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**NEW YORK CITY TO RECEIVE SOURCE WATER PROTECTION
AWARD FROM AMERICAN WATER WORKS ASSOCIATION**

Award Recognizes Department of Environmental Protection's Innovative and Effective Programs That Protect Water Quality Across its Upstate Watersheds

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Carter Strickland announced today that the City will receive the 2013 “Exemplary Source Water Protection Award” from the American Water Works Association (AWWA). The award for metropolitan-size systems recognizes organizations that protect drinking water at its source by setting ambitious goals and implementing programs that are effective and innovative. DEP Deputy Commissioner for Water Supply Paul Rush will accept the award at the AWWA Annual Conference & Exposition in June.

“We are thrilled that AWWA has chosen to recognize New York City for its innovative thinking, long term planning, and robust financial commitment to source-water protection,” said Commissioner Strickland. “This award underscores DEP’s successful protection of water quality in our upstate watersheds by acquiring land around our reservoirs and their headwaters, helping neighboring communities improve their wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and working with farmers, local governments and other watershed partners to create and strengthen programs that ensure clean, safe drinking water for 9 million New Yorkers.”

“Source-water protection is fundamental work for water service providers as part of their larger mission to provide safe and sustainable water supplies for their communities,” said AWWA Executive Director David LaFrance. “We commend New York City Department of Environmental Protection for the impressive programs they have enacted to do this critical work on such a large scale, thereby ensuring that New Yorkers will have access to clean water supplies for generations to come.”

Founded on the notion that the most cost-effective way to provide high quality water is to protect it at its natural source, DEP’s programs have become a national and international model. Each year water and public health professionals come from around the globe to study the City’s source water protection strategies. A key element of the success of the program has been the development of strong relationships with watershed communities, locally-based organizations, environmental groups, and federal, state, and local government agencies.

The City has invested more than \$1.5 billion in watershed protection programs since 1993, when the Environmental Protection Agency first issued the City a waiver from the federal requirement to filter tap water. A 1997 memorandum of agreement allowed the City to move ahead with three key components of its source-water protection strategy: acquisition of vacant

land in the watersheds to minimize pollution related to widespread development in areas near reservoirs and other critical source waters; regulatory controls over new development to ensure water protection; and a series of City-funded partnership programs to address existing and potential sources of water pollution. This multi-pronged approach has provided flexibility to address evolving threats such as climate change, and the agility to reallocate resources and adjust to changing conditions.

DEP's source-water protection initiatives and achievements have included:

- A successful land acquisition program that committed \$541 million toward buying land and conservation easements from willing sellers throughout the watershed from 1997-2017. Thus far, the City has obtained 105,650 acres through fee-simple purchases or conservation easements. The Watershed Agriculture Council (WAC), a partner organization funded by the City, has purchased another 22,838 acres of farm easements in the watershed. In addition, the City already owned nearly 45,000 acres of land surrounding its reservoirs, the State of New York owns and permanently protects 210,000 acres as parkland or forestland, and other entities own and protect nearly 25,000 acres as parkland or forestland.
- WAC has also completed 400 “whole farm” plans that incorporate pollution prevention into the business operations of local farms. Those plans have included roughly 6,000 “best management practices” to control runoff from farms.
- DEP has completed upgrades on all private and public wastewater treatment plants in the Catskill-Delaware Watershed, including upgrades to five City-owned treatment plants and 34 treatment plants not owned by the City. In the Croton Watershed, DEP has completed upgrades on 54 wastewater treatment plants, representing 94 percent of the total wastewater flow. Another 15 are in the process of being upgraded. In addition, the City has funded construction of new wastewater treatment plants or other wastewater solutions in select communities throughout the watershed.
- The Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC), another key partner organization funded by the City, has invested in the repair of failing septic systems across the watershed, with more than 4,000 repairs completed to date. CWC also works with communities to construct stormwater controls to protect water quality.
- DEP has implemented a comprehensive stream management program to restore the natural stability and flood resiliency to failing stream banks. To date, the program has funded construction of 66 stream restoration projects, restored stability to 14 miles of stream, addressed hydraulic constrictions at 23 project sites, and re-vegetated riparian buffers on 105 sites.
- DEP has developed a plan to manage the forests on City-owned lands, which naturally filter many nutrients and helps protect the high-quality water.
- DEP administers a program to review and approve new development proposals in the watershed. All proposals must comply with standards designed to protect the sensitive water features of the region.
- DEP maintains a robust monitoring program that tests water quality on a daily basis. The water quality program annually tests about 25,000 samples from 475 sites that include

reservoirs, streams, and other key points and performs approximately 250,000 analyses of the samples.

- Balancing the goals of watershed protection with the needs of the region, DEP has opened at least 114,833 acres of City-owned land for recreation throughout the watershed, including 80,941 acres of land, and 33,892 acres of reservoirs. Of that, 52,198 acres can be accessed without a permit for activities such as hiking, hunting, snowshoeing and more. DEP has also established a recreational boating program on four of its reservoirs.
- DEP maintains an outreach program to share information about water-quality protection and the watershed. In 2012, for instance, DEP estimates that more than 765,000 people received information about the water supply and watershed protection through more than 446 unique outreach efforts that were attended, coordinated, and supported by DEP and its partners.

Founded in 1881, AWWA is an international, nonprofit, scientific and educational society committed to the safety and improvement of water quality and supply. Focusing its work in four strategic areas, Knowledge Creation and Exchange, Leadership and Advocacy, Member Engagement and Development, and Organizational Stewardship, AWWA unites the full spectrum of the water community to advance water management, education and science and to advocate for smart water policies.

DEP manages New York 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 direct investments in source water protection, DEP supports a \$68 million payroll and pays \$153 million in annual taxes in upstate counties. DEP also has a robust capital program with a planned \$14.4 billion in investments 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 at facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

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