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DEP to Begin Community Releases From Ashokan Reservoir

10-15 Million Gallons a Day Provided for Environmental, Recreational and Economic Benefits

The Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today announced that DEP will begin releasing water from Ashokan Reservoir tomorrow to provide environmental, recreational and economic benefits to the lower Esopus Creek. Initially, DEP will release 10 million gallons of water a day (mgd), which will continue for two weeks before being increased to 15 mgd. Last December, as part of discussions regarding turbid storm-related releases, DEP committed to use the Ashokan Release Channel to release water into the lower Esopus Creek year-round for the first time ever. The amount and frequency of these releases was developed by the Ashokan Release Working Group (ARWG), which consists of DEP, state and federal regulators, and local stakeholders including Ulster County, towns and villages and non-profit organizations. The working group was formed as part of DEP's response to the turbid water releases made through the Ashokan Release Channel last year; the group is also providing input on an impact assessment being conducted by DEP on the effects of turbid releases to the lower Esopus Creek, and helping the city develop new protocols for additional releases.

"This is a tremendous positive step in our efforts to balance the city's need to supply high quality drinking water to nine million New Yorkers with our obligation to ensure that the lower Esopus Creek remains an important source of recreation for downstream communities," said Commissioner Holloway. "The \$5.2 million Operations Support Tool has already given us the ability to increase water releases from the Delaware watershed, and we are now applying it to the Catskill system. These voluntary community releases will have year round benefits that will enhance the overall ecology and improve recreational opportunities. I would like to thank the members of the Ashokan Release Working Group for working hard to come up with a plan that works for everybody."

Under normal conditions, 15 mgd of water will be released from May 1 to October 31 and 10 mgd will be released from November 1 to April 30. In the case of a drought warning,

MORE INFORMATION

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10 mgd will be released in the warmer months and four mgd will be released in the colder months. During a drought, no releases would be made. DEP will modify releases depending on the level of turbidity, with consultation with DEC and Ulster County. DEP and the working group will evaluate the program to determine the effectiveness and if any modifications should be made.

The impact of this initiative will be most pronounced during the summer months when water levels in portions of the creek often run at a very low level. These releases will be conducted without affecting the quality and supply of drinking water. Fresh water from the reservoir could be beneficial for fishing in the river, make more water available for agriculture, and improve water quality for swimming and other recreational activities.

The new releases are made possible in part because of DEP's multi-million dollar investment in the new Operations Support Tool, a high-tech computer application which allows DEP to better predict reservoir-specific water storage levels, quality, and inflows, which gives a level of certainty that was not previously possible about when it is safe to release water without unnecessarily depleting the water supply of nine million New Yorkers.

The Ashokan Release Channel is a concrete canal used to convey water released in a controlled manner from the reservoir through the upper and lower gate chambers to the Little Beaverkill stream and the lower Esopus Creek. Located in Ulster County, the Ashokan Reservoir is approximately 13 miles west of Kingston and 73 miles north of New York City. It was formed by the damming of the Esopus Creek at Olivebridge, which eventually flows northeast and drains into the Hudson River. The reservoir holds 127.9 billion gallons at full capacity and was opened in 1915. It has a west and east basin on either side of the Dividing Weir and has a spillway for reservoir overflow.

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, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. Approximately 1,000 DEP employees live and work in the watershed communities as scientists, engineers, surveyors, and administrative professionals, and perform other critical responsibilities. DEP has invested over \$1.5 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. New York City's water is delivered from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and comprises 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater.

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