

R-eel-y Good Water Quality



Earlier today, DEP employees and staff from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation hosted students from the Saint Clare and New York Harbor Schools, as well as Cub Scouts from Pack 25, at the third annual count of juvenile glass eels in Staten Island's Richmond Creek Bluebelt. The juvenile eels hatch in the Atlantic

Ocean and migrate to healthy streams and rivers along the east coast, where they can live for up to 20 years. Eel populations are an important indicator of water quality and experts have seen a resurgence in New York following more than \$10 billion in harbor water quality investments over the last decade. More photos from can be viewed on [DEP's Flickr account](#).

Spotlight on Safety

NYC Construction Safety Week

The annual New York City Buildings Construction Safety Week (CSW) is taking place from April 28 - May 2. A major component of Construction Safety Week is the Build Safe/Live Safe Conference, which will be held on Tuesday, April 29. This event is an opportunity for department experts to outline industry trends, discuss safe construction operations, and highlight upcoming changes to construction practices in New York City.

DEP's Bureau of Engineering, Design and Construction (BEDC) will celebrate Construction Safety Week by highlighting the theme of Lockout/Tagout (LOTO). For a third consecutive year, BEDC will have a booth at the event, and

several DEP contractors are also participating.

Some of the planned activities and events include:

- A LOTO themed poster contest
- Distribution of a Best Management Practice flyer on LOTO
- LOTO word search and crossword puzzles
- Releasing an updated LOTO lessons learned document.

For more information on NYC Construction Safety Week and the DOB Build Safe/Live Safe Conference, please visit [Construction Safety Week 2014](#).

Commissioner's Corner

Last week I presented DEP's proposed plan for the next fiscal year's water rate and many other initiatives to the New York City Water Board. In addition to the lowest water and sewer rate increase in nearly a decade, we also introduced a number of new customer service programs that will provide significant benefits to our ratepayers.

First, DEP plans to freeze the minimum charge for customers who use less than 100 gallons of water a day. That alone will save our ratepayers nearly \$2.1 million a year, and will result in no rate increase for nearly a quarter of single family homeowners, many of whom are senior citizens. We will also fund a Home Water Assistance Program to assist low-income homeowners by partnering with the NYC Human Resources Administration, which oversees the federal Home Energy Assistance Program. In addition, DEP will extend our leak forgiveness program to include maintainable leaks, such as toilets and faucets. Thanks to advances in technology, DEP's Leak Notification Program has already saved customers \$45 million in leak-related charges since 2011.

To make appeals easier, we are also expanding the deadline to file an appeal with the Water Board from 30 to 60 days. In addition, we will exclude customers who have a pending appeal from being listed on the 90-day lien sale list and new rules will grant customers who are issued a "catch-up" bill after the installation of an Automated Meter Reader 90 days to pay their bill, interest free. Automated Meter Readers have been a huge success—the program has resulted in a 79 percent reduction in estimated bills since 2009 and a 49 percent reduction in billing disputes since 2011.

We have been able to achieve these gains in customer service



and in keeping water and sewer charges low thanks, in large part, to the efforts of our operating bureaus. Over the past few years you all have helped us identify more than 75 cost saving initiatives that are saving ratepayers \$69.4 million each year. By the end of the year, we anticipate additional advances to produce recurring annual savings of \$85.4 million.

We have also benefited from the recent low interest rate environment. Since 2009, the Water Finance Authority has taken advantage of lower rates to refinance and buy back more than \$7.9 billion of higher-cost debt, achieving more than \$2.3 billion in savings.

Helping matters, **Mayor de Blasio** plans to return an additional 10 percent (\$22 million) of the fiscal year 2014 rental payment we make to the City to operate the the water and sewer system to benefit DEP's ratepayers. Combined with the \$14 million that will be returned as part of the rental return pilot, a total of \$36 million will be returned to the system.

You should all take great pride in continuing the long tradition of investing in the city's future and keeping one of our most precious resources affordable for all New Yorkers. I want to give a special thanks to our Bureau of Customer Services and DEP's Office of Information technology for their hard work developing these new customer service programs.

