THE DEP DIGEST

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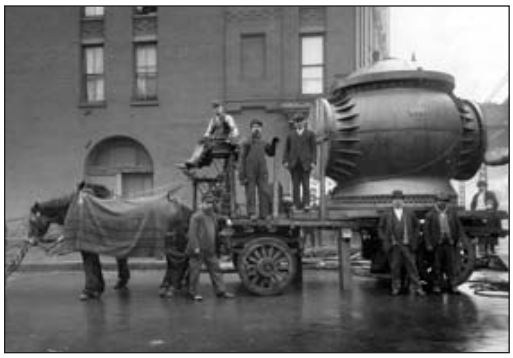
FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Summer has finally arrived, after weeks of overcast skies and seemingly constant rain. As we begin a new water year for the City, it is helpful to look back and remember where we were last year at this time. The City was experiencing a severe drought that had started in April, after months of below-average rainfall. Eventually the rain came, and after seven months the drought ended in November. During that time, DEP launched a water-conservation campaign and the City banded together to conserve water. At our peak, New York City's residents were conserving up to 45 million gallons per day.

This year we seem to be more fortunate. Since the winter, we have had higher-than-average rainfall, which has kept our reservoirs at or above their normal capacity for this time of year, often above 100 percent. Still, we should remember the lessons of last year's drought, even though conditions are much better this summer. Conservation is an important message to deliver year-round. Last year taught New Yorkers how important it is to save water. You will note in the "Congratulations!" section of the this newsletter that DEP was recently awarded for its conservation programs.

In closing, I'd like to wish you and your families a safe and happy summer in the City, and to thank you again for everything you do to keep New York from running dry!

Very truly yours,



EXPLORING THE UNEXPLORED: A TRIP THROUGH THE DELAWARE AQUEDUCT

In early June, staff from DEP and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution accomplished a feat that five years ago would have been impossible: they were able to photograph a stretch of the Delaware Aqueduct 45-miles long – and filled with running water. After over a decade of planning and experimenting with different methods, DEP was able to send a small robotic submarine equipped with cameras through the Aqueduct to look for the sources of leaks that were first discovered in 1991.

Up to 36 million gallons of water per day seep from the Delaware Aqueduct into the grounds of Ulster and Orange Counties upstate – this is approximately equal to the daily usage of Rochester. Although water conservation is extremely important, a greater concern regarding the leaks is their effect on the integrity of the Aqueduct itself, and the possibility they could, one day, jeopardize up to 40% of the City's water supply system.

The submersible was designed specifically for DEP to provide us with the information we need to solve this problem. Encountering a few bumps on its path, the submarine (called Uliisys, pronounced "Ulysses" by DEP engineers, for Underwater Linear Infrastructure Investigation System) finished its mission after fifteen hours of travel, hundreds of feet below the ground.

Now that Uliisys has completed its journey through the Aqueduct, DEP engineers are looking forward to discovering what it has to tell us about the condition of the tunnel. Retrieving and interpreting this data is an enormous undertaking that involves copying and analyzing 175,000 photographs taken by the submersible. Early looks at the data seem promising, and clear images of the interior of the tunnel have been captured in the photographs for the first time. It will still be some time before a final analysis of the 58-year-old Delaware Aqueduct is completed, but when it is finished, it will surely offer us a unique look into the previously unseen heart of our water delivery system.

AN INTERVIEW WITH: STEVE ASKEW, PLANT SUPERINTENDENT, NORTH RIVER WTP

DEP: Managing the North River Treatment Plant is only the most recent job you've had here at DEP – how did you start out with the Agency?

SA: I've been with DEP since the summer of 1983 – this summer it'll have been 20 years with the Agency, and I've worked my way up to supervising North River. Before that, I was in the US Navy, working in new nuclear construction at the Newport News shipyards. After that, I started work at DEP as a machinist doing repair on major equipment. After that, I was an oiler, and then a stationary electric engineer, and then a senior stationary electric engineer. I started at the Owl's Head plant, and then moved on to Coney Island – that's where I spent a lot of my time here. When I was at Coney Island, I became assistant superintendent at the plant. Then I transferred to North River as assistant superintendent around 1996, and then became superintendent there. So, I've dealt directly with almost everything that happens at the plant, which is useful.

DEP: North River is a one-of-a-kind place to work – you have a New York State park on top of your roof. What's that like?

SA: It's a pretty good thing – every day the park has between 10 and 15 thousand visitors using the roller rink or the gym, and it's amazing because aside from perhaps seeing our smokestacks, almost none of them ever know there's a wastewater treatment plant underneath them. Being the only plant in Manhattan, and being located where we are, it also gives us the oppor- (continued on reverse)

If you've been on the subway or bus lately, there's a good chance you've caught a glimpse of DEP history. Shortly after Memorial Day, subways and buses started exhibiting photographs (see above and reverse for examples) from the DEP Archives to increase New Yorkers' awareness of their City's water supply. Commissioner Ward stated that, "[The photos are] meant to interest and excite New Yorkers about the complex water supply system that is so vital to our day-to-day life ... We also want to increase New Yorkers' awareness about the seeming mystery of how their water actually gets to them." The photographs depict scenes from the construction of the City's water supply at the turn of the 20th century. The images will last through September, and will offer New Yorkers a unique glimpse into the history of the City's most precious resource.

