

## Ashokan Reservoir - 100 Years Old Today



The construction of the Ashokan Reservoir—the first piece of New York City’s ambitious Catskill Water Supply System—was completed 100 years ago today. Newspaper accounts at the time said that steam whistles “screamed with joy” for an hour to signify the completion of all the dams and dikes that were built to impound the Esopus Creek and form the reservoir.

The Ashokan Reservoir was built after state officials passed a 1905 law that gave New York City the authority to acquire land for the construction of reservoirs in the Catskills. Bids for the construction of Ashokan Reservoir were opened on August 6, 1907, and the project to build the dams and dikes was awarded to MacArthur Brothers Company and Winston

(Continued on reverse side)

## Spotlight on Safety

### National Safety Month: Distracted Driving

As part of National Safety Month, the National Safety Council (NSC) has dedicated this week to distracted driving. Car crashes are the leading cause of employee on-the-job fatalities and the NSC estimates that 25% of all crashes are the result of drivers distracted by cell phones. Many drivers fail to realize that talking on a cell phone while driving is dangerous even if you never take your eyes off the road.

The “great multitasking myth” is that the brain is capable of performing two tasks at the same time, when in fact the brain switches back and forth between the two tasks, processing each separately.

Drivers talking on cell phones can miss seeing up to 50% of their driving environment, including red lights and pedestrians.

To avoid the temptation of using a cell phone while driving:

- Silence your cell phone when you get into your car
- Avoid scheduling important calls when you know you will be on the road
- Pull over safely if you need to make a call

To learn more about distracted driving and the multitasking myth, visit the [National Safety Council's website](#)

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. 🙌

## Commissioner's Corner

Last Thursday I joined members of DEP’s Green Infrastructure team to celebrate the completion of the Kelly Street Green Community Garden in the Hunts Point neighborhood of the Bronx. The Kelly Street Green is the final component of the rehabilitation of



five buildings that were severely distressed prior to a partnership between an affordable housing developer called the Workforce Housing Group and the City’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Seeing potential in unused backyard space, which has southern exposure that is ideal for planting, the Workforce Housing Group applied for, and received, nearly \$237,000 in funding through DEP’s Green Infrastructure Grant Program. Kelly Street Green is one of 29 projects DEP’s Green Infrastructure Grant Program has sponsored since 2011. The new garden has the capacity to capture as much as 13,500 gallons of stormwater each time it rains, or more than 250,000 gallons annually, and will help reduce pollution in the East River.

planted earlier this year. Kelly Street Green will not only provide tenants with access to healthy food, but will serve as a great community space and help manage stormwater and improve the health of New York Harbor.

The green infrastructure technologies installed at the garden include a 1,402 square foot green roof, a 3,675 square foot garden with raised planters, 2,775 square feet of gravel, permeable pavers with an underlying storage area, and eight water storage barrels.

DEP is engaged in a citywide effort to soften the impervious urban landscape to help absorb rainwater that would otherwise drain into the combined sewer system and contribute to combined sewer overflows into local waterways. This is the fourth year of the Green Infrastructure Grant Program. During the first three years DEP committed more than \$11 million to fund 29 different projects, which was matched by \$5.6 million in private funds. In total, the projects will prevent an estimated 13 million gallons of stormwater from entering the combined sewer system each year.

The Green Infrastructure Program is an important part of our efforts to continue the improvement of the health of our waterways and will help us reduce our carbon footprint and combat climate change. I want to thank the entire team that contributed to this project.

To view more photos of the project, click [here](#).



The new garden area is roughly 13,000 square feet and is a combination of landscaped and planted areas, with raised beds that will produce as much as \$43,000 of fresh food each growing season. For vegetable production, more than 2,000 plants were brought in to help complement the 500 vegetables

## Focus on the Field



Meet the face behind, and sometimes in front of, the camera. Digital Media Specialist **Leah McWilliams** has always been interested in the environment, and even earned a graduate degree studying its politics, but she has nonetheless been surprised by how much she has learned since joining DEP.

