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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MORE INFORMATION

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Statement from DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd on FY '09 Water Rate Proposal

“Last year at this time, Water Board rate projections indicated the likely need for a double digit increase of 11.5% in FY '09. A few key factors, however, have contributed to the need for an '09 increase of 14.5%, or three points higher than predicted.

“Even though the growing cost of building and maintaining infrastructure is well known, DEP recognizes that any rate increase will be significant for our customers, particularly now. DEP has implemented a variety of measures to help keep the increase as low as possible.

“These measures include:

- ▶ The Payment Incentive Program (PIP) for delinquent customers, which has already brought in close to \$40 million in this fiscal year - even before the end of the program - and will generate a large amount of additional revenue in the upcoming four years, as a result of payment agreements;
- ▶ The residential service shut off program for non-payment, now entering its fourth week, has already achieved a 95% pre-termination payment rate;
- ▶ The first stand alone water lien sale will take place on May 19.
- ▶ Automated Meter Reading, a technology which helps other cities achieve near perfect collection rates, will be installed in New York City beginning this summer; and
- ▶ DEP has also cut its own agency expenses.

“These strategies, as well as significant customer service improvements were undertaken as part of the overall transformation of DEP’s Bureau of Customer Services (BCS). Also, in conjunction with its new enforcement efforts, DEP has created a Safety Net program for the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Already, close to 400 people have opted into the Safety Net program, which connects customers with a range of assistance programs, including

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budgetary counseling and emergency grants and/or loans.

“But even though we are very pleased with the results of our enforcement and revenue collections strategies, and with the positive impact they will have on our future collections, costs have grown in other areas. We have seen a more than \$118 million increase in non-discretionary operations and maintenance costs, such as a dramatic growth in the cost of fuel and energy; increases in collective bargaining and health care costs; larger debt service payments on the Federally mandated projects that constitute two thirds of DEP’s capital budget, and also on other critical infrastructure projects, such as the Third Water Tunnel and the Delaware Aqueduct.

“Under the new rate proposal, the average single family homeowner will pay \$200 a quarter next year as opposed to \$175 a quarter this year. This is approximately \$5 a quarter more than was projected last year. Average annual costs for the rate per dwelling unit in multi-family dwellings will go from \$594 per year to \$680 per year.”