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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

04-38

July 13, 2004

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DEP Issues Proposed Revisions To Watershed Recreation Rules

Public Hearings Scheduled for September

Commissioner Christopher O. Ward of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that draft revisions to the City's Rules and Regulations for the Recreational Use of Water Supply Lands are now available on the DEP Web site at nyc.gov/watershed. The proposed revisions will be presented for comment at public hearings throughout the watershed in September.

The revisions address hiking, hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities on New York City water supply property throughout the Catskills and in Dutchess, Putnam and Westchester Counties. The City owns over 112,000 acres in the region for the purpose of providing drinking water and protecting the drinking water supply for over nine million New York State residents.

"The existing rules and regulations are outdated and don't address many of the new opportunities for recreation now available to the public," said Commissioner Ward. "The rules were last revised in 1998. They cover fishing, but do not include provisions for hiking and hunting – activities which began in the late 1990's – or the multi-use DEP Access Permit, which replaced the reservoir fishing permit in early 2002."

As part of the revision process, DEP sought comments from user groups throughout the watershed, including the regional Sporting Advisory Committees (SACs). The two SACs – one for the East and one for the West of Hudson watershed – are composed of representatives from local sporting organizations and recreational groups, as well as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), environmental groups and county representatives. Suggestions from the general public, which were collected through surveys, letters and comments were also considered and many were included in the draft.

"We strive to balance water supply protection with providing recreation benefits to watershed communities and the general public," Commissioner Ward said. "Anglers, hikers and hunters who use water supply lands tend to be

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good stewards of the land and have been important contributors to the revisions. We've incorporated a lot of the feedback from recreational users over the years to improve and clarify the rules wherever we can."

Notable changes to the rules and regulations include:

- ▶ lowering the age for recreational access from 16 to 14 years;
- ▶ lowering the age requirement for adult supervision from 16 to 14 years;
- ▶ allowing handguns for hunting;
- ▶ creating a "Public Area" designation to allow access without a Public Access Permit to areas that have historically been open to the public in this manner.

Several regulations have been reworked to clarify their intentions, including the use of waders for fishing, storage of rowboats, renewal of permits, and the use of life jackets while boating. Also, administrative fees for the replacement of lost permits and tags have been added.

The complete proposed rules will be published prior to the hearings in watershed and City newspapers. They are accessible now on the DEP Web site at www.nyc.gov/watershedrecreation. Copies may be obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Legal Affairs, 19th Floor, 59-17 Junction Boulevard, Flushing, NY 11373.

The DEP will hold a series of five public hearings to take comments prior to enacting the proposed revisions. The earliest the new rules could take effect is 30 days after the last public hearing. The hearing schedule is:

Wednesday, September 1, 2004, 1-3:00 P.M.
NYC DEP, 59-17 Junction Blvd., 6th Floor Lecture Room, Flushing

Thursday, September 2, 2004, 7-9:00 P.M.
Carmel Town Hall, 60 McAlpin Avenue, Mahopac

Wednesday, September 8, 2004, 7-9:00 P.M.
Walton Middle/High School Auditorium, 47-49 Stockton Avenue, Walton

Tuesday, September 14, 2004, 7-9:00 P.M.
Shandaken Town Hall, 7209 Route 28, Shandaken

Thursday, September 23, 2004, 7-9:00 P.M.
Neversink Town Hall, 273 Main Street, Grahamsville