

Land Acquisition: It's Go Go Go for H2O

The NYC Department of Environmental Protection runs the Land Acquisition Program as a part of the city's long-term strategy to preserve environmentally sensitive lands in its upstate watershed. Land acquisition is a successful element of the city's ability to obtain Filtration Avoidance Determination from the US Environmental Protection Agency. The Land Acquisition Program's mission is for the city to acquire, from willing sellers, at fair market value, fee title to or conservation easements on real property that is considered important for long-term protection of water quality.

Since the inception of the Land Acquisition Program, the city has protected more than 116,000 acres of watershed land in the Catskill/Delaware and Croton reservoir systems, which together provide more than one billion gallons of drinking water to nine million New Yorkers every day. Most of the properties acquired in fee are open for public access including hunting, hiking and fishing. Some



parcels are also licensed for use by local farmers for haying, row crops, livestock grazing, or maple syrup taps, thereby supporting local economies.

Recently, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation issued a new 15-year Water Supply Permit to New York City to continue the Land Acquisition Program in its upstate watershed. The new permit will allow the city to acquire additional properties and easements in fee to ensure that the undeveloped, environmentally-

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Spotlight on Safety

The Eyes Have It

Workplace Eye Safety & Health Month

More than 2,000 people injure their eyes at work each day and about one in 10 of these eye injuries requires at least one missed workday. Furthermore, 10% to 20% will cause temporary or permanent vision loss.

Why are there so many eye injuries on the job? Because there are so many eye hazards, including:

- Flying objects, such as pieces of wood, metal, stone, or sparks. Flying objects cause nearly 70% of eye injuries, according to a Bureau of Labor Statistics study. Many such injuries are caused by objects smaller than the head of a pin.

- Splashes from hazardous chemicals, acids, and other corrosives, or hot metal that can seriously damage the eyes.

OSHA recognizes these dangers and issued 29 CFR 1910.133 which requires workers to use protection "when exposed to eye or face hazards from flying particles, molten metal, liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids, chemical gases or vapors, or potentially injurious light radiation."

Follow your workplace's eye safety measures at all times because eye injuries can happen, well, in the blink of an eye!

For the complete article, click here [🔗](#).

Commissioner's Corner

Today I travelled to Washington D.C. to participate in the 2011 Money Matters Summit, organized by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA). Managers of utilities across the nation came to the Capitol today to discuss the most pressing issue we all face: how to improve water quality and comply with the many federal and state mandates without continuing the double-digit water rate increases that have been necessary in cities and towns across the country. In New York City, water rates have increased by 117% since 2002, most of which was necessary to build projects mandated, but not funded, by the state and federal government. Indeed, of the \$19 billion that **Mayor Bloomberg** has committed to water and wastewater infrastructure since 2002—more than any other social need including education and public safety—only 1.3% has been paid for through federal grants.

This trend is unsustainable, and the cities gathered in Washington today spoke of the need for the EPA and state regulators to work in partnership with local governments to establish common priorities that address the most pressing local water needs. We were joined by **Loren Denton**, head of Municipal Enforcement for EPA, who emphasized a focus on national priorities—like combined sewer overflows—that are developed on three-year cycles. I spoke briefly about a major initiative of DEP's strategic plan—securing adoption by our state and federal regulators of a new, flexible enforcement model that would treat local governments as partners, rather than the adversarial approach that, as Loren acknowledged, characterizes the current enforcement process. I suggested that a partnership approach is essential to the success of initiatives like green infrastructure that EPA Administrator **Lisa Jackson** has made a priority—and could save New Yorkers more than \$2 billion over the next 20 years. You can read the full text of my remarks here [🔗](#).

Speaking of our strategic plan, over the last 10 days I've had the opportunity to present the plan to hundreds of DEP employees, and field some great questions that I hope I was able to answer. I also got some great ideas, including a suggestion to hold



quarterly town-hall-style meetings so that we can talk about DEP's priorities, and our progress meeting our ambitious strategic goals. We're going to implement that suggestion, and you'll be hearing more details in the coming weeks. A video of the presentation will be available shortly.

Last week I also made two trips to the watershed. On Tuesday, I travelled to Walton to attend the monthly Board of Directors meeting of the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC), one of our most important partners in safeguarding the quality of the drinking water supply for nine million New Yorkers. WAC is a not-for-profit organization that works with farmers to establish agricultural easements on watershed farmlands that include the implementation of farming practices that protect water quality. Since 2001, WAC has helped us protect more than 21,000 acres through conservation easements, and we talked about the possibility of hitting 30,000 acres in the near future. I'd like to thank WAC Chair **Fred Huneke**, WAC Executive Director **Craig Cashman**, and the entire WAC Board of Directors for their hard work on our behalf.

I also went to Albany to meet with new DEC Commissioner **Joseph Martens** and his team. We talked about the many environmental challenges New York City is tackling, and creative initiatives—like the Green Infrastructure plan—that have many environmental and sustainability benefits, and cost much less than "grey" infrastructure alternatives that are only useful when it rains. Joe committed to meet with DEP quarterly to ensure that our common priorities stay on track, and we look forward to an active and productive relationship in the months and years ahead.

