

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

February 10, 2012

**No. 11**

## **DEP Opens Neversink, Pepacton and Schoharie Reservoirs for Rowboats, Canoes, Kayaks, Sculls and Small Sailboats**

*Expanded Boating Program Will Add 12,544 Acres of Reservoirs for New Recreational Activities and Makes Pilot at Cannonsville Permanent; 7,500 New Acres of Additional Watershed Lands to Open in 2012*

Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced a broad expansion of the recreational boating program at the Neversink, Pepacton and Schoharie reservoirs. The program will be similar to the three-year pilot program to expand recreational boating opportunities at Cannonsville Reservoir that began in 2008 and will now be permanent. Currently, only metal rowboats with boat tags issued by DEP staff are allowed on the Neversink, Pepacton and Schoharie reservoirs and only for the purpose of fishing. The new program, which the Catskill Watershed Corporation is helping to fund, will add 12,544 acres of public access by allowing temporary and seasonal DEP-issued recreational boating tags issued by certified private steam cleaning vendors for rowboats, canoes, kayaks, sculls and small sailboats with removable center boards. The opening of the new reservoirs will kick off on Memorial Day weekend, and DEP will coordinate with representatives from local communities around the reservoirs to incorporate them into the existing recreational boating steering committee, which consists of state and federal officials and local organizations. A key part of the program will be the selection and construction of new recreational boating launch sites at each reservoir, which will include input from the committee, and identification and certification of steam cleaning vendors in the vicinity of the reservoirs. As in the case of the Cannonsville program, DEP seeks active input from community partners to develop the expansion program. DEP also expects to open an additional 7,500 acres of watershed land in 2012 for recreation, including areas in Schoharie, Sullivan, Ulster, Greene and Delaware counties.

“Making the Cannonsville recreational program permanent and opening up Neversink, Pepacton and Schoharie reservoirs for recreational boating is an evolution of our efforts to open lands to local communities and visitors,” said Commissioner Strickland. “For the recreational boating program at Cannonsville Reservoir, participants overwhelmingly loved the expanded access and we are thrilled to extend this program to three additional reservoirs. Being a good neighbor is critical to our watershed partnerships and we are mindful of this every single day. The results of this collaborative approach are clear. More families and visitors will now be able to take advantage of the beautiful, pristine reservoirs and will potentially help boost tourism and economic activity across Delaware, Sullivan, Greene and Schoharie counties. And all of this can be done without putting the water supply of nine million New Yorkers at risk.”

“Over the last three years we have met diligently on the Cannonsville Recreational Boating Program and have found no environmental or water quality issues, etc. that would create unfavorable conditions in the future,” said Delaware County Chairman James Eisel. “Therefore, it is with great enthusiasm and anticipation that this successful program move on to the Pepacton

Reservoir this summer. Many thanks for the full cooperation I have received from the New York City DEP.”

“I think it is great that the City of New York and the DEP are opening three more reservoirs for recreational use, especially the Neversink Reservoir,” said Neversink Supervisor Mark McCarthy. “We welcome everyone who will take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to enjoy, in my opinion, the most picturesque body of water in Sullivan County. This will help local businesses economically as well. Thanks again to the City of New York and DEP for their continued expansion of recreational use of their properties.”

“I think that DEP expanding recreational boating at the Schoharie Reservoir is great news for Greene County because it will bring more people to the area,” said Chairman of the Greene County Legislature Wayne Speenburgh. “This is a good way for DEP to contribute to the local economy.”

“We have waited for many years to see canoes and sailboats on these big beautiful reservoirs,” said Alan Rosa, Executive Director of the Catskill Watershed Corporation. “It worked out well on the Cannonsville, and we know it will be just as successful at the Pepacton, Neversink and Schoharie. CWC is glad to be a partner in any program that lets people enjoy the beauty of the Watershed in a responsible way.”

“I’m very excited to see this recreational opportunity expanded,” said Georgianna Lepke, President of the CWC Board of Directors and a member of the Neversink Town Board. “It adds to our quality of life, and also provides economic development potential to our communities. I hope it’s a huge success!”

Prior to the start of the land acquisition program in 1997, the city already owned another 44,600 acres surrounding its reservoirs. More than 120,000 acres have been purchased since 1997. Most of the properties acquired outright will be opened for public access, including hunting, hiking and fishing, as well as economic activities like hay cropping that help local community businesses.

