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26 New Environmental Police Officers Are Sworn In

DEP Police Are Critical to Protecting New York City's Drinking Water Supply and Water Infrastructure

Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland today presided over a graduation ceremony for 26 Environmental Police Officers (EPOs) from DEP's Environmental Police Academy. The academy, launched in 2002, is the first-of-its-kind in the nation to provide training, experience and concentrated course work in advanced environmental laws. The new EPOs will be immediately deployed to protect the city's water supply system and will have the responsibility for safeguarding 2,000 square miles of watershed land and infrastructure in nine counties. Graduates successfully completed a total of 31 weeks of instruction in which they underwent intense training in counterterrorism, the environment, police science, the use of firearms and defensive tactics. In addition, recruits completed courses in environmental conservation law, land navigation, fish and wildlife, and watershed protection. The ceremony took place at the Ulster Performing Arts Center in Kingston. This class brings the police force to 201 sworn members.

"I would like to congratulate our newest Environmental Police Officers, who will be the first line of defense in protecting the water supply for nine million New Yorkers," said Commissioner Strickland. "DEP Police assisted with search and rescues throughout the watershed during and in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene, and their extraordinary efforts saved lives. Our newest officers, who hail from counties both in the city and in the watershed, are more than ready for the challenge of patrolling the largest watershed for drinking water in the United States and our extensive infrastructure."

The graduating class named EPO Matthew Knoetgen, who served honorably in the United States Marine Corps for five years and received three letters of appreciation and one meritorious mast, as the class leader and EPO Andres Gomera, EPO Kylee Pappas, EPO Brandon Velez and EPO Daniel Wahl as squad leaders. During the graduation ceremony several EPOs were given awards for their outstanding performance during the training. EPO Nicholas Schust received the Academic Proficiency Award; EPO Olivia Pullman received the Physical Fitness Award; EPO Scott Hogan received the Firearms Proficiency Award; and EPO Jeremy Arcaro received Best Overall Officer Award.

The complete list of graduates and their home counties:

Jeremy Acaro, Orange; Victor Bonadonna, Westchester; Stephen Davis, Delaware; James Dipietrantonio, Westchester; Malcolm Fowlkes, the Bronx; Andres Gomera, the Bronx; Scott Hogan, Dutchess; Matthew Knoetgen, Delaware; Amrit Maharaj, Suffolk; Lauren Mendizza, Staten Island; Joseph Mercorella, Westchester; Michael Messina, Dutchess; Ralph Miller,

Queens; Kylee Pappas, Westchester; Zachary Petrowsky, Sullivan; Olivia Pullman, Ulster; Matthew Resentein, Brooklyn; Pasquale Santucci, Westchester; Catherine Sass, Nassau; Nicholas Schust, Orange; Bradley Sherburne, Delaware; Christopher Sorano, Westchester; Daniel Szeto, Brooklyn; Ivan Tejada, Manhattan; Brandon Velez, the Bronx; Daniel Wahl, Delaware.

DEP manages the 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, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP employs nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$49 million payroll and \$132 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.5 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program with a planned \$13.2 billion in investments over the next 10 years that creates up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/nycwater DEP

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