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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Farrell Sklerov/Michael Saucier (DEP) (718) 595-6600
 Susan Craig/Chanel Caraway (DOHMH) (347) 396-4177

Update on North River Wastewater Treatment Plant Fire and Impacts

Overview of Incident

The North River Wastewater Treatment Plant was taken offline last Wednesday afternoon following a four-alarm fire in the engine room that started at approximately 11:45 am that morning. At approximately 5:15 pm Wednesday, untreated wastewater started to be directly discharged into the Hudson River. The North River plant has been in operation since 1986 and treats an average of 120 million gallons of wastewater a day from Manhattan's west side from Bank Street through northern Manhattan.

Status of Plant Operations

On Friday, DEP made significant progress in making the plant operational by bringing two engines back online and, as a result, all untreated discharges into the Hudson River stopped Friday night as of approximately 9:30 pm. Saturday morning, at approximately 5:00 am, an electricity feeder that supplies power to the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant went offline because of an electrical utility manhole fire. Con Edison was able to isolate the failed feeder, which helped DEP restore internal power. Both engines started again in less than an hour, but as a result of the power interruption, a pump connected to one of the engines did not take flow for several hours due to a mechanical issue related to the power stoppage. Because of this, the plant temporarily was able to treat roughly 104 million gallons a day of wastewater with primary treatment and chlorine disinfection; while the second pump was offline, untreated wastewater was discharged into the Hudson River at a rate of roughly 15-25 million gallons a day. The second pump was restored to service at approximately 2:00 pm Saturday afternoon, and the rate of untreated discharges quickly decreased until they stopped completely at approximately 3:30 pm on Saturday. Since then, intermittent issues with the plant's operations related to the fire continue to be addressed as they arise. No discharges have occurred since Saturday afternoon.

All health advisories in place over the last several days have been lifted. Please refer to the

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NYC Department of
 Environmental Protection
 Communications &
 Intergovernmental Affairs

59-17 Junction Boulevard
 19th Floor
 Flushing, NY 11373

(718) 595 - 6600

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Environmental, Health and Community Impacts **section of this release for the most recent update.**

DEP is still working around the clock to stabilize the operations that have been restored and is putting affected systems back in working order. Of the plant's five engines used to pump wastewater into the facility, only two engines need to be operating during dry weather to handle the wastewater flow into the plant. The wastewater that is being processed is receiving primary treatment and chlorine disinfection, which are the key components of the sewage treatment process needed protect public health. On Wednesday, DEP successfully restarted a third engine at the plant, providing critical redundancy during dry weather and adding additional capacity during storms.

Over the past several days, substantial progress has been made restoring secondary treatment. Two of the three critical systems necessary to achieve secondary treatment, aeration tanks and final settling tanks, have come online and are in operation. The third system—aeration achieved by blowers that supply oxygen to the process—is partially operating, with two of the three blowers needed to achieve secondary treatment currently online. As a result, since Monday DEP has been averaging Total Suspended Solid Removal requirements, a major indicator that the plant is making progress towards meeting secondary standards for treating wastewater.

As a backup in the event of further operational disruptions, and to increase treatment capacity during wet weather, DEP has installed an additional pumping system in case any further issues with the existing system arise. That installation is now fully online, providing an additional 24 million gallons a day of pumping capacity. Because the plant now has enough pumping redundancy with the addition of the third engine and back-up pumping systems that were recently installed, DEP deactivated small "pump arounds" that were temporarily pumping wastewater flow out of an 84-inch sewer at West 117th St. in Manhattan to a 42-inch sewer at Frederick Douglass Boulevard and 117th, which flows to the Wards Island Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Environmental, Health and Community Impacts

The New York City Health Department has lifted the beach pollution advisory for Sea Gate in Brooklyn as well as the beach closure notices for South Beach, Midland Beach and Cedar Grove Beach in Staten Island starting immediately. The most recent water quality sampling indicates that bacteria levels found at these locations and in New York Harbor has returned to acceptable levels. Additionally, the Health Department has determined that recreational activities may resume in the Hudson River, the East River from the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge to Verrazano Bridge, the Harlem River and the Kill Van Kull to the Goethals Bridge. These waterways are now fit for recreational activities that entail possible direct contact with water. Consuming fish caught from these areas is again permissible, provided that individuals follow the New York State guidelines for consumption of fish caught in New York City waterways. That information can be found [here](#).

Warning signs at beaches and kayak launches will be removed as a result. Specific beach information continues to be available to the public through website postings at the City's beach website www.nyc.gov/health/beach, at www.nyc.gov under NYC Right to Know, and at www.nyc.gov/health, the City Information Hotline 311, and

those who have signed up to Notify NYC will receive up to date status information relating to public beaches via Twitter, RSS, email and SMS.

In the event of rainfall that would trigger a wet weather advisory, the Health Department will issue standard wet weather advisories for public beaches through 311, Notify NYC and its Web page. Descriptions of wet weather advisories can be found [here](#).

DEP and the Health Department will continue to take samples in the harbor and at permitted beaches to ensure that bacteria levels remain low. For the most up-to-date information, go to the NYC Health website at www.nyc.gov/health, the DEP website at www.nyc.gov/dep, or call 311. Individuals can also receive proactive alerts by signing up through 311 for Notify NYC, the city's official source for information about emergency events and important city services. Riverbank State Park, located atop the treatment plant, is open. Westchester County and New Jersey DEP are also performing water sampling and water flow modeling to determine any impacts on their rivers and beaches.

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