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EHS liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city. CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH PIPELINE. HELP IS ON THE WAY. 🙋

Focus on the Field



DEP's in-city water distribution and wastewater collection systems total nearly 15,000 miles of buried pipes, and ensuring that they remain in a state of good repair is essential to maintaining public health in the city. Over the last 25 years, Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations (BWSO) Supervisor **Curvin Hamilton** has worked on the systems throughout the five boroughs, and recently he has been involved with some of the department's newest initiatives to protect harbor water quality.

Hamilton was born in Trinidad and came to the United States with his family in 1969. They settled in Brooklyn and later moved to Queens where he attended Aviation High School in Long Island City. After graduation Hamilton joined the Air Force and was stationed at Fairchild Air Force Base in Washington State where he did construction work. Four years later he left active duty, joined the Air Force Reserves and returned to New York City.

Hamilton joined DEP as an apprentice laborer for BWSO in 1989. Two years later he became a construction laborer and, over the years, was assigned to repair yards in Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn where he responded to and made repairs to water main and sewer breaks. In 2000, Hamilton became a supervisor and he is now based out of the Brooklyn North repair yard where he works with a team of construction and apprentice laborers on sewer maintenance. Each morning, Hamilton dispatches crews to respond to work orders generated through the Hansen system. Once the crews are out in the field, Hamilton will visit the work sites to help diagnose the cause of the

problem or determine whether the work requires the assistance of the emergency contractor.

"The sewer system plays an important role in ensuring a high quality of life in New York City and I take great satisfaction in working with the Brooklyn North team to resolve issues for residents, while also protecting the environment," said Hamilton.

Hamilton has also been involved with the installation of flow monitors in trunk sewers. The monitors will measure the depth and velocity of the flow in the trunk lines, which will help to ensure that the system is operating according to design and inform the accuracy of modeling efforts as well as plans for future construction. The work is currently taking place in Queens and, if it proves successful, may be brought to all five boroughs. Hamilton has also been leading the inspection of stormwater outfalls along Newtown Creek in order to help identify manholes for an upcoming sampling program.

"Curvin has worked his way up through the ranks and does a tremendous job as a supervisor for Brooklyn North," said BWSO's Chief of Maintenance and Repair **Dennis Delaney**. "He is also leading some of our newest initiatives to ensure that we optimize the capacity of the sewer system and protect the health of New York harbor."

Hamilton is still a member of the Air Force Reserves and during the Iraq war he was deployed twice to Oman where he helped to build bases and air fields for deployment operations. In his free time he enjoys cheering on the Yankees and looks forward to attending his son's college graduation later this spring.

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov.

Welcome Aboard!



Yesterday, 17 new employees attended orientation and received an overview of the department from Chief Financial Officer **Steve Lawitts** and Deputy Director of Human Resources **Herb Roth**. We hope everyone will join us in welcoming them to DEP!

Robert Brennan, Gareth A. King and Johann S. Velez with BWSO; **Christopher M. DePalma, Karen E. Moore, Kimberly Schiappa, La Marr Taylor, Jean-Christian Tiani Taffou and Anthony Vaccaro** with BWS; **Onayinka Famutimi, Ricardo Kuang, Anne M. Ruzek and Mary Van Noy** with BEDC; **Ryan C. Fleming** with BEPA; **Prakash Gupta** and **Yuki Kaneda** with BWT; and **Shaika Sadeque** with Sustainability.

Remembering Aron Thomas



Roughly 140 employees gathered at DEP's office in Kingston on Monday to remember Watershed Maintainer Aron J. Thomas, who died tragically at the office in February. The memorial ceremony was held on Workers Memorial Day, an international day of remembrance for those who have lost their lives or suffered debilitating injuries at work. A

monument made of granite with a bronze plaque was set at the base of a Redbud tree that was planted in Aron's memory. During the ceremony, Aron's colleagues and friends remembered him as a proud father, a skilled outdoorsman, a volunteer firefighter, and for his sharp wit and sense of humor.

Take Our Children to Work Day



Last week, more than 300 young people attended Take Our Children to Work Day events at DEP facilities in New York City and the Watershed. The children at the Gramsville Office got a special treat—a demonstration by DEP Police Officer **Kelly Kilpatrick** and K-9 Bingham. Please [click here](#) to see more photos from the event.