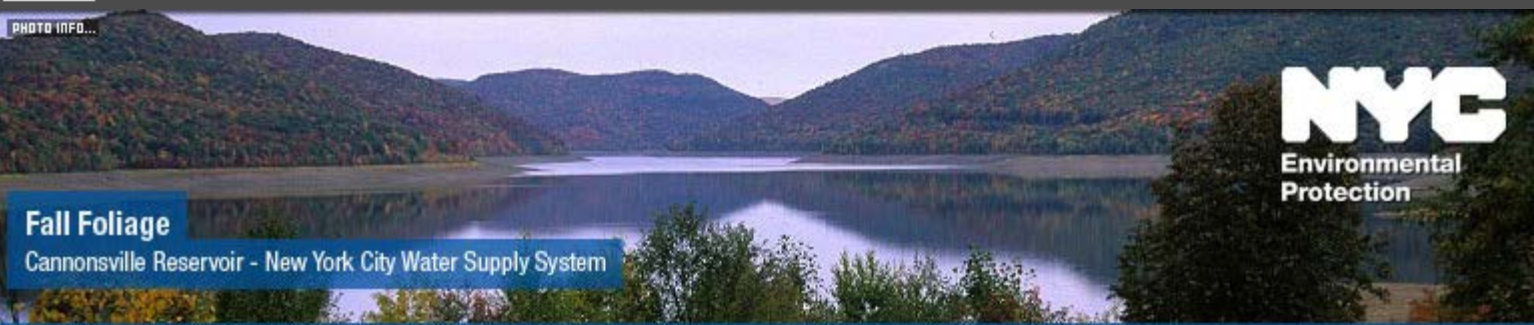




PHOTO INFO...



## Fall Foliage

Cannonsville Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System

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09-07

July 10, 2009

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## DEP Kicks Off Summer Fire Hydrant Abuse Prevention Program

### HEAT Education Outreach Informs Communities About Illegal and Appropriate Fire Hydrant Use

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Acting Commissioner Steven W. Lawitts announced today the return of an innovative fire hydrant abuse prevention program called HEAT (Hydrant Education Action Team). For the third year in a row, DEP is partnering with Alianza Dominicana, the well-known Washington Heights community organization, to offer the HEAT program.

This summer there are five HEAT street teams of peer-led young people who serve as explainers of the dire effects of hydrant abuse and how New Yorkers can safely and appropriately use hydrants during summer months. The teams cover Inwood and Washington Heights in Manhattan; Highbridge, Concourse, Kingsbridge Heights, and University Heights in the Bronx; and Bushwick in Brooklyn. The purpose of HEAT is to educate community residents about the problems surrounding the illegal use of fire hydrants. Hydrants can be opened legally if equipped with a City-approved spray cap. Spray caps can be obtained by an adult 18 or over, free of charge, at local firehouses, after filling out a form. The targeted neighborhoods have a history of high numbers of complaints of illegally opened

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hydrants, which lower water pressure needed for firefighting and household use.

"I am pleased to build upon last year's successful HEAT program, which saw a significant decrease in hydrant complaints," said Acting Commissioner Lawitts. "Street outreach by youth educators is an effective way to reach our neighborhoods with the critical message that illegal open hydrants can have dire consequences."

The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) is collaborating with DEP. "Firefighters need adequate water pressure to put out fires. Opening a hydrant illegally lowers water pressure and puts lives at risk if there is a fire," Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta said. "All you have to do to use a hydrant properly and safely if you want to cool off is visit your local firehouse and ask for a spray cap."

HEAT has been successful in reducing hydrant complaints. For instance, in 2008, Manhattan Community Board 12 (Inwood and Washington Heights) saw a 34 percent reduction in the number of complaints from 2007.

Sixty-six youth educators hit the streets this week for the first time to distribute information outside subway stations and parks, at neighborhood events, and on local streets where residents open fire hydrants on hot days, often without realizing the possible dangerous consequences. HEAT participants wear red t-shirts and most are bilingual in Spanish and English. In addition to talking with the community about hydrant abuse, team members provide information about obtaining spray caps for the supervised, appropriate use of City fire hydrants, and about other ways people can cool off on hot days, including at Parks pools and sprinklers.

In addition to DEP's support of the program and its partnership with the Fire Department, the young people who participate in HEAT are funded as summer youth workers through the Department of Youth and Community Development. The students, who are between the ages of 14 and 21, work in teams, each with a supervisor who will plan the group's activities based on weather, scheduled events in each community and patterns observed in the course of the outreach work. In the days before they begin their outreach, the teams go through training and take a tour of the watershed, over 100 miles away, to learn about the water system so as to have a more direct knowledge of how hydrant abuse not only wastes a precious resource but also how it affects the water pressure of a building.

In Brooklyn, DEP is partnering with the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council. The Ridgewood Bushwick team will be targeting Bushwick in Brooklyn's Community Board 4.

The unauthorized opening of New York City fire hydrants is illegal, and often spikes during heat waves. Open hydrants lower water pressure, and can cause problems at hospitals and medical facilities and reduce the flow of water needed to fight fires. Opening a hydrant without a spray cap can result in fines of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 30 days, or both. New Yorkers should call 311 to report open fire hydrants.

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection manages the City's water supply, providing more than 1.1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents throughout New York State through a complex network of nineteen reservoirs, three controlled lakes and

6,200 miles of water pipes, tunnels and aqueducts. DEP is also responsible for managing storm water throughout the City and treating wastewater at 14 in-City wastewater treatment plants. DEP carries out federal Clean Water Act rules and regulations, handles hazardous materials emergencies and toxic site remediation, oversees asbestos monitoring and removal, enforces the City's air and noise codes, bills and collects on City water and sewer accounts, and manages city-wide water conservation programs.