



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 30, 2012

No. 93

City Lifts Recreational Waterbody Advisory For New York Harbor

99 Percent of City Wastewater Treatment Restored Less Than One Week After Sandy

All NYC Wastewater Treatment Facilities Fully Operational Since November 10

Two Weeks of Water Quality Testing Confirms NYC Waterways Safe

New York City today lifted the harbor water advisory issued after Hurricane Sandy that directed New Yorkers to avoid activities that would bring them into direct contact with water from the Hudson River, East River, New York Harbor, Jamaica Bay and the Kill Van Kull. Water quality testing over the last two weeks confirms that these water bodies are safe for recreational use. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) takes regular water samples at 40 different locations throughout New York Harbor, for more detailed findings go to the [web-site](#). DEP and the New York City Department of Health will continue to monitor harbor water quality conditions to verify that these water bodies remain safe.

“The storm surge from Hurricane Sandy presented DEP with an unprecedented challenge, but thanks to the hard work of the men and women who operate our wastewater treatment plants and pumping stations, we were back up and running in short order,” said Commissioner Carter Strickland. “During the Bloomberg Administration alone, New York City has invested more than \$10 billion to improve harbor water quality and by quickly bringing our damaged plants back into service, our team helped ensure a quick recovery for New York’s waterways.”

The record storm surge that accompanied Hurricane Sandy submerged many of the City’s wastewater treatment plants and their electrical equipment in seawater and degraded their ability to pump and treat wastewater. Ten of the City’s 14 wastewater treatment plants and more than 40 wastewater pumping stations were damaged by Hurricane Sandy. DEP crews and contractors worked around the clock to pump out the seawater and make repairs to the electrical equipment. On November 3, just five days after the storm, DEP was treating 99 percent of all New York City wastewater. And, by November 10, DEP had restored full secondary treatment at all of its wastewater treatment plants and was treating 100 percent of dry weather flow. In addition to repairs at the wastewater treatment plants, DEP has restored service to more than 40 pumping stations throughout the five boroughs which has helped prevent the discharge of untreated wastewater into New York waterways, and prevented sewer backups. U.S. EPA maintains an [advisory](#) for areas of the Atlantic Ocean near Nassau County, including parts of the Rockaways.

Like many of the treatment plants, the Oakwood Beach Plant on Staten Island was cut off by Hurricane Sandy’s storm surge the night of the storm. DEP’s Sewage Treatment Workers, Engineers and Electricians worked through the night to protect the Plant’s critical infrastructure.

The workers at the plant were able to treat more than 80 million gallons of wastewater that would have otherwise been released into New York Harbor or backed up into homes and businesses.

Since 2002, New York City has invested approximately \$10 billion in wastewater treatment plant upgrades to increase treatment capacity and reduce combined sewer overflows (CSO). Capital investments have included the construction of four CSO storage facilities with the capacity to hold approximately 120 million gallons of wastewater until it can be properly treated. These storage facilities reduce CSOs by more than 2.7 billion gallons annually. Conservation methods and improved operational practices, such as lowering wet wells in anticipation of heavy storms and regular cleaning of interceptor sewers have also reduced CSO volumes. This past summer, DEP completed a two-year cleaning of the city's largest interceptor sewer pipes using vacor trucks, removing more than 29 million pounds of debris and sediment and reducing CSO discharges by more than 100 million gallons annually. Since then, DEP has continued the process of inspecting and cleaning these sewers using other methods which have combined to remove an additional one million pounds of debris. CSOs have also become more dilute, with the percentage of sanitary waste in CSO discharges decreasing from 30% in 1980 to approximately 12% today. Under the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan launched by Mayor Bloomberg in 2010, DEP will invest more than \$187 million over the next three years and an estimated \$2.4 billion of public and private funds by 2030 to reduce CSOs by capturing stormwater before it ever enters the city's combined sewer system.

DEP manages the 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. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels, and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP employs nearly 6,000 employees, including nearly 1,000 in the upstate watershed. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/nycwater.

Contact:	Chris Gilbride/Ted Timbers (DEP)	(718) 595-6600
	Chanel Caraway (DOHMH)	(347) 396-4177