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Department of Environmental Protection and Delaware County Employees Honored for their Hurricane Sandy Recovery Efforts

Volunteers Brought Critical Equipment to New York City and helped remove downed trees and pump flood water

New York City Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland last week honored 52 DEP upstate employees and six members of the Delaware County Department of Public Works for their exemplary work in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. The high winds and record storm surge that accompanied the Hurricane resulted in tens of thousands of downed trees, nearly half a million people without electricity and flooding to critical infrastructure throughout New York City and the work of the honorees helped some of the hardest-hit communities in the city begin the recovery from the historic storm. Commissioner Strickland was joined by DEP Chief Operating Officer Kathryn Garcia and Deputy Commissioner for Water Supply Paul Rush at the ceremony, which was held this past Friday at the DEP Facility in Downsville.

“The winds and storm surge of Hurricane Sandy devastated portions of New York City and thankfully we were able to mobilize these staff and resources from upstate to aid in the recovery effort,” said Commissioner Strickland. “We are grateful to Supervisor Eisel and Delaware County for their support in this effort and for the extraordinary dedication of all the volunteers that helped New York City begin its recovery.”

“Delaware County was proud to help New York City residents recover from damage left in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy,” said Delaware County Board of Supervisors chairman James Eisel. “We were fortunate to have the help of New York City after Hurricane Irene and the June 2006 flood damaged many of the county’s homes and businesses. After each of these devastating storms, Delaware County and New York City have shown that true partners work together best in times of need.”

Immediately after the storm, two teams of upstate workers were deployed to New York City to assist in areas that were most affected by the storm. The first team – known as Task Force Godwin for the industrial sized pumps they operated – arrived in New York City on October 30th and worked continuously to remove flood water from several critical locations over the span of seven days. They helped to pump out Manhattan’s Battery Underpass, a sewage pump station in Brooklyn, and a City Department of Education facility.

The second team – known as Task Force Chipper – worked with the New York City Parks Department to remove trees and limbs that had fallen on power lines, homes and across

streets in some of the hardest hit neighborhoods in Queens. Its members arrived in New York City on November 1st and worked continuously for over two weeks, returning home on November 16th. In response, many Queens residents wrote letters to thank the task force for its quick and professional work.

Task Force Chipper included six employees from the Delaware County Department of Public Works, which volunteered its manpower and equipment to help with the tree removal. Their assistance underscored a longstanding partnership between DEP and Delaware County that dates back decades. During previous storms that flooded upstate communities, DEP had sent employees based in New York City to help pump out basements and homes in Delaware County.

Additionally, as the storm approached, upstate staff from DEP's Bureau of Water Supply quickly set up an emergency operations center to ensure reliable communications and prepared generators and key facilities throughout the watershed. As the storm made landfall on October 29th, many of these employees worked around the clock to ensure New Yorkers had a high quality water supply and to remove trees from city roads across the watershed.

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 over \$13 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create 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.

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