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## **DEP Expands Recreational Use for 126 Watershed Acres in Town of Prattsville**

*Recreational Expansion Is a Key Component of 'Rebuild Prattsville' Effort;  
DEP Working with Town of Prattsville to Remove Debris Before Winter*

Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced that DEP will expand recreational use for two City-owned land parcels in the Town of Prattsville, part of ongoing recovery efforts in watershed communities damaged by Hurricane Irene. The reclassification of 126 acres along the east and west banks of Schoharie Creek will expand recreational use and eliminate access permit requirements. This comes as DEP and the Town of Prattsville continue a major cleanup project to ensure the removal of extensive debris along the banks of Schoharie Creek as it enters the reservoir and the extreme southern reservoir shoreline before winter, which will prevent the accumulation of ice and mitigate a potential cause of additional flooding. Debris is being removed from the same area where DEP performed a floodplain restoration project in 2005 to reduce the danger of ice jam flooding. The debris removal from City property is being conducted through an emergency contract with Thalle Construction, Inc. The recreational opening will take effect on April 1, 2012.

“It is essential that DEP continue to work closely with our watershed communities—a responsibility made even clearer in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene,” said Commissioner Strickland. “While we remove debris as quickly as possible, it also made sense to expand recreational use on these land parcels starting this spring for the long-term benefit of the community.”

“The City has stepped up to deal with the debris jams that we felt could threaten the hamlet with further flooding this winter, which we appreciate,” said Town of Prattsville Supervisor Kory O’Hara.

“This will be a great asset to the Town as we rebuild,” said ‘Rebuild Prattsville’ Steering Committee Chairman Kevin Piccoli. “An integral aspect of the Town’s plan is to enhance recreational capabilities, and this is a perfect fit for that approach.”

Both land parcels were previously designated “Fishing By Permit” areas and were severely affected by Hurricane Irene. The property on the east bank of Schoharie Creek can be accessed from County Route 7, and DEP will reopen 10 acres of that property as a Passive Recreation Area for general public use without permit. The parcel is expected to be used for walking, hiking, picnicking, dog walking, fishing, and other recreational activities. On the parcel on the west bank of the creek, accessible from Route 23, DEP will reclassify 116 acres as a Public Access Area (PAA). PAAs do not require access permits and allow for hunting, hiking, trapping, and fishing.

Under the contract with DEP related to the continuing cleanup of the two recreational parcels in Prattsville, Thalle Construction, Inc. has removed large amounts of debris including wood and household items, along with significant amounts of hazardous material. Any items of value removed from these properties have been handed over to the Town of Prattsville for appropriate redistribution. In addition, DEP is undertaking a comprehensive cleanup of Schoharie Reservoir, and has deployed more than 40 workers, one skimmer boat, two equipment barges and three debris barges to collect floating trash and hazardous material in the reservoir. To date, the reservoir cleanup effort has removed over 12,780 cubic yards of debris from the water.

During and after Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, DEP worked with local communities to assist in the recovery and rebuilding while making sure to protect the watershed, including:

- Ahead of the storm, DEP increased water release rates at its reservoirs to enhance the reservoirs' ability to absorb storm inflow and minimize any potential negative impacts on the surrounding community or to drinking water quality.
- From the start of the storm, DEP Police assisted with search and rescues throughout the watershed.
- In order to ensure that cleanup efforts were implemented as quickly and efficiently as possible, DEP suspended enforcement of certain watershed rules and regulations in its West-of-Hudson watershed provided they are taken in response to Hurricane Irene and are immediately necessary to protect life, health, property, and natural resources and are conducted with easily adopted, common-sense protections.
- DEP deployed equipment and personnel to Prattsville, Windham, Margaretville, Phoenicia, Arkville, Mill Brook, Fleischmanns, Wawarsing, and other communities. Dozens of watershed maintainers, construction laborers, and supervisors used dump trucks, backhoes, excavators, loaders, and chainsaws to remove debris.
- A Vector truck and crew from the city was deployed to clean manholes in Margaretville as were crews from sewer maintenance, which deployed flusher trucks and rodders to clean the collection system in the village.
- DEP wastewater treatment personnel from the city pitched in at the Tannersville Wastewater Treatment Plant, where a 150- foot section of road was washed away near the plant. They also assisted with repairing a broken sewer pipe which crossed a stream.
- DEP deployed engineers to assist in inspecting bridges throughout the watershed.
- DEP is also providing technical assistance for the cleanup of Catskill streams after the flood.
- DEP provided \$1 million in funding to help West of Hudson businesses recover from flood damage through the Flood Recovery Fund established by the Catskill Watershed

Corporation and assisted with \$300,000 toward the repair of Schoharie County's emergency siren system for Gilboa Dam.

Since 2003, DEP has significantly expanded the amount of city-owned water supply lands open for recreation to 108,000 — more than double the amount available in 2003. Of the 108,000 total acres open to recreation, 75,000 are land and 33,000 are water. Earlier this year, DEP announced the opening of approximately 6,600 more acres of land in the watershed for recreation through the duration of 2011. Last year, DEP opened 9,895 acres of land. Expanding recreational opportunities in the watershed section is one of the Operations goals outlined in *Strategy 2011-2014*, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. The plan is available on DEP's website at [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep).

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 from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and comprises 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. Approximately 1,000 DEP employees live and work in the watershed communities as scientists, engineers, surveyors, and administrative professionals, and perform other critical responsibilities. 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 for the repair of Gilboa Dam and other in-city and upstate infrastructure, with a planned \$13.2 billion in investments over the next 10 years. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep), like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nycwater](http://www.facebook.com/nycwater), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/nycwater](http://www.twitter.com/nycwater).

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