

Special Guest *Commissioner's Corner*



Paul Rush, DEP's Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Water Supply, is a guest commentator this week.

In my travels throughout the watershed this winter, one question keeps popping up. Is DEP worried about the lack of snow this year?

This inquiry might seem strange to our colleagues in the five boroughs—who this winter endured one of the biggest blizzards in the history of New York City. The situation upstate—especially in the Catskills—has been very different. The winter months here brought mild temperatures and practically zero snow. The mountains that surround our reservoirs have remained tree-trunk brown instead of snow-covered white, and no substantial ice accumulated on any of our waters.

It's hard to imagine two consecutive winters that were more different. The winter of 2014-2015 in our watershed was marked by huge amounts of snow and relentless sub-freezing temperatures that stretched well into March. Because much of our work is driven by data, numbers say a lot about the past two winters.

In February 2015, our Catskill-Delaware watershed had a vast snowpack that contained roughly 90 billion gallons of water. Historically, those two watersheds combined for roughly 50 billion gallons of water trapped in the snow in February. But this year? Our measurements showed zero snow in the Catskills for February. These data are only snapshots in time, but they reasonably illustrate the polar-opposite extremes that we've seen over the past two winters.

In a similar guest column last year, I mentioned that melting snow and spring rains are important for refilling our water supply reservoirs. Decades of historical data show that snow water and rain account for approximately 580 billion gallons of runoff entering our reservoirs in the Catskills from November to May each year. That's enough water to supply the City for more than a year.

So let's go back to that question: is the Bureau of Water Supply worried about having zero snow this year? The answer is no. The reservoir system is currently at 94 percent of its capacity, roughly 5 percent ahead of the average storage for this time of year. Average streamflow during winter has actually been higher than usual because snow was replaced by many moderate-to-

heavy rainstorms that moved into the watershed during winter. Our Operations Support Tool, which uses dozens of inputs and advanced weather forecasting to predict reservoir storage, shows a very strong probability that our reservoirs will completely refill by June. In addition, the City now has access to Croton System water through the Croton Filtration Plant, which provides another source of redundancy for our supply.

Because we thought this winter was strange, our weather experts decided to look back at the historic record. What they found was surprising. History suggests there is little connection between snowless winters and droughts. That rings true during this winter of bare mountains and nearly full reservoirs.

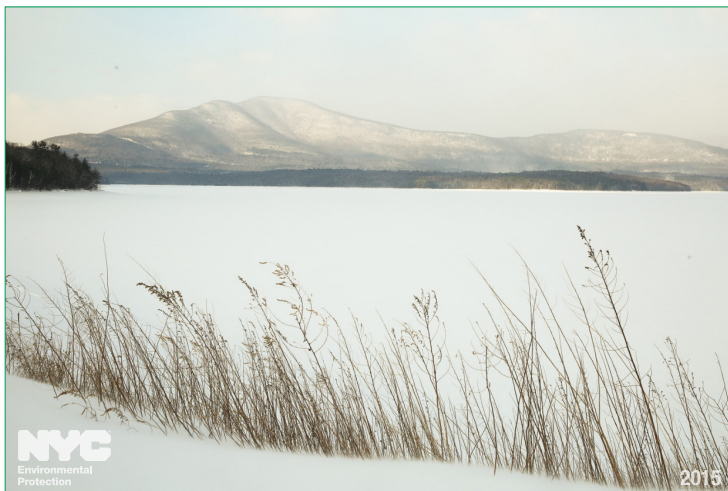
Spotlight on Safety

Technical Library

The Office of Environmental, Health and Safety (OEHS) maintains a link on The Source's Employee Resource Center, which connects employees to various OEHS resources. One of these resources is the EHS Technical Library, which contains a host of reference documents related to environmental, health and safety. For example, the Codes and Standards section contains points of contact for bureaus who have copies of consensus and industry standards available for use by DEP employees. Other resources include EHS technical

reference documents, DEP's policies and procedures, templates and checklists, as well as other supporting documents on environmental, health and safety compliance.

OEHS would like to continue to build the Technical Library so it can serve as an important source for EHS reference materials. If you think there are any additional informational resources that should be added to the library, please [send your suggestions to EHS](#). To visit the EHS Technical Library [click here](#).



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.

Rain Barrels in Castle Hill



This past Saturday, the Bureau of Public Affairs and Communications joined **New York City Council Member Annabel Palma** to distribute rain barrels to approximately 200 homeowners in the Castle Hill section of the Bronx. The 60-gallon rain barrels are easy to install, and connect directly to a property owner's downspout to capture and store the stormwater that falls on the rooftop. The water collected in the rain barrel can then be used to water lawns and gardens, or for other outdoor chores. Since 2008, DEP has distributed more than 3,500 rain barrels to New York City homeowners. Saturday's event was held at the YMCA on Castle Hill Avenue and the rain barrels were provided free of charge. [Learn more here.](#)

Spring Blood Drive



The Greater New York Blood Program is experiencing a serious shortage due to a fall-off in donations. To help ensure that blood will be available to those who need it, DEP will host blood drives in the Kingston/Catskill Area: 51 Albany Avenue, 3/21 and 3/28, 1:00pm to 6:00pm.

In the News



DISPOSABLE WIPES CLOGGING CITY PIPES Cities around the world are trying to spread a not-so-well-known message: Stop flushing disposable wipes. View the CBS News story [here](#).

NEW YORK'S BIG GREEN CLEAN Tom Heap visits New York to find out how the City is cleaning up its waterways and bringing back oysters to the harbor... The City's Department of Environmental Protection has embarked on a Green Infrastructure Plan... There are green roof projects, tree-planting programs, and bioswales are being constructed. Listen to the BBC radio story [here](#).

Annual World Fishing & Outdoor Expo



Last weekend, staff from the Bureau of Water Supply attended the 39th Annual World Fishing & Outdoor Expo at Rockland County Community College. DEP provided information about fishing, hiking, hunting and other outdoor activities that are popular on more than 130,000 acres of City-owned lands and waters that are open for recreation in the watershed. The booth also offered visitors a chance to sign up for their free DEP Access Permit. More than 20,000 people attend the expo each year; it is one of the largest shows of its kind in the Northeast.

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