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Department of Environmental Protection Announces Pilot Test for Natural Weed Control Along City-Owned Roads in the Watershed

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on Tuesday announced a pilot program to test two natural and organic herbicides to control weeds along City-owned roads in the watershed. The test will examine the effectiveness of natural herbicides to eliminate weeds beneath guiderrails that line some of the 99 miles of road maintained by DEP. Controlling weed growth along these corridors is important for public safety and proper drainage along roadway shoulders. DEP also announced that in 2015 it will not use an herbicide called glyphosate for roadway maintenance.

“Although DEP is confident that previous herbicide applications did not pose a threat to our water supply, I have directed our staff to explore alternatives for weed control after hearing concerns from many local residents last year,” **DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd** said. “By testing natural herbicides along portions of our guiderrails this year, DEP hopes to find a new solution that balances public safety, environmental stewardship, water quality protection, and the concerns of our neighbors.”

Since 2009, DEP had worked with the state Department of Transportation to apply the herbicide glyphosate along guiderrails on City-owned roads in the watershed. The use of glyphosate was approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and extensive scientific testing and water quality monitoring found that it had no effect on nearby bodies of water, including City reservoirs. Glyphosate will not be used to control weeds along city-owned roads in 2015.

Instead, DEP will begin testing two alternative weed-control options in June, using products called Finale and Burnout II. Both are natural, non-synthetic products that are also approved by federal regulators. Finale, also known as glufosinate, is a natural compound based on two types of fungi. Burnout II is an organic mixture of clove oil and citric acid. Both are also approved by EPA. Each herbicide will be applied by DEP to two 100-yard lengths of roadside, which will be monitored carefully to examine effectiveness. Two nearby stretches of road will also be left untreated to provide a constant point of comparison for the test. Roadways selected for the test include a stretch of Route 28A in the vicinity of the Ben Nesin Lab building, and Route 28A between Whispell Road and West Shokan Heights Road. The remainder of guiderrails along City-owned roads will be manually maintained by trimmers this year. DEP will begin testing the two herbicides in late June, and the department will post signs around test sites in advance.

The maintenance of guide rails is important for public safety and proper road

More Information

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drainage in the watershed. Tall weeds can reduce sight distances for drivers, especially along bends. Uncontrolled growth along the guiderails can also make it difficult for motorists to see and avoid deer. Dense weed growth can lead to ponding along the roadsides, which causes pavement to crack and form potholes over time.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of high quality water each day to more than 9 million New Yorkers. This includes more than 70 upstate communities and institutions in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties who consume an average of 110 million total gallons of drinking water daily from New York City's water supply system. 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 has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and other professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$70 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.7 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 nearly \$14 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 nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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