

Home
Customer Services
<div>Ways to Pay Your Bill</div> <div>Account Information</div> <div>Customer Assistance</div> <div>Service Line Protection Program</div> <div>Water Rates</div> <div>Property Managers & Trade Professionals</div>
Water Utilities
<div>Drinking Water</div> <div>Wastewater</div> <div>Stormwater</div> <div>Harbor Water</div> <div>Long Term Control Plan</div>
The Watershed
<div>Watershed Protection</div> <div>Watershed Recreation</div>
Citywide Initiatiives
<div>Regulatory Reform</div> <div>Environmental Education</div> <div>Conservation Programs</div> <div>Air Pollution Control</div> <div>Noise Codes & Complaints</div>
Business and Professionals
<div>Forms & Permits</div> <div>Economic Development Unit</div> <div>Doing Business with DEP</div> <div>Asbestos Abatement</div> <div>Construction, Demolition & Abatement</div>
About DEP
<div>Inside DEP</div> <div>News</div> <div>DEP Featured In...</div> <div>Stories from DEP</div> <div>Press Releases</div> <div>Public Notices</div> <div>Testimony and Public Comments</div>



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 13-112
November 20, 2013

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Department of Environmental Protection Provides Update on Forestry Management Project at Kensico Reservoir

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced significant progress on a project to remove fallen and damaged trees from four sites, comprising roughly 49 acres, around Kensico Reservoir in Westchester County. The forestry management project was announced in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, which toppled and damaged a large number of trees around the reservoir, including some areas where as many as 90 percent of the trees were downed. Since the project began in March, DEP has completed more than half the work, including the removal of all damaged trees from a 27-acre site located along Nannyhagen Road. The remaining, smaller sites are expected to be complete by the end of winter.

“The area around Kensico Reservoir was hit hard by Hurricane Sandy and the removal of fallen and weakened trees will limit erosion and protect water quality in the reservoir,” said DEP Commissioner Carter Strickland. “Our team has moved aggressively, but carefully, to complete this project to ensure high quality drinking water while also improving public safety for the residents of Westchester County.”

Thus far, DEP has removed approximately 90 tractor trailer loads of fallen and damaged trees from the site on Nannyhagen Road—the equivalent of roughly 765,000 board feet of wood. The majority of that wood is being shipped to Quebec, where it will be milled for future use as lumber. Damaged wood, branches, and any pieces less than 6 inches in diameter will be chipped and left on-site to help prevent erosion.

Over the next several months, crews will remove the remaining trees at smaller

More Information

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» [Capital Projects](#)





» [Careers at DEP](#)

» [Environmental Reviews](#)

» [Interagency MOUs](#)

» [A to Z Index](#)

» [Contact Us](#)



sites along Route 120 and West Lake Drive. The majority of the fallen trees were Norway spruce that were planted nearly 100 years ago when Kensico Reservoir was built. The average height of the trees in some areas was more than 100 feet, and each of them weighed thousands of pounds. Town officials in Mount Pleasant and North Castle have supported the forestry project because it will improve public safety, ensure roads stay open during emergencies, and greatly reduce the chance of power outages caused by falling trees.

Because Kensico Reservoir is among the last stops for drinking water as it travels from upstate reservoirs to New York City, DEP has taken extra precautions to ensure the forestry project does not affect water quality. The project has its own stormwater pollution prevention plan, which includes weekly inspections by forestry and stormwater staff to ensure erosion control measures are functioning properly. The use of heavy equipment is suspended during heavy rain, or when soils are saturated, to avoid rutting and erosion. Silt fence has been installed along portions of the Kensico Reservoir shoreline, and a turbidity curtain catches any suspended sediments that reach the reservoir. Wood chips spread on the site also help prevent erosion by guarding the soil from falling rain.

DEP plans to replant the site next year, once all the fallen and damaged trees are removed. The reforestation plan calls for planting 300 trees and 200 shrubs per acre, including native evergreens and hardwood trees that will diversify the forest and help it withstand extreme storms in the future. An 8-foot-high, woven-wire deer-exclusion fence will surround the plantings. Higher than average deer populations in this part of Westchester County frequently feed on young trees, preventing natural forest regeneration.

The new trees and shrubs will also improve aesthetics, stabilize the soil, and continue to protect water quality by naturally removing soil elements such as phosphorous and nitrogen, which can result in the growth of algae and potentially affect the taste and smell of drinking water.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8.4 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 has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$68 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$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. 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 at facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

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