McWilliams was born in Lexington, Kentucky and raised in North Carolina. She earned a bachelor's degree in Communications from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and then spent some time working as a production assistant in the film industry in Los Angeles. She worked on a number of pilots and learned the ins and outs of film production. Having always been interested in environmental issues, especially how they can cross borders and affect different populations, she followed this passion across the pond and earned a master's degree in global environmental politics from King's College London. During her studies she lived in Highbury Islington on the north side of the city. This was the first time she lived in a dense and walkable urban environment and she loved it.

From London, McWilliams moved to Brussels and worked for the European Commission, the executive body of the European Union (EU). As a communications consultant she helped them build a website to coordinate legal terms and all the necessary translations for the 22 languages of the EU countries. When she returned to the United States, McWilliams was determined to try living in New York City and she found a job at a documentary film production company where she further honed her film-making skills and also had the opportunity to work on a film with Robert Redford.

Since joining DEP in February of 2013, McWilliams has been responsible for creating, managing and monitoring the content of the department's social media sites. She also shoots and edits videos for [DEP's YouTube channel](#), assists with updating DEP's website, helps put official publications together and takes and edits photos. Impressively, over the last 15 months, [DEP's Facebook](#) likes have risen 31 percent, followers on [Twitter](#) are up 60 percent and YouTube views are up 38 percent.

"It's an interesting and exciting time to be working in social media for the government because as we expand our presence and more people utilize the services, we're seeing that it can be a very useful means to disseminate information, especially in times of emergency," said McWilliams.

"Leah's a one-stop shop when it comes to DEP's social media presence, distilling the day-to-day operations of the agency for an audience of tens of thousands. Her work developing DEP's YouTube channel is particularly noteworthy for how well it educates the public on important topics that impact both the agency and New Yorkers alike," said **Girma Moges**, Director of Digital Media.

McWilliams lives in Astoria and she tries to visit her family in Kentucky as often as possible. She also enjoys travelling and will be visiting Cyprus in the coming weeks. She currently speaks French and Spanish and would love to learn Portuguese and Arabic. To maintain these language skills she is part of a group called Conversation Exchange that helps people find others who would like to practice speaking a different language. This allows her to continually meet new people, often natives of interesting countries.

## Free Refills



On June 1, DEP—in partnership with the Department of Health—launched a bus shelter ad campaign aimed at promoting our drinking water quality. The posters encourage New Yorkers to stay hydrated with clean, delicious New York City tap water and offer a free reusable water bottle to anyone who downloads the NYC Water app. The posters went up in 65 locations at the beginning of June and have already generated more than 1,000 app downloads! Check one out—the nearest location to LeFrak is on Queens Blvd between 63<sup>rd</sup> Drive and 64<sup>th</sup> Road. The posters run through the end of the month.

### (Ashokan Reservoir - 100 Years Old Today... continued)

& Company for a sum of \$12.6 million, according to annual reports from the Board of Water Supply. The contract required that construction be complete in 84 months; it finished roughly six weeks early.

Building the reservoir—which at 123 billion gallons would store more water than the entire Croton System that preceded it—was an immense task. It required approximately 3,000 employees, the excavation of 2.5 million cubic yards of soil and rock, and 1.2 million barrels of cement. When it was finished,

the reservoir included 40.7 miles of shoreline.

The Ashokan Reservoir first delivered water to the New York City distribution system, to part of the Bronx, on December 27, 1915. Manhattan received its first water from the Catskills on November 29, 1916, and Brooklyn and Queens in January of the following year.

On Tuesday—a century after its completion—Ashokan Reservoir was still providing 500 million gallons of the same high-quality, unfiltered water that has allowed New York City to grow and thrive.

## New Signs at Newtown Creek



Walking from the Visitor Center at Newtown Creek to the Nature Walk just became more interesting. Fifteen informational signs and eight directional signs have been installed along the perimeter of the plant on both Greenpoint Avenue and Provost Street. The signs provide a step-by-step overview of the wastewater treatment process including water quality monitoring, sludge transport, and more.