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11-06

February 2, 2011

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DEP Announces \$3 Million in Community-Based Green Infrastructure Program Grants

First Meeting for Public Involvement in Planning Process Is Tonight

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today announced up to \$3 million in grants this year for green infrastructure projects within combined sewer overflow drainage areas in New York City as part of the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan. The grants can be used for green roofs, enhanced tree pits, and other measures to reduce and manage stormwater on private property and public sidewalks. The launch of the grant program fulfills a 2011 State of the City commitment made by Mayor Bloomberg last month, and helps achieve the PlaNYC goal of improving water quality. New York City, like other older urban centers, is largely serviced by a combined sewer system where stormwater and wastewater are carried through a single pipe. During heavy storms, the system can exceed its capacity, and must discharge a mix of stormwater and wastewater — called a combined sewer overflow, or CSO — into New York Harbor. The NYC Green Infrastructure Plan, announced by Mayor Bloomberg last September, explains how the City will use green infrastructure to improve the quality of NYC's waterways by capturing and retaining stormwater to reduce sewer overflows. The grant announcement coincides with a public meeting tonight to describe the Green Infrastructure Plan and the formation of the Green Infrastructure Citizens Group, a forum for community participation in shaping and implementing City's green infrastructure program.

"Green Infrastructure has the potential to be extremely cost-effective," said Deputy Mayor for Operations Stephen Goldsmith. "These grants will foster creativity and reward innovative thinking while helping to forge essential community partnerships."

"The success of the Green Infrastructure Plan depends on support from local communities to help us develop innovative ways to deal with stormwater where it falls — not after it enters the sewer system, where it can impair water quality," said Commissioner Holloway. "The grants awarded through this program will give New Yorkers a unique opportunity to help DEP improve water quality —

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and improve their neighborhoods. That's a big reason why we believe that the Green Infrastructure Plan is the best, fastest, and most cost-effective way to continue the tremendous water quality improvements that are largely due to Mayor Bloomberg's commitment to building the infrastructure New York City needs to thrive and grow."

"Creating a greener, greater New York is not something that City government can do alone," said Director of the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability David Bragdon. "By empowering New Yorkers to implement sustainable stormwater management solutions, we will inspire innovation and foster citizen stewardship."

"Green infrastructure is an innovative approach to reducing significant amounts of pathogens and contaminants that are contained in stormwater runoff and associated combined sewer overflows," said Acting Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Joe Martens. "It also beautifies urban neighborhoods and provides a host of other community and economic benefits. We applaud New York City's plans to enhance water quality through direct support for this community-driven environmental protection effort."

Private property owners, businesses, and not-for-profit organizations are eligible for funding for projects that use green infrastructure to reduce or manage stormwater on private property and public sidewalks. Preference for grants will be given to projects that can provide evidence that they will create further benefits such as increased shade, decreased energy use for cooling buildings, increased awareness about stormwater management, and increased community stewardship. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will join City personnel as part of the grant evaluation process. More information and the grant application can be found at www.nyc.gov/dep. Applications are due by April 1, 2011. The recipients of the Green Infrastructure Grants will be announced as part of the update to PlaNYC.

The first Green Infrastructure Citizens Group meeting will take place tonight, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm, at Pace University's NYC Downtown Campus in the Multi-Purpose Room at One Pace Plaza Pace University. It is co-sponsored by Pace University's Office of Government and Community Relations. Attendees are advised to use the entrance for the Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts (3 Spruce Street), which is located between Nassau Street and Gold Street. The group will be open to all members of the public and will be organized by a Steering Committee which will comprise members from environmental, real estate, economic development, design and academic communities and from the public. The meeting will provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions and make recommendations on the implementation of the plan, which can be viewed on DEP's website at: www.nyc.gov/dep/greeninfrastructure.

The NYC Green Infrastructure Plan will improve harbor water quality by capturing and retaining stormwater runoff before it enters the sewer system. Most green infrastructure uses natural features, like green-roofs, and adds structural designs, like porous pavement and tree pits, to absorb and retain stormwater. By replacing the current "grey" strategy with the Green Infrastructure Plan, the City will cut CSOs by more than 12 billion gallons per year by 2030 — a 40% reduction — which is two billion gallons more per year than the under the current plan. The Green Infrastructure Plan will cost New Yorkers \$2.4 billion less than the tanks and tunnels that we are currently required to build.

Green infrastructure uses vegetation, soils, and other structural elements to mimic natural hydrologic cycles by slowing down, absorbing and evaporating stormwater. These characteristics, the minimal energy and manpower required for operation, and the relatively quick installation mean that green infrastructure can be cost-effective and provide immediate benefits. Types of green infrastructure projects include: blue roofs and green roofs for new and existing buildings that slow roof water from draining from roofs too quickly and overwhelming storm sewers; porous pavement for parking lots that allows water to seep through it and be absorbed into the ground rather than becoming runoff; tree pits and streetside swales for roadways that allow water to pool in underground holding areas until it can dissipate in the ground or transpire through plants; wetlands and swales for parks; rain barrels for low-density residential areas; and a compilation of these techniques for high-density residential housing.

The NYC Green Infrastructure Plan proposes to invest a total of \$5.3 billion in a mix of green infrastructure, cost-effective grey infrastructure, system-wide optimization, and conservation. This multi-pronged strategy will result in a net reduction in combined sewer overflows of roughly 12 billion gallons per year. The City is prepared to commit \$1.5 billion over 20 years to green infrastructure projects in order to prevent the first inch of rainfall on 10% of the impervious areas in combined sewer areas from entering the sewer system. In addition, over 20 years approximately \$900 million will be funded by private investment through new regulations and standards that will require onsite stormwater detention and infiltration to be incorporated into design and construction, as is the state-of-the-art in other cities. By capturing the first inch of rain on 1.5% of impervious surfaces, by 2015, an additional 2.5% by 2020, and additional 3% by 2025 and the remaining 3% by 2030, the green element of the plan will reduce combined sewer overflows by 1.5 billion gallons per year. Green infrastructure investments will be targeted to all of the city's combined sewer drainage areas, including the South Bronx, Flushing and northeastern Queens, and the area around the Gowanus Canal.

DEP manages the city's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,400 miles of sewer lines take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP also manages storm water throughout the city, and ensures that the city's facilities comply with the Clean Water Act, and other federal, state and local rules and regulations. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater.

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