3-1-1 Hotline will Answer the City's Questions and Concerns

While campaigning to become Mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg encountered what New Yorkers with questions and concerns deal with on a daily basis: a fourteen page telephone directory listing over forty City government agencies from which to choose. Determined to make New York City's services easier to access, and to increase the City's efficiency, Mayor Bloomberg established 3-1-1, a one-stop service that should reduce New Yorkers' need to navigate through a web of City phone numbers before finding the answers they seek.

Since 1997, a number of cities nationwide have successfully implemented 3-1-1 non-emergency hotlines, including Chicago, Houston, Washington DC, and Los Angeles. New York City is joining the trend to streamline government services and provide high-quality customer care to its residents.

But what exactly does this mean for New York City? When the 3-1-1 number went into effect, it absorbed a majority of City agency hotlines, including DEP-HELP, as well as hotlines for DOS, DOT, and NYPD. A new 24- hour center helps provide citizens with immediate, up-to-date city information and the ability to file complaints with the appropriate City agency. (Certain specialized help lines still remain distinct from the 3-1-1 umbrella, such as the Bureau of Customer Services' water bill inquiry number and the Environmental Control Board's information lines.) Today, New Yorkers have a single point of contact for all their government necessities. In the near future, 3-1-1 will not only function as a telephone hotline, but as a multi-channeled service accessible via the World Wide Web, fax, and e-mail, which will bridge the gap between government agencies and the people they serve.

Pleaser remember when dealing with City residents to refer them to 3-1-1, rather than DEP-HELP. DEP still has a special "cell" of call-takers at 3-1-1 to help resolve water, sewer. air, noise, HazMat, and other service complaints for which this agency is responsible, but the actual 718-DEP-HELP phone line has been discontinued. All upstate DEP phone numbers for watershed concerns remain operational.

(*Askew Interview*, coninued from front) tunity to work with the public on a lot of outreach activities. North River has relationships with everyone from grassroots community groups to community boards to odor panels that we helped establish to answer questions about the plant itself and its effects on the community. Before 9-11, we used to give tours – we had about 2,000 visitors a year, from 6th graders to the heads of state from all over the world.

DEP: After working at North River for a while, what's your favorite thing about the plant?

SA: That's easy - the intensity. There is always something going on here and always something to do. North River may not be the largest treatment plant in the City, but in my opinion it's one of the flagship plants DEP has. Because of its location, and its unique construction, it's definitely one of the most visible plants we have, both politically and to the public. I'd say "intense" is the best word for it.

Bluebelt Program Seeks Expansion in Staten Island

One of DEP's most innovative strategies for protecting the environment and improving water quality is its Bluebelt Program in Staten Island. This program integrates the Island's own network of ponds, marshes, and streams with existing sewer infrastructure to create a stormwater management system that helps to preserve native wetlands and protects plant- and wildlife.

The success of the Bluebelt in the South Richmond area of Staten Island has led DEP to pursue opportunities forexpanding the program into other areas of the island. We recently received approval from the City for funding to expand the Bluebelt to a 70-acre site in New Creek in the Midland Beach section of Staten Island. We are also looking at additional sites for expansion, in South Beach and Oakwood Beach, as well.

The Bluebelt Program garnered tremendous support from local elected officials and the neighboring communities. In fact, proximity to a Bluebelt has become a selling point for Staten Island real estate. In addition to the environmental and aesthetic benefits of the program, Bluebelts also have considerably higher cost savings to water and sewer rate-payers over traditional stormwater infrastructure.

The Staten Island Bluebelt is one of the most beneficial programs that DEP operates, offering a model for urban stormwater treatment that is cost-effective, sustainable, and ecologically sound.

If you would like to learn more about how the Bluebelt works, plans for its future, and much, much more, please check it out on DEP's web-site: www.nyc.gov/dep.

Congratulations!

- A total of 8 of DEP's 14 wastewater treatment plants received Peak Performance awards from the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies (AMSA). The **Owl's Head** and **Rockaway WTPs** won Gold Awards for 100% compliance with their National Pollutant DIscharge Elimination System permits for an entire year. **Hunts Point, 26th Ward, Coney Island, Bowery Bay, Oakwood Beach, and Red Hook WTPs** all received Silver awards for having 5 or fewer violations during 2002.

- The **Bureau of Customer Services**, primarily through the work of **Warren Liebold and his staff**, has been honored with the "Environmental Project of the Year" by the New York Chapter of the Association of Energy Engineers for its innovative and effective conservation efforts.

- **DEP** received the Platinum Award for Blood Donations from Long Island Blood Services. In 2002, thoughtful employees of the Agency donated a record 959 pints of blood.

Ideas for the next newsletter? Send them to Ryan Purdy, at rpurdy@dep.nyc.gov.