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Contact:

depressoffice@dep.nyc.gov, (845) 334-7868

5,000 Septic Systems Upgraded in New York City's West of Hudson Watershed

Watershed Infrastructure Upgrades Help to Protect New York City's High-Quality Drinking Water Supply

The Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced the completion of the 5,000th septic system upgrade in the City's West of Hudson watershed. Harris Cohn, owner of a three-bedroom house in Shandaken, was reimbursed the full cost, or \$18,583, of his septic system upgrade by the CWC's Septic Rehabilitation and Replacement Program. Since 1997, DEP has committed more than \$90 million to the program, which funds the upgrade of local infrastructure to help protect New York City's high-quality drinking water supply.

Alan Rosa, Executive Director of the CWC, said "This is a valuable program—to homeowners, our environment and to millions of New Yorkers. We are very proud of the good work that has been done here over the past 19 years."

"This milestone—rehabbing and replacing 5,000 septic systems in the watershed—is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our partners at the Catskill Watershed Corporation," said **Vincent Sapienza, DEP's Acting Commissioner**. "Since 1997, DEP has committed more than \$90 million to the septic rehabilitation and replacement program that is run by CWC. This strong partnership has provided free-of-charge infrastructure to local homeowners, supported local jobs, and protected New York City's reservoirs and the public health of more than 9.5 million people who depend on their clean drinking water every day."

"I couldn't have afforded to have this septic upgrade done without this program," said **property owner Harris Cohn**. "During construction over the summer it was a bit intrusive, but it feels good to know I'm helping to protect the environment."

The septic program has been aiding residents of the five-county New York City Watershed West of the Hudson River since the landmark NYC Watershed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed in 1997. The MOA requires the City of New York to fund several water quality protection programs in order to avoid filtering its Catskill-Delaware Water Supply. The CWC was established to develop and run many of those programs, including the repair and replacement of failed or substandard residential septic systems which have the potential to pollute groundwater, streams and reservoirs. In subsequent years the roster of CWC programs has grown to include septic replacement for businesses, and a maintenance program to help homeowners pay for half the cost of pumping and inspecting their systems.

The milestone project, which consists of a concrete septic tank, a dosing chamber and a small absorption bed, was designed by engineer Rex Sanford, who has an estimated 1,000 such systems to his credit, first under Robert C. Burgher Associates, and, since 1999, under his own stamp. Steve Davis was the

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NYC Department of
Environmental Protection
Public Affairs
59-17 Junction Boulevard
19th Floor
Flushing, NY 11373
(718) 595-6600

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contractor on the job, bringing experience gained in installing 445 systems over the past 19 years. In recognition of the milestone, property owner Harris Cohn received a certificate entitling him to a free pumpout in three to five years.

Leo LaBuda, Environmental Engineering Specialist who manages the septic program at the CWC, said “We encourage homeowners to have their on-site septic system pumped out regularly, a rule of thumb is every three to five years. That’s the best way to extend the life of your system and avoid expensive repairs.”

The CWC is a non-profit, Local Development Corporation responsible for several environmental protection, economic development and education programs in the New York City Watershed West of the Hudson River. Visit cwconline.org or call (845)586-1400 for more information.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of high quality water each day to more than 9.5 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 over \$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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