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Contact:

DEP: (718) 595-6600
DSNY: (646) 885-5020
City Hall: (212) 788-2958

New York City to Launch Media Campaign to Help Reduce Consumer Waste, Combat Littering and Improve the Health of Local Waterways

Photos are Available on [DEP's Flickr Page](#)

The New York City Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Sanitation (DSNY) today joined with the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and GreeNYC to announce a new public information campaign aimed at reducing consumer waste and street litter while also helping to improve the health and aesthetics of local waterways. Each year, New York City generates more than 3 million tons of residential waste along with 3 million tons of commercial waste. Some of that waste is not properly discarded and ends up as litter on city streets and, when it gets washed into the sewer system, can end up polluting local waterways. The public awareness campaign will build upon the success of GreeNYC's recent "B.Y.O." (*Bring Your Own*) effort and aim to address these interconnected problems by reducing the amount of consumer waste produced in the first place. Working with small businesses, the campaign will encourage New Yorkers to use reusable mugs, bottles and bags rather than their disposable counterparts, and digital ads and posters on bus shelters and DSNY trucks will help remind New Yorkers to bring reusable items when they're on the go. In addition to addressing the issue of street litter and marine debris, the campaign will help to meet the OneNYC goals of sending zero waste to landfills and reducing waste disposal by 90 percent by 2030. DEP has already committed

More Information

NYC Department of
Environmental Protection
Public Affairs
59-17 Junction Boulevard
19th Floor
Flushing, NY 11373
(718) 595-6600

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approximately \$600,000 to the campaign.

“New York City boasts roughly 520 miles of waterfront and our harbor is cleaner now than it has been in more than a century,” said **DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd**. “However, we also serve the largest population center in the country and trash discarded on the street often ends up fouling our waterways. One of the most direct actions New Yorkers can take to help protect our shared environment is to avoid disposable bags and mugs and ensure that trash ends up where it belongs, in a litter basket.”

“New Yorkers are our partners in keeping New York City healthy, safe and clean,” said **DSNY Commissioner Kathryn Garcia**. “We’re delighted that the City’s iconic ‘Birdie’ will help us spread our message that cleaner streets mean cleaner shores for all New Yorkers.”

“Plastic in our harbor and ocean is an assault on the environment. We are essentially turning our waters into a landfill,” said **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Judith A. Enck**. “The best way to remove trash from our waters is to keep it out in the first place. We need to reduce waste at the source. NYC’s Bring Your Own is a terrific initiative that should be repeated in other communities.”

“We are a city of islands, with a recovering marine ecosystem surrounding them,” said **Nilda Mesa, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Sustainability**. “The more trash we keep off the streets, the more fish and other aquatic wildlife will return. The first phase of the B.Y.O. campaign was a great success, with 157 million less plastic bags going to landfill in NYC and a financial savings of \$2 million to the city. This next phase will take it up a notch.”

“Through surveys and direct observation of consumer behavior before and after the first phase of GreeNYC’s B.Y.O. campaign we were able to gather a rich understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of New Yorkers towards carrying reusable water bottles, shopping bags and coffee mugs that will help inform and optimize this next phase of the media campaign with DEP,” said **Roya Kazemi, Director of GreeNYC**.

“New York City’s campaign will help stop trash where it starts,” said **Robert Pirani, Director of the New York – New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program at the Hudson River Foundation**. “Helping people and businesses make better choices about bottles, bags and other sources of litter gets at the root of the problem, improving the health of the estuary and helping reduce the need for more costly cleanup efforts along our waterways, beaches and shorelines. Currently, more than \$60 million is being spent annually on such measures throughout the estuary.”

Data from the first phase of GreeNYC’s B.Y.O. campaign promoting reusable shopping bags, coffee mugs and water bottles has shown that New Yorkers had overwhelming positive feelings towards the campaign and that it increased their feelings of responsibility for reducing waste. Following the B.Y.O. campaign, 14 percent of New Yorkers reported that it got them into the habit of carrying reusable bags, mugs and bottles; 36 percent reported that they intend to always carry reusable bags; 42 percent intend to always carry a reusable water bottle; and 27 percent intend to always carry a reusable mug.

As part of this initiative, the City is studying the sources of street litter and marine debris, which will help to inform the awareness campaign and allow the City to work closely with affected communities. This will also help to focus outreach efforts where they will have the most impact.

To support New Yorkers who carry their own water bottle, the City will install or repair 500 public water fountains and water bottle refilling stations across the five boroughs. DEP has committed \$5 million to this initiative. DEP will also continue to provide temporary water bottle refilling stations during the summer months through the Water-on-the-Go Program.

Through the Adopt-a-Basket program, run by DSNY, local businesses and

community groups, known as adopters, monitor litter baskets in busy areas. When the baskets are nearly full, adopters change out the liner to keep trash from spilling onto the street. The City will also host beach cleanup events in the summer months through the Clean Streets = Clean Beaches program.

In addition, DSNY sweeps more than 6,000 miles of city roadways each day and maintains approximately 25,000 litter baskets around the city. DEP inspects and cleans the city's approximately 148,000 catch basins which are designed to trap litter before it can make its way into the sewer line. In addition, a fleet of skimmer boats, along with booms surrounding 23 major sewer outfalls throughout the city, are used to capture any debris that makes it through the catch basins before it reaches local waterways. DEP has also built three litter control devices located within sewer outfalls along the Bronx River, and one at the head of the Gowanus Canal, that use hydraulic bar screens and nylon netting systems to capture litter before it can reach the river.

About the New York City Department of Environmental Protection

DEP manages New York 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. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$14 billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

About the New York City Department of Sanitation

DSNY promotes a healthy environment through the efficient management of solid waste and the development of environmentally sound long-range planning for handling refuse, including recyclables. The Department operates 59 district garages and manages a fleet of 2,022 rear-loading collection trucks, 450 mechanical brooms and 365 salt/sand spreaders. The Department clears litter, snow and ice from approximately 6,000 miles of City streets and removes debris from vacant lots as well as abandoned vehicles from City streets.

About the Mayor's Office of Sustainability

The Mayor's Office of Sustainability is implementing policies and programs dedicated to fighting the causes of climate change and making New York City a more sustainable place for all to live. Mayor de Blasio recently announced "One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City," the City's comprehensive plan for a sustainable and resilient city for all New Yorkers that addresses social, economic, and environmental challenges of all New Yorkers. To read the full plan, [click here](#).

About GreeNYC

GreeNYC is New York City's public education program dedicated to educating, engaging, and mobilizing New Yorkers to take simple, but meaningful, steps to reduce their energy use, generate less waste, and live more sustainable lifestyles. These steps are critical to achieving the city's goal of sending zero waste to landfills, reducing waste disposal by 90 percent by 2030 and improving the quality of the city's environment. The GreeNYC program is fronted by the recognizable mascot 'Birdie.' He is the face of all campaigns and can be seen at events throughout the City. Follow Birdie on Facebook ([Birdie NYC](#)) and Twitter ([@Birdie_NYC](#)) for daily musings and updates on how to help make a greener and greater New York.

 [All Press Releases](#)