

## Marking 50 Years of Managing the Delaware

Extending 330 miles from the western slopes of the Catskill Mountains to the Delaware Bay on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean, the Delaware River is the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi. The Delaware River drains into the 13,539-square-mile Delaware River Basin. This basin makes up less than one percent of the nation's land and yet over 15 million people, or about five percent of the nation's population, rely on it for drinking water, agricultural and industrial uses, and recreation. This includes New York City, which gets nearly 50 percent of its water from three reservoirs situated in the Delaware River Basin (Neversink, Pepacton and Cannonsville). It is an important local, regional and national resource.

On November 2, 1961 at a White House ceremony, President John F. Kennedy and representatives of the states of Delaware, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania signed into law the Delaware River Basin Compact. The compact created the Delaware River Basin Commission which celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anni-



From the DRBC Archives

versary this year. The compact was pioneering in that it marked the first time that the federal government and a group of states joined as equal partners to address river basin planning, and it would become a model for interstate-Federal compact agencies. The members of the DRBC include the governors of the four signatory states and a federal representative appointed by the President. The Mayor of New York City functions as the advisor to the New York governor. The five mem-

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## Spotlight on Safety

### Skylights...Nice but hazardous!

In OSHA's most recent weekly fatality posting, there were to separate reports of workers falling through skylights to their deaths in one single week. One was here in Jamaica, Queens at the NYS Armory. A National Guardsman was pulling a tarp into place on a leaky roof, lost his footing and fell 60 feet to his death through a skylight.

Skylights are both ubiquitous, and dangerous!

OSHA has regulations to protect workers from roof opening hazards, that require "every skylight floor opening and hole shall be guarded by a standard skylight screen or a fixed standard railing on all ex-

posed sides." Likewise, the OSHA Construction Standard addresses hazards posed by skylight openings during construction: Wherever there is a danger of falling through a skylight opening, it shall be guarded by a fixed standard railing on all exposed sides or a cover capable of sustaining the weight of a 200-pound person.

DEP staff, DEP contractors and contract managers alike must be constantly vigilant of their surroundings while working or overseeing work on roof areas, and follow all established protocols.

To read the full article, including safety tips, please click here.

## Commissioner's Corner



Last week marked a watershed moment for protecting our reservoirs as the State Department of Environmental Conservation and DEP announced the approval of a new 15-year water supply permit for New York City.

Under the new permit, DEP can continue to purchase environmentally sensitive lands and to acquire conservation easements in the Catskill and Delaware watersheds, which is critical to keeping Cat/Del water unfiltered over the long term. The issuance of the permit is the culmination of three years of negotiations between DEP, DEC, and dozens of stakeholders, including watershed communities that are home to our water supply, environmental groups, and others. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this Herculean effort, and special thanks to **Jim Tierney** and his team at DEC that worked around the clock to get this done. On the City side, this simply would not have been possible without the efforts of **Paul Rush, Dave Warne, Jeff Graf, Dave Tobias, Matt Schwab, Dave Pujdak, and Abbie Duchon** in Water Supply; **Robin Levine, Sandy Jackson, and Gail Buchman** in Legal, and **Hilary Meltzer, Carrie Noteboom, Rita Dumain, Bob Paparella, and Joe Kroening** at the City's Law Department. Congratulations to all!

On Thursday, **Mayor Bloomberg** presented the preliminary budget for FY 2012, which outlines his plan to close a \$4.58 billion deficit without tax increases or draconian cuts to city-funded

services. While the economy has improved slightly, the Mayor stressed that we must continue to cut the costs of City government—without sacrificing the high-quality services that New Yorkers expect. You can see the Mayor's presentation here.

The Mayor also made clear that we will continue to make the infrastructure investments New York City needs to thrive and grow, including fixing the leaks in the Delaware Aqueduct and completing City Tunnel No. 3, signature DEP projects.

On Friday, I testified before the City Council on Intro 26-A, a bill that re-authorizes the sale of liens based on delinquent water charges. The authority to sell the liens is absolutely essential to keeping water rates as low as possible, and there are some concerns with the proposed legislation that we are working with the City Council to address. Our ultimate goal is a bill that will induce New Yorkers who can afford to pay their water bills to pay, and protect those customers who may be in financial distress. The vast majority of New Yorkers pay their water bills, but a small, persistent group refuse to pay, even though they can afford to. That means higher water rates for everyone else, and that's not fair. We have proposed changes to the draft legislation that we think will strike the right balance, and we are working with the City Council to implement them and re-authorize this critical tool as soon as possible. To read my testimony, click here.

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



The New York City water supply system has in **Thomas Murphy**—Chief of Water Systems Operations—a veteran who knows how to manage every drop of it. Better yet, he is part of a team that makes sure NYC has sufficient high quality water every day. His role at DEP calls for a wide range of responsibilities including reviewing reservoir operations to consider any operational changes needed while maintaining numerous objectives. Tom is also working on the next version of the Flexible Flow Management Program (FFMP) with other representatives to the 1954 Supreme Court Decree to evaluate how much additional water is available for FFMP enhanced water releases while minimizing the risk to the City's water supply.

