

A Summer-Long Mission To Mow



As the summer begins each year, three crews of watershed maintainers from the Bureau of Water Supply set out to mow, trim and clean the cut-and-cover portions of the Catskill Aqueduct that traverse through 55.5 miles of forests, old farms, airports, highways, rural towns and upstate city neighborhoods.

Their central job is to mow the aqueduct and adjacent lands that the City acquired when the Catskill System was built in the early

1900s. Maintainers use a special mower whose low center of gravity allows them to drive up and down the steep slopes alongside the aqueduct. Additionally, tree crews chainsaw limbs that have fallen and must be removed before mowing can continue.

The maintainers also take care of the aqueduct's outer infrastructure and check for abnormalities. They scan for depressions or soggy areas that might signal a leak in the century-old conduit.

The arduous but necessary grass-cutting task began in May and will last through the end of October.

Spotlight on Safety

National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month—in part because high winds, thunderstorms and flooding are more common during this time of year. Emergencies can happen at any time, so this serves as a reminder that we should all be prepared and have a plan. For first responders, the risks are of course greater. After a natural disaster or severe weather, response and recovery workers face additional challenges, such as downed power lines, felled trees, and construction debris, while performing an otherwise familiar task/operation.

When severe weather hits New York City and its watersheds, DEP employees often work tirelessly, both during and after the events. [DEP's Emergency Planning Policy](#)

outlines what steps facilities should follow:

- train employees on emergency action and response plans
- maintain an updated list of key personnel and their telephone numbers
- practice evacuation drills at least once a year
- have a plan in place to account for personnel following an evacuation

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) offers several resources to help workers prepare for, stay safe during and recover from severe weather events and natural disasters. For more information, visit [OSHA: Emergency Preparedness and Response](#).

Special Guest Commissioner's Corner



This week's Commissioner's Corner was written by Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Water Supply, **Paul Rush**.

DEP and its partners at the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) marked an impressive milestone earlier this month with the announcement of the 5,000th septic system upgrade in the watershed that surrounds our reservoirs in the Catskill Mountains.

The recipient of that landmark septic was Harris Cohn, the owner of a three-bedroom house in the Town of Shandaken. We'll come back to Mr. Cohn's property in a moment.

For those of us who work in the watershed, these milestones allow us to look back on all the work we've done to protect New York City's unfiltered water supply, while also thinking about what work lies ahead.

The septic replacement and rehabilitation program remains one of the foundation blocks of our watershed protection programs. The septic program—which is fully funded by the City and administered by CWC—began soon after the City and watershed communities reached an agreement in 1997 that allowed the City to develop programs and regulations that protect our water supply and keep it unfiltered, while preserving the character and economic viability of watershed communities.

The numbers from some of the other core programs are equally impressive. We have preserved nearly 140,000 acres of sensitive watershed land, completed 300 stream projects, and upgraded nearly 7,000 pieces of infrastructure at local farms, just to name a few.

Because more than 200,000 people live in our watershed, collecting and treating wastewater from their communities has played a big role in protecting and improving water quality in the City's reservoirs. To date we've committed more than \$600 million to building, upgrading and maintaining wastewater treatment plants that serve population centers in the watershed. And we've committed more than \$90 million to the CWC septic program.

Staff from the Bureau of Water Supply, with help from the Bureau of Legal Affairs and the Law Department, are currently negotiating with our regulators to determine what programs will be in the next Filtration Avoidance Determination, the permit that outlines and governs our watershed protection efforts. Although the permit won't be issued until 2017, our talks thus far indicate that the septic program and other core efforts will continue. Why?

The complicated answer has roots in federal regulations that require us to meet targets relative to fecal coliforms and pathogens. But Mr. Cohn—the recipient of that 5,000th septic system—provides a good anecdotal reason. Someone with a decent arm could throw a baseball from Mr. Cohn's yard and hit the Esopus Creek, which drains into Ashokan Reservoir.

That means everything that goes down his sink, toilet and tub might also reach the creek if it's not collected and treated properly. It's our job—and the job of our invaluable partners—to ensure that we administer the right programs and install the right infrastructure to protect New York City's water every day.

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EHS liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city. CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH [PIPELINE](#). HELP IS ON THE WAY.

DEP Pride on Display at Citi Field



Nearly 600 DEP employees, family and friends came out this past Saturday night for the Mets game at Citi Field. Participants gathered across the Warning Track for the playing of the Star Spangled Banner. The Amazin's then presented DEP a "Spirit Award" for its strong showing of agency pride. On hand to accept the honor were **Diana Jones Ritter**, Deputy Commissioner for Organizational Development and Human Resources; **Pam Elardo**, Deputy Commissioner for Wastewater Treatment; **Rosie Dejesus**, Quality of Work Life Oversight Committee Co-Chair & Local 371 SSEU, Shop Steward; **Adrian Allen**, Organizational Development & Human Resources Bureau Support Specialist, and **William Schroder**, Port Richmond Wastewater Treatment Plant Chief. (**Kim Vann**, QWL CAT co-chair, not pictured). Allen and Schroder were acknowledged for selling the most tickets to the game.

Put Your Peers In Check

A friendly game of chess will be held Thursday, September 22, at 5:30pm in the 3rd Floor Employee Lounge. Interested employees are asked to email **Lionel Layne** at LionelL@dep.nyc.gov or call 718-595-3882. Pre-registration is highly recommended and entrance will only be given to the first 20 attendees.

New Gear Up for Grabs



The DEP Employee Store has officially re-opened in the Lefrak Low-rise lobby. Those interested in purchasing DEP gear are encouraged to shop in-person or online at [The Source](#). Items available for sale include shirts, water bottles, hats, umbrellas, bags, cufflinks and more! Email inquiries to employeestore@dep.nyc.gov or call 718-595-6964.

\$24M to Upgrade Upstate Roadways



Delaware County and DEP recently announced a long-term agreement through which the City will provide \$24 million to the County for the [reconstruction of roadway infrastructure](#) near Cannonsville and Pepacton reservoirs. Through the agreement, which includes work until the year 2024, the Delaware County Department of Public Works (DPW) will upgrade highway infrastructure along more than 40 miles of City-owned roads in the watershed. The work will include repaving and restriping the roads, replacing all their guiderails, stabilizing shoulders, and repairing culverts. In the above photograph, members of the West-of-Hudson Tree Task Force clear land near Pepacton Reservoir in preparation for roadway work to begin.

DEP Funds Botanic Garden Project



The Brooklyn Botanic Garden last week opened the [Shelby White and Leon Levy Water Garden](#), toward which DEP provided \$210,000 in funding. The allocated money was used for the construction of the biofilter and recirculation components included in the Japanese Pond, which will promote water conservation and stormwater management. Managing Director **Viada Kenniff**, and Project Manager **Benjamin Huff** from the Bureau of Environmental Planning and Analysis (BEPA) worked on the project, under the direction of Deputy Commissioner of Sustainability **Angela Licata**, and Acting Assistant Commissioner of BEPA, **Pinar Balci**. The Garden, part of Brooklyn Botanic Garden's larger Water Conservation Project, will recirculate rainwater collected throughout its 52-acre watershed and channel it through a complex brook and pond system, reducing freshwater consumption from an estimated 22 million to 900,000 gallons per year. Additionally, the innovative wetland will lower stormwater discharges into the City's sewer system from 8 million gallons to only 2.5 million gallons per year.

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov.