

Watershed Currents

A New and Improved DEP Watershed Protection Website is on the Way!

By John Schwartz

For anyone who has visited the official DEP website (www.nyc.gov/dep) and clicked on the **Watershed Protection** link, you probably noticed the same information that was originally posted about seven years ago pursuant to a 2002 FAD deliverable for Watershed Education and Outreach. Well hold onto your web browser, because DEP's **Watershed Protection** website is about to get a makeover!

During 2008, DEP began converting its entire website to a new Content Management System, which essentially provides the similar "look and feel" you experience when surfing the website of DEP and other City agencies. In early 2009, when DEP's **Watershed Protection** pages were migrated into the new Content Management System, essentially all of the existing content from the previous FAD website was pasted into the new design template as a placeholder.

Last year, the WPP Outreach Working Group was assigned the task of redesigning and updating the DEP **Watershed Protection** website pages in collaboration with our colleagues from the Bureau of Communication and Intergovernmental Affairs (BCIA) who are responsible for overseeing and maintaining the

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ACCESS PERMIT OFFICE

Serving all your watershed recreation needs

By Charlie Laing

The recreational uses of City-water supply lands and waters are important as both an economic and quality-of-life factor to the upstate communities and the staff of the Access Permit Office (APO) are the ones who help make it all happen. Access Permits and Boat Tags open the door to a world of recreational opportunities from fishing on the Pepacton Reservoir in Delaware County to hiking along the southern shore of the New Croton Reservoir in Westchester County.

The APO is managed by three dedicated DEP employees: Peggy Berardi, Maria Mannino and Robbin Rittie. The bulk of their regular work involves processing



The Access Permit Office is (left to right): **Robbin Rittie, Peggy Berardi, Maria Mannino**

With assistance from: **John Staby**, Recreation Manager and **Jeremy Fontenault**, Program Analyst/Data Manager

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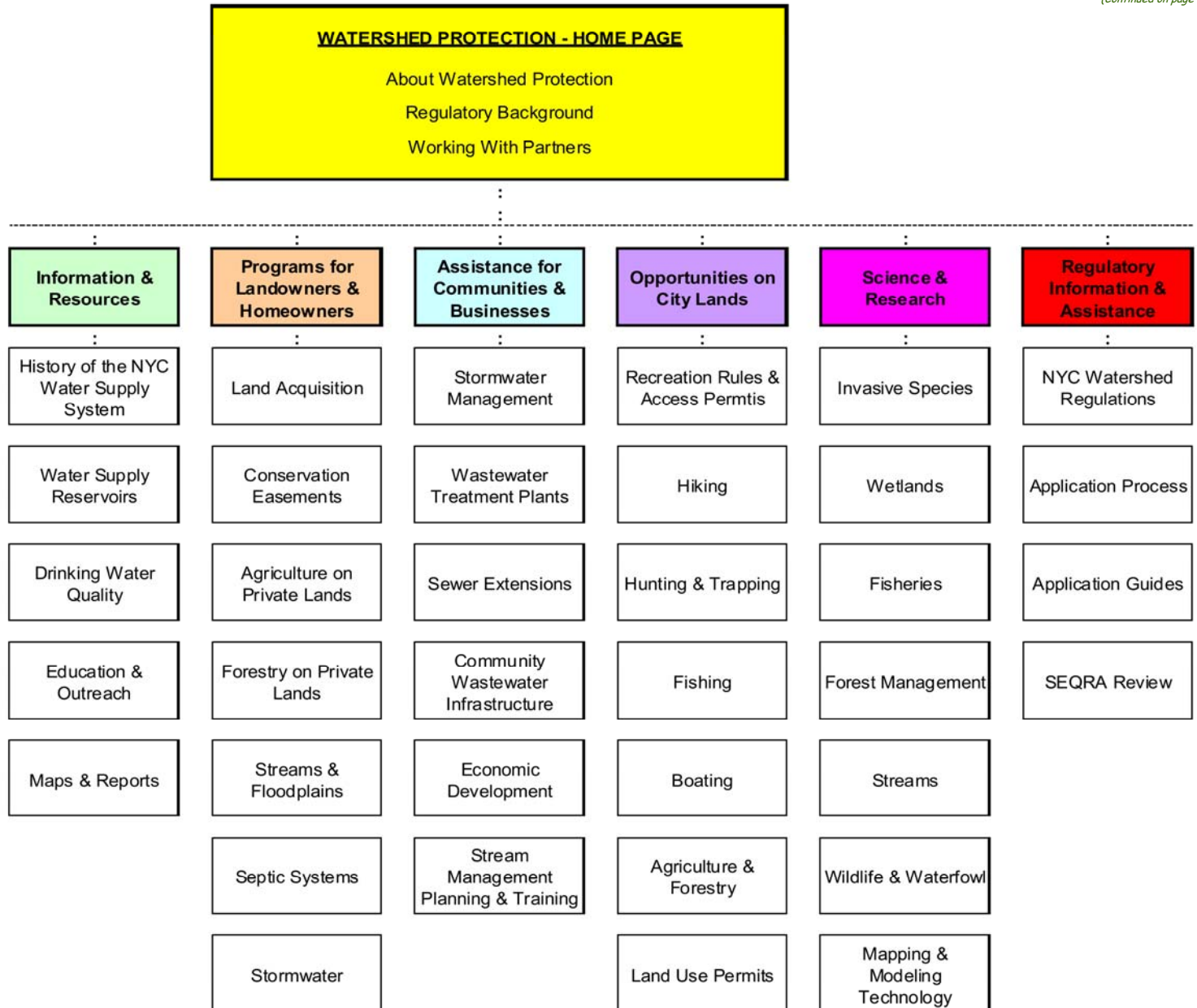
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official DEP website in its entirety.

