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EPA Proposes To Continue Grant Of Filtration Avoidance For New York City's Catskill/Delaware Water Supply

Commissioner Christopher O. Ward of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed to grant a Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) to New York City for drinking water from its reservoirs of the Catskill/Delaware supply system. EPA had granted a five-year filtration avoidance waiver in 1997, and, in December 2001, the City submitted to the EPA New York City's 2001 Watershed Protection Program Summary, Assessment and Long-term Plan, which included DEP's proposal for a new five-year Filtration Avoidance Determination.

New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg said, "The City and its watershed partners have established outstanding national models for watershed protection. The EPA's plan to grant a new five-year Filtration Avoidance Determination is a tribute to the work of DEP and its partners in the protection of water quality throughout a 1,600 square mile watershed. Based on extensive reviews of our achievements over the last five years and our proposals for implementation of additional long-term watershed protection measures, the EPA clearly recognizes that the City's programs are achieving their goals of protecting water quality for over nine million consumers who rely on the City's supply."

DEP's Watershed Protection Program Summary, Assessment and Long-term Plan and Assessment, reported that the comprehensive water quality monitoring and modeling programs confirm that the quality of water in the Catskill/Delaware supply remains high and that specific watershed protection programs are yielding substantial benefits. The report demonstrates that the City's supply continues to meet all objective water quality criteria of the federal Surface Water Treatment Rule and that specific efforts - among them, waterfowl management, Kensico stormwater controls, wastewater treatment plant upgrades and inspections - are showing quantifiable improvements.

Commissioner Ward said, "The EPA's FAD and the Watershed Memorandum of Agreement of 1997 ushered in a

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new era of watershed protection and partnership with many watershed stakeholders - the State, EPA, certain environmental and public interest groups, and the watershed counties, towns and villages. This unique coalition came together with the dual goals of protecting water quality and the economic viability of watershed communities for generations to come. The EPA's willingness to grant another five-year FAD confirms that the partnerships have made meeting those goals possible, and that long-term plans are not only feasible but desirable for all concerned."

Under the new FAD, the City will continue and, in some cases, significantly expand certain programs that target key potential pollution sources. Among them are: the Watershed Agricultural Program, including the Watershed Forestry Program; the Waterfowl Management Program; the New Infrastructure Program for seven West-of-Hudson communities; the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Program; the Stream Management Program; the Kensico Reservoir protection programs; plus two programs administered by the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) - the Septic Remediation and Replacement Program and the Stormwater Retrofit Program.

In addition, the City will undertake a number of new initiatives, including the Community Wastewater Management Program to address wastewater problems in certain smaller hamlets and villages; a Septic Operation and Maintenance Program that will support proper operation and maintenance of septic systems in the West-of-Hudson watershed; a house-to-house survey to identify failing septic systems in the West Branch and Boyds Corner Reservoir basins; funding for CWC and county staff throughout the West-of-Hudson watershed to undertake comprehensive watershed planning efforts and to identify and prioritize community stormwater needs; a study to evaluate engineering options for reducing levels of turbidity leaving the Schoharie Reservoir; certain efforts to control nonpoint source pollution in those Catskill/Delaware reservoir basins that are east of the Hudson; and a commitment to design and construct an enhanced disinfection facility, utilizing ultra-violet technology, for Catskill/Delaware water.

"We are proud of the work DEP and its partners have done for watershed protection," said Commissioner Ward. "The EPA clearly agrees with us that continuation and enhancement of the program is scientifically supported, comprehensive and will provide continuing protection for the nine million New Yorkers who count on the City's water supply every day."