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Fall Foliage

Schoharie Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System



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NYC to Acquire 1,124 Acres of Land for Watershed Protection

City Has Purchased Land or Easements on 110,000 Acres of Upstate Land to Maintain Outstanding Water Quality for New Yorkers

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today announced that New York City has secured an additional 1,124 acres of land throughout the City's upstate watersheds for \$4.75 million. Since the inception of the Land Acquisition Program in 1997, New York City has secured 110,000 acres of land in the Catskill, Delaware and Croton watersheds, in addition to more than 44,500 acres of buffer land that the City owned surrounding the reservoirs prior to 1997. The water supply system includes parts of eight counties in New York State: Schoharie, Dutchess, Sullivan, Putnam, Westchester, Greene, Delaware and Ulster. The group of properties purchased includes parcels in Greene, Ulster, Putnam, Westchester, and Delaware counties. The acquisition of sensitive watershed lands is critical to maintaining the outstanding quality of the drinking water that 9 million New Yorkers rely on each day. Most of these properties will be opened for public access, including hunting, hiking and fishing, as well as hay cropping that helps local community businesses.

"Protecting our upstate watersheds is the single most important thing that the City can do to preserve our world-class water, a signature component of Mayor Bloomberg's efforts to prepare our City for one million additional residents by 2030," said Commissioner Holloway. "This land acquisition is part of a \$1.5 billion overall investment in watershed protection programs that allows New York City to continue supplying the majority of its drinking water from unfiltered sources – a status that only five large cities in the country share. We will continue to make the investments necessary to protect and preserve New York City's unfiltered water supply."

The 20 parcels acquired today are scattered throughout priority areas which were established in 1997 based on certain watershed and water quality features that help guide the City's solicitation of land in order to best protect upstate reservoirs from over development.

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The acquisition of 1,124 acres of land includes 488 acres in Greene County, 541 acres in Delaware County, and 93 acres in Ulster County.

Watershed protection is widely considered the best way of maintaining the quality of drinking water in the long term. New York City's program, one of the most comprehensive in the world, has been so successful at protecting the integrity of New York City's water supply that the United States Environmental Protection Agency awarded the City a 10-year Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) in 2007. The success of New York City's Watershed Protection Program is one of the main reasons why New York City remains one of only five large cities in the United States that is not required to filter its drinking water. The other cities are Boston, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle. Since the beginning of the FAD, New York City has committed \$541 million to purchase land to protect our unfiltered drinking water which supplies roughly half the population of New York State. DEP has made unprecedented efforts to balance water quality preservation with the interests and economic vitality of watershed communities, and has agreed to avoid acquisitions in and around existing hamlets where towns have designated such properties.

The 2007 FAD requires the City to continue an active land acquisition program, focusing on properties selected for their water quality protection benefits. The City only acquires lands from willing sellers and pays fair market value based on independent appraisals. The City can acquire land outright, in which case the properties are usually opened for public access and recreational use. The City also protects land by purchasing conservation easements, and through initiatives like the Watershed Agricultural Council, which works with farmers to implement farming practices that are compatible with the City's watershed protection goals.

DEP supplies 1 billion gallons of drinking water to 9 million New York State residents every day, including 8 million in New York City, and residents in portions of Ulster, Orange, Putnam, and Westchester Counties. DEP's watershed is comprised of 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and seven wastewater treatment plants. Approximately 1,000 DEP employees live and work in watershed communities as scientists, engineers, surveyors, administrative professionals, and other critical vocations.

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