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## Department of Environmental Protection Begins Pilot Program to Use Grazing Sheep for Grass Maintenance



**Program has begun in a field downstream of Neversink Dam in Sullivan County**

**Rotational grazing is consistent with City goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**

**Photos of the sheep grazing at Neversink can be found on [DEP's Flickr page](#)**

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today deployed 14 sheep to a grassy field downstream of Neversink Dam as part of a pilot program to maintain the 50-acre field by rotational grazing instead of mechanical mowing. The pilot—which is consistent with the City's goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and cut its use of fossil fuels—will continue for the next year, and it could be expanded to maintain other water supply properties if the trial is successful.

"Instead of looking toward modern technology to meet all our demands for water supply maintenance, the best solutions sometimes require us to take a new look at centuries-old practices," **DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza** said. "Public agencies and nonprofits throughout the country have found that rotational grazing is a low-cost, environmentally sound method of managing large swaths of land. Here in New York we have seen many government agencies use goats or sheep to successfully manage their properties, and we hope this pilot program yields the same good results."

**More Information**

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The Icelandic sheep arrived this week at the field downstream of Neversink Dam in Sullivan County. They are owned by Travis O'Dell, a farmer in Long Eddy, N.Y. who runs a company called Rotational Land Management. The sheep will graze within an approximately 1,000-square-foot, movable fence that includes a portable shelter for shade and protection from storms. A source of clean drinking water will also move with the sheep as they graze. The portable fence and sheep will be moved every day or two to maintain the entire 50-acre area through October. The sheep will return in April for a full year of grazing.

Many government departments and authorities have begun to use sheep or goats in recent years to manage their properties. The technique, known as intensive rotational targeted grazing, has been used by the New York City Parks Department and below bridges in the Hudson Valley by the New York State Bridge Authority. Studies have shown that rotational grazing has many benefits. It limits the use of heavy machinery, fuel and chemicals, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, suppresses invasive plants and increases biodiversity, and allows manpower to be used for other projects.

The sheep will be grazing in an area downstream of Neversink Dam that is not open to the public. However, it can be seen from the public kiosk located on State Route 55. Sheep were chosen for the Neversink pilot because they eat grass better than goats, who prefer woody vegetation.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of high quality water each day to more than 9.5 million New Yorkers. This includes more than 70 upstate communities and institutions in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties who consume an average of 110 million total gallons of drinking water daily from New York City's water supply system. 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 has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and other professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$70 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.7 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 over \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/dep](http://nyc.gov/dep), like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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