As a first step, the Working Group thoroughly reviewed the existing **Watershed Protection** website to determine if it was clearly organized from the perspective of our constituents. After several brainstorming sessions, the Working Group proposed a new layout (see graphic) that not only improves the presentation of DEP's watershed protection efforts, but will allow visitors to quickly and easily access information with the fewest "clicks" possible.

Once the new layout was approved, WPP staff went to work developing content - including text, photos and document downloads - to populate the revised **Watershed Protection** website. For some pages, this task simply meant updating older existing content with newer facts and figures about recent program developments. For other pages, especially those describing new DEP initiatives, this task required that

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Pumping Station Improvements at Shaft 6 of the Rondout

By Todd West

The Delaware Aqueduct's Rondout West Branch Tunnel (RWBT) leaks made the recent National Geographic special issue "*Water*".

The RWBT is a 46 mile long deep rock pressure tunnel that has its lowest point, 600 feet below sea level, under the Hudson River. The Board of Water Supply engineers constructed a pump station at the low point at the base of Shaft 6 that could allow the tunnel to be pumped out. While the tunnel will "blow off" or drain from its operating pressure down to about 70 feet above mean sea level (MSL), the remaining 225 million gallons must be pumped and the existing methods are considered obsolete, unreliable, and of inadequate capacity.



Pump Room at Base of Shaft 6, -591 feet below MSL

In preparation for the future repair of the RWBT, DEP's Bureau of Engineering Design and Construction (BEDC) is managing a \$250 million contract with the goal of making DEP better prepared to gain access to the RWBT and keep it dry. Amongst other improvements for access to shaft sites and procuring long lead items, the project increases the pumping capacity at Shaft 6, located in Dutchess County. Contrary to some media reports, this contract is not repairing the leaks.

The current contract will install a series of submersible pumps capable of pumping 80 million gallons per day, with the Shaft serving as a well casing would at your house, only this shaft is 700 feet deep, 13 feet in diameter, and filled with water. It couldn't be dewatered until recently due to

TOIL AND TROUBLE

By Susan Mathys

When the weather turns warm, the days grow long, and daffodils and tulips are in bloom, we start to think about enhancing our gardens with new flowers and shrubs. There is nothing more exciting than watching your garden burst with color after a long cold winter season.



But before we run to the garden centers and purchase all those beautiful plants and shrubs, BEWARE. Do your homework and know what you are buying. The last thing you need in your life is more Toil and Trouble and this is exactly what you will get if you are not careful about choosing what you put in your gardens.



What we are talking about is native versus non-native plants. While garden centers provide an amazing array of beautiful plants and will make many suggestions of what plants and shrubs you can use to beautify your garden, they are not always concerned when it comes to selling you plants that are native to the area. So who cares? Why is it so important to bring native plants to your landscaping? Non-native plants can be just as nice and certainly as beautiful.



According to Westchester Community College's Native Plant Center, there are several reasons why native plants are so much better: native plants are usually more suited to the hot and humid summers here in the Northeast, they require less watering once established, native plants often require less maintenance (and who needs all the extra toil and trouble), native plants are less interesting to deer and they help restore natural food and nectar sources for butterflies, hummingbirds and birds.



So when you are in the garden center or just picking up flowers and plants from your local supermarket, please do your homework and know what you are buying. Unwittingly buying a non-native plant will cause more Toil and Trouble than you want.



For further information please visit Westchester Community College, Native Plant Center at www.nativeplantcenter.org and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at www.wildflower.org/plants. (The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has extensive information on native plants specific to our area.)

LOCAL NATIVE PLANTS



Jacob's Ladder
Polemonium reptans



Wild Columbine
Aquilegia canadensis



Iris
cristata alba



Christmas Fern
Polystichum acrostichoides

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brand new content be developed. One of my roles in this process was to ensure the final web content possesses a uniform narrative tone that is easy to read and understand, with minimal bureaucratic jargon.

After extensive internal reviews near the end of 2009, the new **Watershed Protection** website materials were submitted to BCIA whose staff are now working diligently to bring the new website officially online. In addition to requiring a complete structural redesign and a thorough revamping of content, this task also requires that new internal and external "hot links" be established to ensure that **Watershed Protection** is fully integrated and cross referenced with other parts of the DEP website (such as **Drinking Water** and **Environmental Education**) as well as the websites of our various watershed partners.

In summary, the new and improved **Watershed Protection** website takes into account the range of audiences who might visit DEP online for information or assistance. While this year-long project marks the first major website update in nearly a decade, our goal is to keep our new website current as we continue implementing watershed protection programs into the future.

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new access permit and boat tag applications together with renewals both via mail and email. To give you some idea of the volume of permits being dealt with, in the month of March 2010 the APO processed over 1,600 access permit renewals, 935 new access permits and over 320 replacement permits and tags. They also mailed out over 1,400 boat tag renewal applications and renewed the almost 800 boat tags sent in. There are currently over 116,000 active Access Permits and 11,000 Boat Tags!

You might ask how these dedicated public servants keep up this level of service month after month. Well, the fact is that this isn't even the most important role of the APO staff. Peggy, Maria and Robbin are in many respects the public face of DEP, or at least the public voice, as they deal with thousands of requests and inquiries from residents and recreational users throughout the watershed. Their professionalism and easy rapport with callers goes a long way towards promoting a positive attitude towards the NYC DEP in the watershed which benefits all our programs.

A lot has changed in the City's management of its recreation programs over the past few years including discontinuance of Hunt Tag requirements and the designation of certain City-lands as Public Access Areas (PAAs, areas where no Access Permits are required). These, together with steadily increasing use of email and online resources by recreational users, have dramatically reduced the volume of some of the mailings that are part of the APO routine.

There is also a growing reliance on a powerful relational database known as the Watershed Lands Information System (WaLIS) that can track permits, users and expiration dates and generate reports and statistics to help inform management of the recreational programs. A constant flow of new boats and boat owners being added to the system coupled with the biannual renewal requirements generates a steady flow of mail and email from the APO.

So now you have a good excuse to get that Access Permit you always wanted and you know where to get it. So get out there and recreate.

You can learn more about recreational opportunities by visiting http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/watershed_protection/index.shtml

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concerns about failure of certain key assets.

Four deep (saturation) dives have occurred since February 2008 to demolish the existing 24" diameter manganese bronze plumbing and some concrete encasement, followed by installation a new 24" stainless steel valve that can be remotely operated. Each of these dive events required taking the RWBT out of service and maintaining a steady water level in the Tunnel. The shutdowns were managed by a team of BWS Event Coordinators and Malcolm Pirnie staff working 24/7 and led by Jeff Helmuth of Western Operations. I had the opportunity to serve as an Event Coordinator several



Dive Bell, Saturation Chambers, and Equipment, Shaft 6

times. Staff serving as "ECs" monitor tunnel blow off and refill rates to ensure rates are not beyond set limits and that tunnel levels remain steady, balancing inflows with tunnel leakage, and communicating with others at Rondout and West Branch Reservoirs and several field locations at all hours of the day or night, assuring the divers that DEP is in control of the RWBT.

In January 2010, the shaft was completely drained for the first time since the 1970s, and several staff, including Jeff Helmuth, were allowed to travel down the 700 feet in an elevator and participate in inspections. The RWBT was returned to service and will be blown off one last time for the final dive and improvements before the shaft can be left dry and installation of the new pump station can occur.



Please welcome Mr. Charles Laing, Mr. David Diaz, and Ms. Deborah DeGraw to Watershed Protection & Planning (WPP). Mr. Diaz and Mr. Laing joined WPP in January, Ms. DeGraw in February.

Deb started her career with DEP around ten years ago, working in the Shokan/Kingston area. Over the years she has gained extensive engineering experience in a wide variety of engineering projects in the NYC Watershed. Most recently, Deb served as Deputy Chief of Compliance and Procurement in the Wastewater Operations Division where she was responsible for managing procurement administration, regulatory compliance and EH&S related items for eight city owned wastewater treatment facilities. Within Regulatory & Engineering Programs, Deb will serve as the Wastewater Programs Manager (Section) managing all of the wastewater regulatory review, compliance and inspection sections in the EOH and WOH offices. Deb is a licensed Professional Engineer. She will report directly to Brenda Drake, P.E.. Deb shares her time between the Kingston and Valhalla offices.

David has joined the Land Acquisition Program (LAP), within Watershed Lands and Community Planning (WLCP). He comes to WPP with over ten years of environmental conservation, project management and land management experience, most recently with the Columbia Land Conservancy. David brings to LAP extensive experience involving easement project management, land conservation plan development, property value assessment, and natural resource, soil and wildlife experience. David reports directly to Abbie Duchon and is located in the Kingston office.

Charles joined the Natural Resource Section of (WLCP) overseeing the Lands Permitting office. He brings to WPP experience from two very important land trusts in the Hudson Valley, Scenic Hudson and Columbia Land Conservancy. Charles has extensive project management experience coordinating and overseeing major land protection efforts including acquiring and monitoring lands. Charles is not a stranger to BWS. He was a part of the WLCP team for over five years assisting with land acquisition, conservation easements and working closely with the Watershed Agricultural Program. Charles reports directly to Paul Lenz and is located in the Kingston office.