

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 17, 2012

No. 56

DEP Announces Additional Assistance to Residents of Wawarsing

Plan Includes \$5.5 million in Financial Aid for Home Repairs and \$7 million to expand the Napanoch Water District Service Area

New York City Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced that DEP has initiated another round of assistance to the residents of the Town of Wawarsing, in Ulster County. The City's Delaware Aqueduct, a concrete-lined tunnel that runs under Wawarsing and supplies roughly half of the city's daily drinking water, is leaking and may be contributing to the flooding of homes in Wawarsing. Through the expanded assistance program DEP will fund a \$7 million extension of the Napanoch Water District to include approximately 275 additional homes as well as create a \$5.5 million fund to repair the homes of those residents who are not able to, or choose not to, participate in the Ulster County buyout program.

"We remain committed to being a responsible neighbor to the Town and residents of Wawarsing," said Commissioner Strickland. "This robust assistance program will aid both the town and any affected homeowners."

"I appreciate the DEP's stepping up to provide funding for necessary home repairs and to enlarge the community water system," said State Senator John Bonacic. "The DEP's Paul Rush is to be credited with opening new kinds of relationships between the city and upstate; but most of the credit goes to Julianne Lennon, Laura Smith and the others in the Wawarsing community who never stopped fighting. While I initiated the flood buyout program a few years ago, it was the homeowners who have had to live with these circumstances and who never gave up. I also want to note the efforts, locally of former Supervisor Ed Jennings, Supervisor Scott Carslen, County Legislators Craig Lopez and TJ Briggs, Legislative Chairwoman Terry Bernardo and County Executive Hein."

Ulster County Chairwoman Terry Bernardo stated, "We continue moving forward toward justice for the people of Wawarsing. I appreciate this support from the DEP. It will go a long way to heal the wounds. I want to applaud the homeowners for their never ending efforts and also State Senator John Bonacic for initiating the first start - the buyout program. This home repair program will reach the next phase of home owners - those who will remain in their homes through individual home repairs as well as a public water supply system. Hopefully, this will be the model for better Ulster County/DEP relations in other areas."

Ulster County Legislator Craig Lopez noted, "'The DEP's commitment of additional dollars is great news for the Wawarsing community. This additional funding will enable more of

our families to repair decades-old damages to their homes and provides a longer term solution with a community public water system"

"The Town is pleased that DEP will step up and support a permanent solution to the potable water problems experienced in the area," said Town Supervisor Scott Carlsen. "We have residents who do not want to leave Wawarsing, or who are not able to take advantage of the buy-out programs. I have long advocated fixing the problems, and look forward to going home by home and making repairs & improvements which will make life better for our residents," Carlsen added.

The \$7 million in funding for the Napanoch Water District will extend the service area from the Vernooy Kill to the State Police Barracks area on Route 209, including most of the side streets such as Smith Road, Kelsey Lane, Kagan Road and Foordemoore Road. The \$5.5 million home repair fund will be administered by the Town of Wawarsing, will be offered in the same designated area that was used for the buyout program and will include eligible projects that address groundwater issues. The final terms of this assistance program will be negotiated with the Town of Wawarsing and it must then be sent to the New York City Comptroller's Office for approval, like all city contracts.

In addition to this assistance program, in March 2011 the New York State Legislature authorized Ulster County to use State funds to purchase homes valued at under \$250,000 each. In June of 2012 DEP supplemented this state funding with \$3.7 million in matching funds. The City funding also allows for incentive payments to help with related moving costs and does not include income, home value, residency, or unit limitations that the State funding is subject to. DEP will also help Ulster County cover the cost of administering the program by paying the County's out-of-pocket expenses that are not reimbursed by the State, including funds to maintain the properties. Finally, DEP's assistance includes an incentive payment of 10% of the purchase price in return for a release of City liability, which is completely voluntary for the homeowner. Ulster County is responsible for administering the program, including the State and the City funding. The funds for the buyout program are in addition to the more than \$642,000 the City had already made available to Wawarsing to assist homeowners with drinking water disinfection and pumping equipment, and for stormwater improvements within the town.

The agreement is the latest in a series of actions DEP has taken to mitigate potential effects of the leak for homeowners. Through an intergovernmental agreement with the Town of Wawarsing, DEP has provided:

- Gas-powered portable pumps to help reduce flooding;
- Funding for a \$4 million comprehensive study by the independent U.S. Geological Survey to better understand the effects the leak may be having on the community and on individual groundwater wells, basements, and surface drainage;
- Funding for a drainage analysis through a city consultant to help the community identify stormwater flooding and develop recommendations for drainage improvements;
- Organizational support to organize PAC meetings and work with the Town to manage the intergovernmental agreement with the Town.

DEP's Water for the Future program is a \$2.1 billion initiative that will ensure clean, reliable and safe drinking water for nine million New Yorkers for decades to come. The program has two main elements: repairing leaks in the Delaware Aqueduct and supplementing the city's water supply during construction work on the tunnel. The tunnel repair project is expected to create between 1,000 and 1,500 jobs. Preparation for the repair work is currently underway, including: installation of a pumping system and site improvements to support construction; purchasing equipment for the repair; planning and design of the bypass tunnel; geotechnical investigations; discussions with local stakeholders; and investigating supply augmentation projects.

The 85-mile aqueduct, completed in 1944, conveys approximately half of the city's drinking water from four upstate reservoirs to more than eight million people in New York City, and one million people in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. The aqueduct is a concrete-lined tunnel that varies in diameter from 13.5 to 19.5 feet and runs as deep as 2,000 feet beneath the ground. It was constructed by drilling and blasting, and, in most areas, lined with unreinforced concrete.

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. 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 employs nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$49 million payroll and \$132 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.5 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 a planned \$13.2 billion in investments over the next 10 years that creates up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/nycwater.

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