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DEP Sends Wawarsing Buyout Agreement To Ulster County for Approval

*Agreement Commits NYC to Match Funding In State Program and Provide \$3.7 Million in
Financial Aid for Homes That Might Be Affected by Leaking Aqueduct*

Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland announced that DEP today sent the contract for the Wawarsing buyout assistance effort to Ulster County for approval by its legislature. The buyout assistance is for homeowners in part of the Town of Wawarsing, in Ulster County, seeking relief from the effects of flooding. The city's Delaware Aqueduct, a concrete-lined tunnel that supplies roughly half of the city's daily drinking water needs, is leaking and might be contributing to flooding of basements and homes. DEP committed to supplement the buyout assistance effort in June with \$3.7 million to match State funds allocated to buyout assistance and reached a conceptual agreement with Ulster County in August on the framework of the contract. In addition to doubling the funding available for homeowners, DEP's assistance includes an incentive payment of 10% of the purchase price in return for a release of City liability, which is completely voluntary for the homeowner. Ulster County is responsible for administering the program, including the State and the City funding. The funds for the buyout program are in addition to the more than \$642,000 the City has already made available to Wawarsing to assist homeowners with drinking water disinfection and pumping equipment, and for stormwater improvements within the town.

"Addressing the two leaking areas of the Delaware Aqueduct through our Water for the Future program is our number one capital priority," said Commissioner Strickland. "Still, some local residents seek immediate relief for water problems. To build on what the State has already provided, DEP has committed to matching the State's funds so that affected homeowners who prefer to move have the option to do so. We are also adding an incentive to help reduce out-of-pocket moving or closing costs. Now that the contract is in the hands of Ulster County, we are one step closer to addressing this issue."

In March 2011, the New York State Legislature authorized Ulster County to use State funds to purchase homes valued at under \$250,000 each. DEP's supplemental funding doubles the amount of money available for eligible Wawarsing homeowners. Plus, the City funding allows for incentive payments to help with related moving costs and does not include income, home value, residency, or unit limitations that the State funding is subject to. DEP will also help Ulster County cover the cost of administering the program by paying the County's out-of-pocket expenses that are not reimbursed by the State, including funds to maintain the properties.

Since reaching a general agreement in principle with Ulster County, DEP has taken the steps necessary to finalize the contract, including negotiating the terms with the County, obtaining funding approval from the city's Office of Management and Budget, advertising and

holding a public hearing, obtaining approval from the Mayor's Office of Contract Services, and submitting the contract to Ulster County for Legislative approval. Once the County approves the contract, it is then sent to the New York City Comptroller's Office for approval, like all city contracts.

The agreement is the latest in a series of actions DEP has taken to mitigate potential effects of the leak for homeowners. Through an intergovernmental agreement with the Town of Wawarsing, DEP has provided:

- Gas-powered portable pumps to help reduce flooding;
- Funding for a \$4 million comprehensive study by the independent U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to better understand the effects the leak may be having on the community and on individual groundwater wells, basements, and surface drainage;
- Funding for a drainage analysis through a city consultant to help the community identify stormwater flooding and develop recommendations for drainage improvements;
- Organizational support to organize PAC meetings and work with the Town to manage the intergovernmental agreement with the Town.

In 2011, DEP released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for its Water for the Future program, a \$2.1 billion initiative that will ensure clean, reliable and safe drinking water for nine million New Yorkers for decades to come. The program has two main elements: repairing leaks in the Delaware Aqueduct and supplementing the city's water supply during construction work on the tunnel. The DEIS evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and presents alternatives to the project. The tunnel repair and project is expected to create between 1,000 and 1,500 jobs. Preparation for the repair work is currently underway, including: installation of pumping system and site improvements to support construction; purchasing equipment for the repair; planning and design of the bypass tunnel; geotechnical investigations; discussions with local stakeholders; and investigating supply augmentation projects.

The 85-mile aqueduct, completed in 1944, conveys approximately half of the city's drinking water from four upstate reservoirs to more than eight million people in New York City, and one million people in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. The aqueduct is a concrete-lined tunnel that varies in diameter from 13.5 to 19.5 feet and runs as deep as 2,000 feet beneath the ground. It was constructed by drilling and blasting, and, in most areas, lined with unreinforced concrete.

Some work for the repair of the Delaware Aqueduct has already begun, including:

- In July 2011, DEP announced that the first geotechnical test borings were underway for the construction of an access shaft in the Town of Newburgh and in the Town of Wappinger. Construction of shafts in Newburgh and Wappinger will enable the construction of a new tunnel to bypass a leaking section of the Delaware Aqueduct near Roseton. These were the first of several planned borings to obtain geophysical data for the design and construction of the bypass tunnel. DEP will break ground on the shafts for the bypass tunnel in 2013, and will begin the bypass connection in 2020. Geotechnical test borings are used to obtain geophysical data for the design and construction of the

bypass tunnel, including basic underground rock formations and other conditions that will dictate the design of the tunnel, the selection of equipment, and construction techniques.

- In June 2011, DEP started the second phase of a ground-breaking study to evaluate the effectiveness of mitigating leaks in the Delaware Aqueduct by adding lime to water in order to seal the cracks from within the tunnel. The \$4 million pilot project, which entails building a small-scale water system that replicates full-scale water supply conditions, will help the city better determine if full-scale application of lime will be successful, particularly in the Wawarsing area.

The plan to repair the Delaware Aqueduct is part of *Strategy 2011-2014*, the 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 new plan, the product of nearly one year of analysis and outreach, builds on *PlaNYC*, Mayor Bloomberg's sustainability blueprint for New York City. The plan is available on DEP's website at 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 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, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/nycwater.

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