DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. “The work will include the installation of new, cleaner burning cogeneration engines at the North River facility as well as upgrades to wastewater infrastructure across the city that is critical to protecting public health and the environment.”

The Consent Order requires the City to spend an estimated \$360 million to improve various wastewater treatment systems. This work will include electrification of pumps and the ongoing design and installation of cleaner cogeneration engines that can run on utility gas or anaerobic digester gas at the

### More Information

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Public Notices

Testimony & Public Comments

› [Capital Projects](#)

› [Careers at DEP](#)

› [Environmental Reviews](#)

› [Interagency MOUs](#)

› [A to Z Index](#)

› [Contact Us](#)

North River WWTP, which will improve reliability and reduce any formaldehyde emissions in the vicinity of Riverbank State Park. At Bowery Bay, the plant influent pump station will be completely upgraded. All work is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

In addition, DEP will share with DEC its existing Asset Management Plan for all of the WWTPs and its largest combined sewer overflow retention facilities. Asset management plans help municipalities properly inventory, assess and operate their wastewater treatment plants and provide for improved financial planning for these facilities to avoid future permit violations. Properly functioning systems protect public health, save money, and ensure clean water, air and economic competitiveness.

Under the Order, DEP will also fund an \$800,000 Environmental Benefit Project that will see the construction of a greenhouse and educational garden in Riverbank State Park. The project will be implemented according to a Cooperative Agreement with the Horticultural Society of New York.

On July 20, 2011 the North River WWTP was taken offline following a four-alarm fire in the main sewage pump engine room. The use of fuel oil for the main sewage pump engines and blowers at the plants contributed to the intensity, duration and extensive damage caused by the fire. New York City worked quickly to make the necessary repairs and the Plant was brought back online and initially began treating wastewater on July 22. However, the raw or partially treated sewage discharges during this time period led to the closure of several beaches. With the installation of modern cogeneration equipment and electrification of the main sewage pumps, the use of fuel oil to run engines at the plant will be discontinued.

In addition to the environmental benefit project, the Order requires the City to pay a \$150,000 penalty to settle past alleged offenses which resulted from equipment being taken out of service for maintenance at several plants. It is anticipated that submitting the City’s asset management plan to DEC will help to improve operation and maintenance protocols, and thereby help to protect the health of local waterways.

All Press Releases

1

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