

Home

Customer Services

- › Pay Online
- › Ways to Pay Your Bill
- › eBilling
- › Account Information
- › Customer Assistance
- › Service Line Protection Program
- › Water Rates
- › Property Managers & Trade Professionals

Water Utilities

- › Drinking Water
- › Wastewater
- › Stormwater
- › Harbor Water
- › Long Term Control Plan

The Watershed

- › Watershed Protection
- › Watershed Recreation

Citywide Initiatives

- › Regulatory Reform
- › Environmental Education
- › Conservation Programs
- › Air Pollution Control
- › Noise Codes & Complaints

Business and Professionals

- › Forms & Permits
- › Support for Businesses
- › Doing Business with DEP
- › Asbestos Abatement
- › Construction, Demolition & Abatement

About DEP

- › Inside DEP
- › News
- DEP Featured In...
- Stories from DEP
- Press Releases



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 15-72
August 17, 2015

Contact:

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

Department of Environmental Protection and Watershed Agricultural Council Celebrate 100th Farm Lease on Water Supply Property

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Emily Lloyd on Monday was joined by leaders from the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) and farmers from Delaware County to celebrate the 100th farm lease on city-owned water supply lands. The landmark lease reflects steady growth in the program since it began in 2004 as an effort to keep fertile lands in production after they were purchased by DEP to protect water quality throughout the watershed. Over the past 11 years, DEP has leased more than 3,700 acres to farmers who use the property for cutting hay, planting and harvesting row crops, grazing livestock, and tapping maple trees. The 100th lease was signed by farmer Paul Deysenroth of Byebrook Farm in Bloomville, who cuts hay on 15 acres of DEP land to support his dairy operation. The signing of that lease was announced by DEP and WAC on Monday to kick off the Delaware County Fair in Walton.

“DEP is proud to support local farmers and the agriculture industry in the Catskills by making available many of our water supply lands for cultivation,” **Commissioner Lloyd** said. “Many of these working lands were historically used for cutting hay, growing corn and grazing livestock—activities that time and science have proven to be compatible with maintaining high quality drinking water in our reservoirs. DEP greatly appreciates our partners at the Watershed Agricultural Council and local farmers who’ve worked collaboratively over more than two decades to prove that we can support local farming while improving

More Information

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

[Public Notices](#)[Testimony & Public Comments](#)

- › [Capital Projects](#)
- › [Careers at DEP](#)
- › [Environmental Reviews](#)
- › [Interagency MOUs](#)
- › [A to Z Index](#)
- › [Contact Us](#)



drinking water quality for the largest city in the United States.”

“Our organization firmly believes in working landscapes,” **WAC Executive Director Craig Cashman** said. “We also take our responsibility of protecting the water supply for 9 million New York residents very seriously. Our collaborative efforts have formed an international model recognized in many parts of the world and throughout the United States. The Watershed Agricultural Council’s mission is to promote the economic viability of agriculture and forestry, the protection of water quality, and the conservation of working landscapes through strong local leadership and sustainable public-private partnerships. We know that conserving farm and forest land prevents parcelization, has a positive impact on the environment, and therefore enhances water quality. By all accounts, our collaborative approach to implement effective programs that address surface-water quality has been a resounding success.”

“The partnership WAC has developed with DEP over the years has played an integral part in making the land available to farmers, and farmers in turn caring for the land as they grow crops,” WAC Chairwoman Sally Fairbairn said. “This partnership helps the economic viability of the farms, and WAC help develop plans with the farmers to ensure proper management of the land for water quality. The Deysenroth family is widely recognized as some of the best farmers in the region, and WAC is proud to have a long history of working with them. Known for their innovative approach to farming, they created Byebrook Gouda Cheese and have helped promote value-added dairy in the region.”

In the late 1990s, DEP began a Land Acquisition Program to protect water quality in its reservoirs by preserving key parcels of land in the watershed. Since then, DEP has acquired more than 100,000 acres of land in the Catskills, including many tracts that were historically used for agriculture or rented by neighboring farmers. After hearing from local farmers about the importance of rented land, and consulting with its partners at WAC, DEP developed a plan to keep these lands in production by leasing them back to local farmers. In the beginning, farm activities on DEP property were limited to hay production and maple tapping, but this policy was later expanded to include other agriculture uses.

Today, the program comprises 100 leases, including 52 for hay production, 26 for planting and harvesting row crops, 17 for grazing livestock, and five for tapping maple trees. Once DEP identifies properties that are suitable for leasing, notices are published in local newspapers and sent to WAC. Farmers are invited to submit a proposal identifying the type of farming, a simple land-use plan, and their proposed annual payment. Lands have been leased for as little as \$25, or as much as \$2,500, depending on the size, use and number of competitive bidders. Each lease is signed for a five-year period.

Significant water-quality protection measures are also incorporated in the program. For instance, fertilizers and manure may be applied on the lands during non-freezing conditions, but only if a soil test confirms the need for additional nutrients. Also, farmers are required to keep a 25-foot undisturbed buffer around all streams and wetlands. Lands used by grazing animals also include exclusion fencing to keep them away from watercourses, such as streams. Most farmers who lease property from DEP have also participated in the development of a “whole farm plan” through WAC, which uses best farm management practices to balance productive farming with environmental protection to minimize agricultural runoff into nearby streams.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of high quality water each day to more than 9 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 nearly \$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](#).

 [All Press Releases](#)

