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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New York City Acquires 187 Acres In East Fishkill

Commissioner Christopher O. Ward of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that as part of its continuing watershed protection program the DEP has acquired a 187-acre property on Leetown Road in the Town of East Fishkill, Dutchess County. The acquisition, which was finalized in late-June, will help to protect the drainage area of the West Branch Reservoir, an important component of the City's Catskill/Delaware water supply system.

Since 1997, throughout its watershed east and west of the Hudson River the City has secured over 59,000 acres in both land purchases and conservation easements. This includes 918 acres in Dutchess and 7,103 acres in Putnam County to protect the West Branch and Boyd's Corners Reservoirs, and an additional 1,521 acres in Westchester County to protect the Kensico and Croton Reservoirs. Much of this property has been opened for recreation for holders of free DEP Public Access Permits.

"Land acquisition allows the City to forever protect valuable watershed property from development and pollution," said Commissioner Ward. "The response from landowners to the Program has been remarkable. To date, over 680 willing sellers throughout the watershed have agreed to accept the City's fair-market-value purchase offers, either selling land outright or granting conservation easements. We will continue to identify strategic properties through this successful program through at least 2006."

The 59,000 acres of land and easements acquired or under contract throughout the watershed (in Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, and five counties west of the Hudson River) include about 8,000 acres of farm easements that are being acquired by the Watershed Agricultural Council. The City's acquisitions in the Croton system (primarily in Yorktown, in the New Croton Reservoir Basin), along with several purchases by New York State for protection of the City's watershed, total about 1,350 acres.

The Land Acquisition Program acquires land or conservation easements at fair market value from willing sellers only, and pays property taxes in proportion to the property rights acquired. Landowners are therefore paid upfront for

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development rights, and are relieved of significant property tax burdens in perpetuity. Landowners can generally continue to harvest timber from the land under management plans approved by the DEP. Under this arrangement, the DEP effectively pays good land stewards to continue to care for their land, protect their views from development, and enjoy passive recreational opportunities. For more information about selling land or easements, landowners can contact the DEP's Land Acquisition Program at (800) 575-LAND.

The City has opened over 43,000 acres of its watershed land to public recreation, including over 27,000 acres of the land acquired under the Land Acquisition Program. The DEP has issued over 67,000 public access permits and over 6,300 hunting tags to people wanting to use City watershed property for recreation. There were also almost 10,000 boat tags issued in 2003 for people to use boats on City reservoirs.

Last year the DEP paid over \$83 million in property taxes to watershed communities.