In the coming year, DEP expects to open an additional 7,500 acres of watershed land in 2012 for recreation, including areas in Schoharie, Sullivan, Ulster, Greene and Delaware counties. Almost half of the additional acres will be in Delaware County. A 448-acre parcel of land in Greene County will be opened as for public access in addition to leasing the property to local farmers for agricultural projects. In Ulster County, a 459-acre parcel will be added to the Ticetonyk Mountain recreation unit, creating over 899 acres publicly accessible within a mile of the Ashokan Reservoir. In Delaware County, an 820-acre acquisition project will be opened to the public and added to the existing Pink Street public access area, creating 1,130 acres of recreation land comprising woods and fields.

Since 2003, DEP has significantly expanded the amount of city-owned water supply lands open for recreation to 108,000 — more than double the amount available in 2003. Of the 108,000 total acres open to recreation, 75,000 are land and 33,000 are water. Last year, DEP opened approximately 6,600 more acres of land in the watershed for recreation. In 2010, DEP opened 9,895 acres of land.

The new boating program was based on a three-year pilot program started in 2008 to expand recreational boating opportunities at the Cannonsville Reservoir in the Delaware County towns of Deposit, Tompkins and Walton. The purpose of the Cannonsville Reservoir Recreational Boating Pilot Program was to expand regional recreational opportunities at the reservoir for watershed residents, tourists and visitors – while protecting water quality and natural resources and inducing environmentally sound economic development. Previous to this program only metal rowboats with boat tags issued by DEP staff were allowed on the reservoir and only for the purpose of fishing. In three years of the program, 871 boat tags were issued, of which 93% were for kayaks and canoes. Monitoring reports indicated no detectable negative impacts to water quality and no indication of invasive species — the objectives of the pilot and an important consideration in making the program permanent or expanding it to other reservoirs. The program ran from sunrise to sunset each day starting the Friday of Memorial Day weekend and ending on Columbus Day each year and did not require fishing. The pilot program will now be permanent.

DEP formed a steering committee of local public officials, state and federal regulatory agencies and other organizations to guide the development of the program. The steering committee consisted of representatives from the Catskill Watershed Corporation; the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; New York State Department of Health; U.S. EPA; the supervisors of the Towns of Deposit and Tompkins; Delaware County Chairman of the Board of Supervisors; Delaware County Chamber of Commerce; Catskill Center for Conservation & Development; and Delaware County Commissioners of Watershed Affairs, Planning and Economic Development.

Placed into service in 1964, Cannonsville Reservoir is located at the western edge of Delaware County, southwest of the Village of Walton. The 16.8-mile-long reservoir holds 95.7 billion gallons at full capacity, has an average depth of 61 feet, and a surface area of 4,712 acres. Cannonsville is one of four reservoirs in the City's Delaware system and the newest in New York City's water supply. The Cannonsville watershed's drainage basin is 455 square miles, the largest basin in the City's system.

Neversink Reservoir was placed into service in 1954 and is located in Sullivan County, approximately five miles northeast of the Village of Liberty. Formed by the damming of the Neversink River, which continues south and eventually drains into the lower Delaware River, the Neversink holds 34.9 billion gallons at full capacity.

Pepacton Reservoir is located in Delaware County along the southern edge of Catskill Park, 12 miles south of the Village of Delhi, and more than 100 miles northwest of New York City. Formed by the damming of the East Branch of the Delaware River, which continues west and joins the lower Delaware River, it consists of one basin, approximately 15.8 miles in length. Pepacton holds 140.2 billion gallons at full capacity, which makes it the largest reservoir in the City system by volume. It was placed into service in 1955.

Schoharie Reservoir is located at the intersection of Schoharie, Delaware and Greene Counties, about 36 miles southwest of Albany and roughly 110 miles from New York City. Formed by the damming of the Schoharie Creek, which continues north and eventually drains into the Mohawk River, which flows into the Hudson north of Albany, it consists of one basin, almost six miles in length. Schoharie Reservoir holds 17.6 billion gallons at full capacity and was placed into service in 1926.

Expanding recreational opportunities in the watershed section is one of the Operations goals outlined in *Strategy 2011-2014*, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. The plan is available on DEP's website at [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep).

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. 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 \$49 million upstate payroll and \$132 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 a planned \$13.2 billion in investments over the next 10 years that creates up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep), like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nycwater](https://www.facebook.com/nycwater), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/nycwater](https://www.twitter.com/nycwater).

**Contact:** Farrell Sklerov / Michael Saucier (718) 595-6600