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DEP Announces Record Year for Recreational Boating on NYC Reservoirs

Expanded Recreational Access Program Attracted Hundreds of Visitors and Boosted Local Businesses in the Watershed During the Summer Season

Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter H. Strickland today announced that the 2012 recreational boating season on New York City reservoirs was the most successful to date. The expanded recreational boating access kicked off over the Memorial Day weekend and attracted hundreds of residents and visitors to the Neversink, Pepacton, Schoharie, and Cannonsville reservoirs over the summer. The boating season, which ended on Columbus Day, saw nearly 1,000 boat tags issued, of which 45 percent went to individuals from outside of the watershed and 10 percent went to individuals from outside of New York State. The strong boating season was a boon to the local businesses that steam clean the boats and to those that provide tourism related services.

“Opening some of New York’s most scenic land and waterways for recreation has proven immensely popular with both local residents and visitors from out of state,” said Commissioner Strickland. “We will continue to look for opportunities to attract even more visitors to the region and help stimulate the local economy.”

“The boating program is great because it brought people into the store and helped business,” said Don Hogan, owner of Hogan’s General Store in Andes, NY. “People enjoyed the experience of being able to be on the reservoir and I have had many repeat customers. They enjoyed the leaves this fall and hopefully have gotten some nice pictures that they will post on the internet and it will be good for the tourist trade.”

“We had a great summer for boating, I’m really pleased,” said Alan Rosa, Executive Director of the Catskill Watershed Corporation. “It was good for the local economy, and gave hundreds of people a new way to enjoy the Catskills. We’re looking forward to next year.”

A total of 983 tags were issued and included 697 kayaks, 241 canoes, 31 rowboats, two sculls, and 12 small sailboats. Permits were available free of charge at DEP’s website and required a certification that the boat had been steam cleaned by a certified vendor. Tags were issued to 70 individuals from New York City as well as boaters hailing from Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, Kansas and Florida. The Pepacton Reservoir was the most popular launch site with over 650 permits issued, followed by the Neversink, Cannonsville and Schoharie.

This year's expanded recreational boating access program followed a three-year pilot which began in 2009 and opened up the Cannonsville Reservoir to recreational boating. Prior to 2009, only metal rowboats with DEP issued tags were allowed on the reservoir and only for the purpose of fishing. Monitoring reports during the three-year pilot revealed no negative impacts to water quality and no indication of invasive species in the Cannonsville Reservoir — key indications that expanding the program to other reservoirs would not have a negative effect on DEP's ability to provide clean drinking water.

Since 2003, DEP has significantly expanded the amount of City-owned land within the watershed that is open for recreation. Currently, approximately 108,000 acres — more than double the amount available in 2003 — is open to the public. This comprises more than two-thirds of City-owned property in the watershed. Of the 108,000 total acres open for recreation, 75,000 are land areas and 33,000 are on water. Most of the City's newly acquired property is open to the public for activities such as hunting, hiking and fishing, as well as economic activities like hay cropping.

Expanding recreational opportunities in the watershed is one of the goals outlined in *Strategy 2011-2014*, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives that will ensure that DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. The plan is available on DEP's website at www.nyc.gov/dep.

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 \$68 million payroll and \$153 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.