

Commissioner's Corner



This week's Commissioner's Corner was written by Acting Commissioner **Steven Lawitts**.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to testify before the City Council's Finance and Environmental Protection Committees concerning the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Executive Budget. Our budget outlines the department's priorities for the next several years, and I wanted to share the same information with all of you.

Our expense budget for FY17 includes \$520 million to pay the salaries of our nearly 6,000 employees, \$167 million for taxes on upstate lands that protect water quality, \$92 million for energy costs and \$116 million for chemicals and biosolids.

Our Four-Year Capital Plan budget for FY16-20 is \$12.3 billion, including:

CITY WATER TUNNEL NO.3

The Brooklyn/Queens leg of the tunnel and most of the infrastructure shafts that support it are complete—just two shafts remain to be designed and constructed. **Mayor de Blasio** has prioritized the construction of the remaining two shafts, and has included \$685 million in the Executive Budget and upcoming 10-year strategy, allowing for an accelerated construction of the shafts to begin in 2020, one year earlier than previously projected, as well as ensuring that the tunnel is activation-ready by the end of 2017.

CATSKILL AQUEDUCT RECONSTRUCTION KENSICO TO HILLVIEW

We have budgeted \$144 million for the structural reconstruction and replacement of mechanical equipment of the Lower Catskill Aqueduct. At 100 years old, various mechanical components of the aqueduct and support chambers, gates, valves, roads, and culverts have reached the end of their useful life and need to be upgraded.

SOUTHEAST QUEENS

Alleviating flooding in Southeast Queens is a major priority for New York City. In 2015, as part of One-NYC, Mayor de Blasio announced a \$1.5 billion program to substantially accelerate relief in Southeast Queens by pairing traditional sewer construction with green infrastructure throughout the region. The Four-Year Plan includes \$778 million of this funding.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

The Four-Year Plan projects a \$5 billion investment in wastewater treatment projects, \$3.5 billion of which is for the reconstruction or replacement of components of the wastewater treatment plants and pumping stations. It is worth noting that \$209 million is budgeted for the construction of a new cogeneration system at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant. The remaining \$1.5 billion investment will be used to mitigate combined sewer overflows (CSO), with \$645 million for green infra-

structure such as rain gardens and bioswales, and the remainder for gray infrastructure, such as tanks and tunnels to store wastewater.

A significant part of our wastewater treatment budget is \$746 million in funding to cover planned consent-order work related to the Long-Term Control Plans for CSOs and stormwater control. The most significant element of this commitment is \$560 million for improvements to reduce CSO discharges into the Gowanus Canal. In addition, DEP will undertake projects in the Bronx River, Alley Creek, Hutchinson River, and Flushing Creek, as well as measures in other waterbodies.

DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION

We are proposing to invest an additional \$3.0 billion to protect our reservoirs and improve the integ-

riety of our dams. This funding will also go towards maintaining and repairing the water main system that conveys potable water to all New Yorkers. In addition, for the continuation of our current Filtration Avoidance Determination programs, our budget includes \$139 million, including \$83 million for land acquisition.

SEWERS

The budget projects \$3.0 billion of spending on sewers including \$1.1 billion for replacement of storm, sanitary or combined sewers, \$1.6 billion for new sewers and \$359 million to create Bluebelt systems.

Each one of us plays an important role in protecting public health and the environment in New York City and I'd like to thank you all for your hard work and dedication to our critical mission. The entire budget testimony can be viewed [here](#).

Spotlight on Safety

New Crane Rules

In early February, a crane collapsed onto a Lower Manhattan street, killing one pedestrian and injuring several others as crews attempted to lower the crane during accelerating winds. In response to the incident, safety measures for crane operation throughout New York City were tightened. The previous limit for operation was 25 miles per hour (mph). Now, crawler cranes must stop operating and be secured when there is a forecast for steady wind speeds of 20 mph or higher, or gusts of at least 30 mph, and when actual readings reach

those levels. Other new safety measures include:

- Placing equipment into secure mode at the end of the workday if the forecast for the following workday meets the new limits
- Fines for failing to take appropriate precautions increased from \$4,800 to \$10,000
- Operators must notify nearby residents and businesses before a crane is moved, not only when it is first installed

DEP employees who perform work involving cranes should follow [DEP's Crane & Hoist Safety Policy](#).

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.

'Dam' Good Work



A worker near Gilboa Dam sets rebar for a retaining wall. The wall will support an area near Schoharie Reservoir that will be used to collect and slowly release runoff from the site where workers are building a new release tunnel. The \$142 million project to build release works at Schoharie Reservoir—expected to be completed in the year 2020—includes construction of an intake structure at the bottom of the reservoir, more than 2,000 feet of subsurface tunnels, and a valve chamber along Schoharie Creek.

Welcome Aboard!



Yesterday, 24 new employees attended orientation and received an overview of the department from Acting Commissioner **Steve Lawitts** and Deputy Commissioner for Organizational Development **Diana Jones Ritter**. We hope everyone will join us in welcoming them to DEP!

Winnie Davis with ACCO; **Edouard Beaubrun** and **Alberto Garcia** with BCS; **Arthur Flores**, **Sandy Gonzalez**, **Sheniqua Foster** and **Cindy Singh** with BWS; **John Byrne**, **SM Nazmul Hasan**, **Muhammed Hossain**, **Kristen Johnson**, **Pulkit Kanotra**, **Seong Hee Kim**, and **Zoe Ritter** with BWSO; **Alyssa Calderone**, **Raymond Di Leo**, **Kaitlyn Halloran**, **Joel Martinez**, **Brendan Ross** and **Brian Thompson** with BWT; **Elaine Deschamps-Garcia** and **Oneika Duncan** with CDBG; **Alexander McClean** and **Samantha Young** with Sustainability.

Wetlands Work



This month marks American Wetlands Month—a good time to appreciate marshes, swamps, bogs, fens, and other types of wetlands that provide a home to many species of plants and animals. Of course, wetlands are one of many natural systems that maintain clean drinking water.

DEP will celebrate wetlands month by hosting an educational walk in Westchester County on May 15. The walk will take place on a four-acre wetland that was constructed by DEP in the Town of North Castle. Activities will begin at 10:30am. Parking is available at the former Armonk Bowling Alley on Old Route 22, across from the Beehive Restaurant. The walk will be led by BWS wetland scientist **Frank Parisio**, who will explain the importance of the wetland to the surrounding area, and also provide hands-on opportunities to examine some of the animals and plants that live in the wetland. The educational walk will include wet and dry conditions, so participants are encouraged to bring waterproof boots.

DEP completed construction of the wetland in 2010 to meet the

requirements of a permit issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the construction of the Catskill/Delaware Ultraviolet Light Disinfection Facility in Mount Pleasant. DEP created shallow pond and emergent marsh habitat surrounded by shrub and tree plantings. More than 100 plant species have been observed on-site, along with a diverse array of animals such as muskrats, ducks, songbirds, turtles, and numerous amphibians.

In 1991, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency designated May as American Wetlands Month to celebrate their vital importance to the nation's ecological, economic, and social health. Wetlands, which are transitional lands between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, provide a wide variety of beneficial functions. They attenuate flooding, help maintain stream flow, improve water quality, cycle nutrients and carbon, and provide plant and wildlife habitat. Nearly half of the nation's threatened and endangered species rely on wetlands to survive.

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