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DEP Kicks Off Boating Season at Neversink, Pepacton, Schoharie and Cannonsville Reservoirs

Ceremonies mark the addition of more than of 12,500 acres of recreational boating space in reservoirs this season

Out of 108,000 watershed acres open for recreation, 33,000 are on water

Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced the kick-off of the recreational boating season at the Neversink, Pepacton, Schoharie, and Cannonsville reservoirs. On Thursday and Friday, DEP officials will participate in ceremonies at the Neversink, Pepacton and Schoharie reservoirs to mark the addition this summer of more than 12,500 acres of recreational boating space in those reservoirs. In February, DEP, with support from the Catskill Watershed Corporation, announced the expansion of recreational boating opportunities after a successful three year pilot program at the Cannonsville Reservoir. In addition, DEP announced the opening of the new Devasego Park today in Prattsville at a ceremony along the banks of Schoharie Creek. The new park will expand recreational use of City-owned land parcels in the Town of Prattsville, which is part of an ongoing planning and recovery strategy to transform an area damaged by Hurricane Irene.

“In addition to the more than 12,500 acres of recreational boating space we are introducing this summer, DEP will also open more than 7,500 additional acres of watershed land for recreational use, bringing the total area available for recreational use to 108,000 acres of land and 33,000 acres of water for boating or fishing, as appropriate.” said Commissioner Strickland. “Providing more access to some of New York’s most scenic land and waterways will boost tourism and economic activity in our watershed. Our pilot program at Cannonsville demonstrated that with the right safety measures in place, we can enjoy recreational opportunities at our reservoirs and protect our water supply that nearly nine million New Yorkers rely on. We will continue to help Prattsville rebuild for a more resilient and vibrant future and hope that this new park and the recent flood study we conducted help achieve that goal. ”

“After a three year pilot program at Cannonsville reservoir the committee along with DEP could not find any water quality issues, and, true to their word, DEP moved the program to Pepacton reservoir the crown jewel in the city’s water supply system,” said Delaware County Chairman James Eisel. “I know expanding this boating program will give a great opportunity to all the residents in our county.”

“This is a great day for Town of Neversink residents and all welcomed visitors to enjoy, in my opinion, the most picturesque body of water in Sullivan County,” said Neversink Supervisor Mark McCarthy. “A really big thank you to the City of New York and the Catskill

Watershed Corporation working together to make recreational boating on the Neversink Reservoir become a reality. This is a win-win for everyone and I am looking forward to seeing people enjoy one of the prettiest places on earth. Let's go boating!"

"Expanding the Recreational Boating Program into the Schoharie Reservoir will provide an avenue for economic development in the surrounding communities, specifically the Town of Prattsville," said Chairman of the Greene County Legislature Wayne Speenburgh. "The Program also provides visitors to the area the opportunity to experience our beautiful landscape from the water of the Schoharie Reservoir."

"The opening of the reservoirs has generated a lot of excitement among boaters and also from businesses," remarked Alan Rosa, Executive Director of the Catskill Watershed Corporation. "We expect this will boost traffic in our communities and introduce a lot of people to the many recreational opportunities in the Catskills."

Throughout the recreational boating season, rowboats, canoes, kayaks, sculls, and small sailboats with removable center boards will be allowed to access the four reservoirs provided they have a valid DEP access permit (available free of charge at DEP's website) and certification that the boat has been steam cleaned by a DEP-certified vendor. Several certified vendors in the vicinity of the reservoirs are participating in the program. In addition, boaters must have a wearable personal flotation device for each person on the boat. Children under the age of 12 must wear such devices at all times. Boaters can obtain a free DEP access permit online at www.nyc.gov/dep A list of certified vendors is located online at http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/recreation/cannonsville_boating_program.shtml

The new boating program was introduced after a three-year pilot program started in 2008 to expand recreational boating opportunities at the Cannonsville Reservoir in the Delaware County towns of Deposit, Tompkins and Walton. The purpose of the Cannonsville Reservoir Recreational Boating Pilot Program was to expand recreational opportunities at the reservoir for watershed residents, tourists, and visitors – while protecting water quality and natural resources and encouraging environmentally sound economic development. Prior to the pilot program only metal rowboats with boat tags issued by DEP were allowed on the reservoir and only for the purpose of fishing. Since the pilot program began, 871 boat tags have been issued, of which 93% were for kayaks and canoes. Monitoring reports during the study period revealed no negative impacts to water quality and no indication of invasive species — the objectives of the pilot, and an important consideration in making the program permanent and expanding it to other reservoirs.

In 2012, DEP also expects to open an additional 7,500 acres of watershed land for recreational use, including areas in Schoharie, Sullivan, Ulster, Greene and Delaware counties. A 448-acre parcel of land in Greene County will be opened to the public and be made available for lease to local farmers for agricultural projects. In Ulster County, a 459-acre parcel will be added to the Ticetonyk Mountain recreation unit, creating over 899 acres publicly accessible within a mile of the Ashokan Reservoir. In Delaware County, an 820-acre acquisition project will be opened to the public and will add to the existing Pink Street public access area, creating 1,130 acres of recreation land comprising woods and fields.

In Schoharie, following Hurricane Irene, DEP completed an extensive cleanup of the land that later became the Devasego Park. This location has two land parcels that were previously

designated to be "Fishing by Permit" areas, not available for other recreational uses. The property on the east bank of Schoharie Creek can be accessed from County Route 7, while the parcel on the west bank of the creek is accessible from Route 23. The parcel will soon be available for walking, hiking, picnicking, dog walking, fishing, and other recreational activities. The western parcel will also include a public access area which will not require access permits and will allow for hunting, hiking, trapping, and fishing. DEP worked closely with the community in the recovery process and as a result developed plans to enhance recreational facilities in the town. The community also named the land Devasego Park to commemorate the unique waterfall and historic inn that stood nearby before construction of the Schoharie Reservoir.

Since 2003, DEP has significantly expanded the amount of City-owned water supply lands open for recreation to 108,000 acres — more than double the amount available in 2003. Of the 108,000 total acres open to recreation, 75,000 are land areas and 33,000 are on water. Last year, DEP opened approximately 6,600 more acres in the watershed to recreation. In 2010, DEP opened 9,895 acres. Most of the properties acquired by the City will be opened for public access, including hunting, hiking and fishing, as well as economic activities like hay cropping that help local community businesses.

Expanding recreational opportunities in the watershed is one of the goals outlined in *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 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, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP employs nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$49 million payroll and \$132 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.5 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program with a planned \$13.2 billion in investments over the next 10 years that creates up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/nycwater.

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