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. [🔗](#)

Focus on the Field



Arlene Weissman is a Project Manager for DEP's Land Acquisition Program, where she has worked since joining the agency in 1998. As she recalls it, "Everything fell into place when we moved to Woodstock; I joined DEP shortly after relocating upstate." From her base in Kingston, she is involved in identifying, evaluating, and acquiring property upstate for purchase or to be placed in a conservation easement by New York City. Parcels range in size from as small as one acre to more than 1,000 acres.

One tool that Arlene finds particularly helpful is the robust and highly sophisticated *Watershed Lands Information System* (WaLIS)—DEP's

custom database application that manages information about watershed land owned by NYC and its neighbors. WaLIS integrates geographic and property information with natural resource, tax, appraisal, and land acquisition information.

As one of five project managers who work throughout the watershed, Arlene builds on that information by making site visits where she is often joined by property owners or realtors. Her love of the job shows when she describes how she is able to walk on beautiful properties and get to know both the owners and the land's history. As part of her assessment, she also takes GPS points and photographs, and reviews appraisals. Then, Arlene is armed with the best information needed to present at weekly real estate review meetings where discussions are held and decisions are made about a wide range of projects, issues and next steps.

Before working at DEP, she worked at two other NYC agencies as well as the private sector. Arlene enjoys being outdoors with her husband **Bill** and her two children: **Jake**, a high school senior and **Anna**, a high school sophomore.

Event Calendar

March is Greek-Irish American Heritage Month

Greek-Irish American Heritage Month honors and celebrates the achievements and contributions of Greek and Irish immigrants and their descendants in the United States of America.

March is National Women's History Month

This year's theme "*Our History is Our Strength*" pays tribute to the millions of women who have taken action to help create a better world for the times in which they lived, as well as for future generations.

For both, DEP will have a display of posters, artifacts, and literature on the 3rd floor near the cafeteria. For a schedule of other events, [click here](#) 📄

DEP Blood Drive

Lefrak, 6th floor training room: 3/15-3/17, 8am to 1:30pm; Sutton Park, 2nd floor: 3/10, 8:30am to 2:30pm; Downsville Fire Department: 3/9, 9am to 3pm; Kingston, 51 Albany Avenue: 3/7 & 3/14, 1pm to 6pm; Grahamsville Parking Lot: 3/16-3/17, 10am - 3pm.

Did You Know

...that as part of the Land Acquisition Program, which began in 1997, New York City has purchased more than 116,000 acres, or about 179 square miles of the New York City watershed upstate? That is almost the same amount of land that covers the area of combining Brooklyn's 71 square miles with Queens' 109 square miles.

Business Owner's Bill of Rights

New York City recently enacted a Business Owner's Bill of Rights 📄 to ensure that business owners know they have the right to prompt, efficient, and easily accessible service, which has always been the hallmark of DEP's customer service. Copies of the Bill will be posted in all customer service locations.

Beyond New York



Watershed Land Acquisition in Massachusetts

Quabbin Reservoir, located 65 miles west of Boston, is one of the largest reservoirs in the world built exclusively for water supply purposes. It covers 39 square miles and has a capacity of 412 billion gallons. It is one of three watersheds managed by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority and since 1985, more than 22,000 acres of land has been purchased as part of the Watershed Land Acquisition program. Owning and maintaining watershed lands surrounding a water supply source is a method of protecting the source's long-term quality watershed.

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sensitive watershed lands remain protected. The new Water Supply Permit continues with the same framework of the original 1997 program. The new permit also includes a few refinements, including provisions for a pilot riparian buffer acquisition program and a program to encourage land trust participation in acquiring watershed land. In 2010, almost 12,000 acres were signed to contract by DEP, making it the most successful year for signing contracts since the Land Acquisition Program started in 1997.

DEP is most interested in protecting hydrologically sensitive land and buffers from the impacts of nearby impervious surfaces, fertilizers, pesticides, stormwater runoff, and other high-intensity uses associated with development. **David Tobias**, director of the Land Acquisition Program for DEP, says that "land acquisition is fundamental to surface water supplies like the city's because degradation of water quality seems to happen in watersheds when levels of development exceed about 10%. A

number of studies have shown that water deriving from natural and vegetated landscapes is of much higher quality than water deriving from developed basins."

The city's Land Acquisition Program, one of the largest in the world, has been so successful at protecting the integrity of the city's water supply that the United States Environmental Protection Agency awarded the city a 10-year Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) in 2007. Since the beginning of the FAD, the city has committed \$541 million to purchase land to protect our unfiltered drinking water to nine million New Yorkers. DEP has also made unprecedented efforts to balance water quality preservation with the interests and economic vitality of watershed communities, and has agreed to avoid acquisitions in and around existing hamlets where towns have designated such properties as important for future growth. Overall, the Land Acquisition Program is a great way to keep NYC drinking water as one of the best in the world and for generations to come.

Celebrating 25 Years of Art & Poetry

Do you know a New York City student in grade K-12? If so, they may be interested in participating in DEP's, first ever, online Water Resources Art and Poetry Contest. Simply forward the information 📄 to their teacher—or you can do it too—to learn about contest themes, deadlines and how to submit their water inspired art (photography, craft, digital art, drawing, etc.) or poetry entry.

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