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Statement of NYC Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway On the Water Board Vote to Adopt the Fiscal Year 2012 Water Rate

“New York City is fortunate to have a world-class water and wastewater system. As every New Yorker and visitor knows, the one billion gallons of NYC Water that DEP’s dedicated workforce delivers every day is some of the best quality water in the world—backed by more than 500,000 tests every year. And we continue to improve our wastewater treatment processes and facilities through billions of dollars of investments, with the result that New York Harbor is healthier than it’s been in a century.

“Running a system that includes 19 reservoirs, 295 miles of tunnels and aqueducts, 14,000 miles of water and sewer mains, and 22 wastewater treatment plants is a complicated and expensive endeavor—especially with state and federal mandates that cost billions of dollars to implement, but come with no funding attached. Because of these mandates, water rates have increased by more than 90% since 2006 alone; that pace is clearly unsustainable for New Yorkers who are already struggling because of the tough economy.

“Last year, DEP committed to tightening our belt by operating more efficiently; rethinking our capital plan to stretch every dollar as far as it can go; and making critical water and wastewater investments on a timeframe that New Yorkers can afford. Our work is beginning to pay off. The 7.5% rate increase that the Water Board adopted today is the lowest in six years, and 35% less than the 11.5% increase that was projected last year. Make no mistake, any rate increase—particularly in these tough economic times—will be a challenge for families and businesses throughout the five boroughs. But we are headed in the right direction, and we will continue to work hard to deliver the world class services New Yorkers rightly expect. To ease the burden in the short term, we are offering a 2% discount for any customer who signs up online for paperless billing and to pay their water bill through direct debit.

“While attending public hearings in every borough, the public and elected officials delivered a consistent message:

MORE INFORMATION

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the significantly lower-than-expected rate increase was welcome news, but DEP must do even better in future years. To meet that challenge, this February Mayor Bloomberg and I released *Strategy 2011-2014*, a plan that lays out 100 specific initiatives to improve customer service, reduce operating costs, and run the safest, most efficient water and wastewater utility in the nation. With this roadmap, we will strive to find every efficiency and make cost effective capital investments; but we will never sacrifice our fundamental obligation to provide the high quality drinking water and wastewater treatment that New York City needs to continue to grow and thrive."

DEP is responsible for proposing a water rate that meets the financial obligations necessary to provide water and wastewater services to more than nine million New Yorkers. The Fiscal Year 2012 water rate adopted today by the Water Board includes the following components:

- ▶ A 7.5% increase to the water rate.
- ▶ A 2% discount for customers who sign up for direct debit payments and paperless billing.

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. New York City's water is delivered from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the city, and comprises 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater.

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