Thom started working at DEP 22 years ago for the Bureau of Wastewater Treatment as manager of the

biosolid beneficial program. In 2006 he moved to the Bureau of Water Supply. As New York City continually tries to balance the needs of the downstream communities while delivering more than 1 billion gallons of water to nine million people every day, it is Thom's job to be in constant interaction with the parties involved in the operation process to make sure this happens smoothly. "I reach out to different people for different reasons: It may be operational support, community issues, strategic services, and it can all occur in the same day."

His daily duties give him fulfillment, but the fact that he negotiates with the other representatives to the 1954 Supreme Court Decree is the best part of the job. "Helping to negotiate the FFMP and protecting the interest of the City because the Decree Parties have very different interests and goals in how the Delaware Basin reservoirs are operated is fulfilling," said Thom. "It is rewarding when we find consensus of how to manage this precious resource," he said of his interactions with representatives of the Decree Parties.

Thom received a degree in mechanical engineering from Manhattan College and in his spare time he's an avid athlete. Thom belongs to a couple of USTA teams and plays tennis with his two children. He also enjoys going skiing with his family.

## Milestone

Congratulations to **Kathleen Ramelize**, BWSO, on her retirement.

Best wishes to **Vladimir Khassin**, BWSO, who will be retiring on February 25 after 21 years of service.

## Press Box

**Luis Baerga**, the longest serving sewer inspector in the city, was recently profiled in the NY Times. Click here [🔗](#) to read about his 35-year-career in the sewers of New York, and learn more about his theory on the start of "the whole alligator thing" legend.

## Kudos Corner

DEP is among the first recipients of a 2011 United States Water Prize in recognition of the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan and its ongoing commitment to maintain the city's drinking water and improve the quality of the surrounding waterways. The newly created award program is sponsored by the Clean Water America Alliance and is the first of its kind to recognize successful efforts in protecting and improving the health of watersheds in this country. This marks another achievement from the Bureau of Environmental Planning & Analysis and the Office of Green Infrastructure including lead contributors such as **Carter Strickland**, **Angela Licata**, **Es-ther Siskind**, **Julie Stein**, **Viada Kenniff**, and **John McLaughlin**.

## Did You Know

...that the JP Morgan Chase Bank started as a waterworks company? It traces its history back to the founding of The Bank of The Manhattan Company by Aaron Burr in 1799. It was the second commercial bank in New York City and a rival to The Bank of New York—founded in 1784 by Alexander Hamilton.

The Bank of The Manhattan Company had an unusual beginning. The Manhattan Company was formed to bring fresh water to New Yorkers, and that was its stated purpose. But Burr added a provision enabling him to start a bank, which is what he really wanted to do. He did both. The waterworks, called The Manhattan Company, laid 25 miles of pipe in the city and was its first water system. It had a network of wooden pipes made from hollowed pine logs and distributed water to more than 2,000 customers in Lower Manhattan for 43 years until 1842, and the creation of New York City's municipal water system. Oceanus, the Greek god of water, was portrayed in the bank's first logo, representing its origin as a water company.

The Bank of The Manhattan Company outlived the waterworks and became one of the leading banking institutions in the nation—lending money and underwriting bonds, for instance, to help finance the Erie Canal, which opened in 1825.

### (Marking 50 Years of Managing the Delaware... continued)

bers have an equal vote with rulings by majority. The compact remains in force for 100 years with the option to renew with consent from all members.

The compact ended decades of disputes over the conflicting interests of the four basin states to the Delaware River Basin water resources —disputes that extended back to New York City's 1928 plan to tap Delaware tributaries for an additional water supply to support its growing population. New Jersey contested the city's plan and the dispute was taken to the Supreme Court. In 1931, the court granted NYC limited diversions of 440 million gallons per day. Moving beyond political boundaries of the respective states, the compact calls for the DRBC to recognize the Delaware River Basin as a regional asset and directs it to plan and develop its resources accordingly. Significant to New York City, the compact preserves the 1954 Supreme Court decree. The 1954 decree increased the city's total Delaware diversions to 800 million gallons per day and allowed for the construction of the Cannonsville

Reservoir. The decree also requires the city to make compensating releases to the Delaware River and allows New Jersey to divert 100 million gallons per day through the Delaware Raritan Canal. In carrying out its duties the DRBC is required to formulate a Comprehensive Plan to address water supply, pollution control, flood protection, watershed management including fish and wildlife conservation, recreation, hydroelectric power and regulations governing water withdrawals and diversions.

Through DRBC pollution abatement efforts the polluted Delaware of the 1950s has experienced a rebirth with a resurgence of fish populations and excellent water quality. Its tidal stretch between Trenton and Delaware Bay is included in the National Estuary Program, which protects estuarine systems of national significance. In more recent years, the DRBC has worked with New York City on many issues including the Flexible Flow Management Program, understanding and addressing flooding concerns, and installing real-time snowpack measuring devices [🔗](#).

### NYC Simplicity Idea Market



Have you seen what they're posting on Idea Market!? People love our drinking water and want more of it! Two separate people have suggested getting rid of water coolers in City government offices and to install more water drinking fountains in the city. Please go to [nyc.gov/ideamarket](http://nyc.gov/ideamarket) to submit your own ideas, or vote for others' ideas. If you have any suggestions on how to improve the site or want to share your experience with using the site, please contact Tami Lin at [tlin@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:tlin@dep.nyc.gov).

**We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: [newsletter@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:newsletter@dep.nyc.gov). [🔗](#)**