

*Commissioner's Corner*



On Monday, I had the pleasure of joining our partners from the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) and many local farmers to kick off the Delaware County Fair. Every year, DEP and WAC share a booth at the fair to provide information about watershed

recreation, protection programs, and the working lands that are used to cultivate local food and timber products.

This year we also celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> farm lease on city-owned land in the watershed.

The landmark lease reflects steady growth in this DEP program since it began in 2004 as an effort to keep fertile lands in production after they were purchased by the city to protect water quality throughout the watershed. Over the past 11 years, DEP has leased more than 3,700 acres of property to farmers who use it for cutting hay, planting and harvesting row crops, grazing livestock, and tapping maple trees.

The 100<sup>th</sup> lease was signed this year by farmer Paul Deysenroth of Byebrook Farm, who cuts hay on 15 acres of DEP land to support his dairy farm in Delaware County. I was happy to present Mr. Deysenroth with a certificate from DEP to mark the occasion.

Our lease program recognizes that rented land is very important to farmers in the Catskills, who generally operate on small parcels. Historically, many of these farmers rented additional lands from their neighbors to increase their yield of hay, corn and other crops and feeds.

In the late 1990s, DEP began a Land Acquisition Program to protect water quality around our reservoir system by preserving key parcels in the watershed. Since then, DEP has purchased more than 100,000 acres in the Catskills, including many of these tracts that were historically used or rented for farming. After hearing from local farmers about the importance of rented land, and consulting with our 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, 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.

The lease program is just one example of DEP's efforts to support the farming economy that is vital to the Catskills, and the small family farms that cultivate the fresh, local products that many of our neighbors here in New York City enjoy every day.

*Spotlight on Safety*

**OSHA's New Confined Space Rule**

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) issued a new Confined Spaces in Construction standard on May 4, 2015, which provides construction workers with protections similar to those that manufacturing and general industry workers have, with some differences tailored to the construction industry. This rule emphasizes training, continuous worksite evaluation and monitoring, and communication requirements to further protect workers' health and safety.

Construction workers often perform tasks in confined spaces. Confined spaces such as manholes, crawl spaces, and tanks are not designed for continuous occupancy and are difficult to exit in the event of an emergency. These spaces can present physical and atmospheric

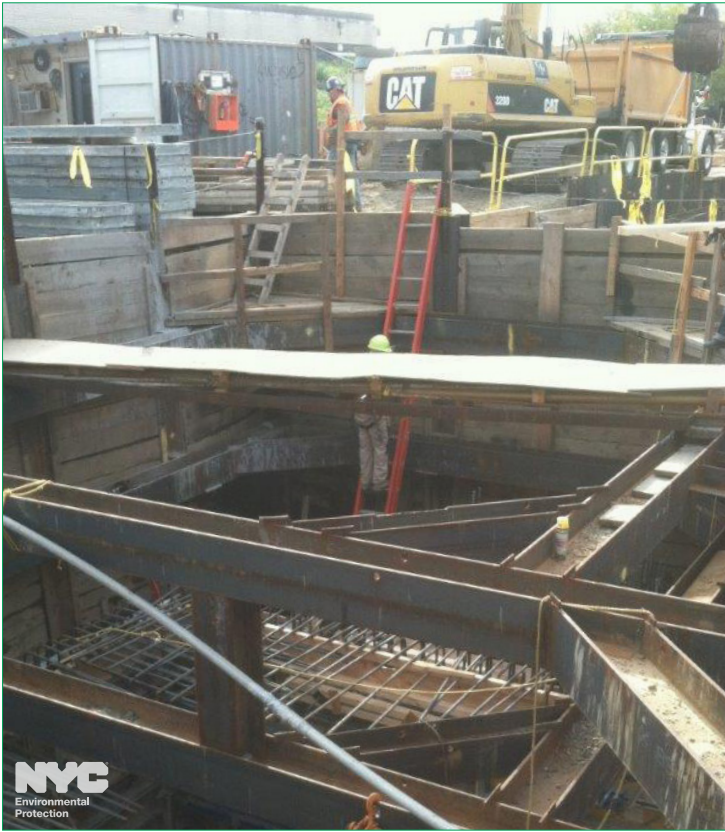
hazards. However, these hazards can be prevented if addressed prior to entering the space to perform work.

The new standard became temporarily effective on August 3, 2015, but full enforcement will not begin until October 2, 2015. During this 60-day temporary enforcement period, OSHA will not issue citations to employers who make good faith efforts, including scheduling required training for employees and ordering the necessary equipment to comply with the new standard, as well as taking alternative measures to educate and protect employees from confined space hazards.

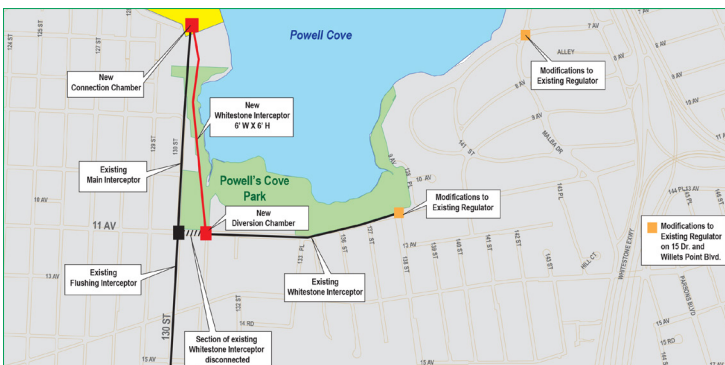
For more information on this new regulation, visit OSHA's [Confined Spaces in Construction](#) webpage.

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EHS liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city. CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH [PIPELINE](#). HELP IS ON THE WAY.

## New Sewer Activated in College Point



DEP recently announced the activation of a new, large interceptor sewer line in the College Point neighborhood that will significantly reduce Combined Sewer Overflows into Flushing Bay, Powell's Cove and Little Bay. On a dry weather day, the Tallman Island Wastewater Treatment Plant located in College Point receives, cleans and disinfects approximately 55 million gallons of wastewater. During wet weather, the plant has been handling approximately 120 million gallons a day. In order to increase the volume of wastewater treated at the plant during wet weather, in 2012 DEP began the construction of a 2,100-foot-long, six-foot-high by six-foot-wide interceptor sewer line running north from the intersection of 131<sup>st</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, under Powell's Cove Park, to the Tallman Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. Construction was completed in late 2014 and DEP is now in the final stages of restoring and upgrading the park. By allowing the Tallman Island facility to treat up to 160 million gallons of wastewater a day during wet weather, the \$30 million project is expected to reduce Combined Sewer Overflows into local waterways by nearly 140 million gallons each year. To see more photos of the work [click here](#).



## Riverbank State Park



The New York City water cycle is the backdrop for a fun and watery way to keep cool at Riverbank State Park this summer. Scores of children have played in the water splashing area since the completion in 2013 of "Beautifying Riverbank," a 260' wide by 15' high mural that was created with the help of DEP's Education staff in partnership with Groundswell, a non-profit organization that brings together artists, youth and community groups to use art as a tool for social change. Designed by 15 young people participating in Groundswell's Summer Leadership Institute, the mural engages Riverbank State Park's diverse visitors with images of our local water cycle, from the Catskill Mountains to New York City. Located in Upper Manhattan, Riverbank State Park is a 28-acre landscaped recreational facility that rises 69 feet above the Hudson River and sits on top of the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant. This mural is one of six that Groundswell youth artists have created with DEP's Education staff.

## Water-On-the-Go Interns



From the first day of summer until Labor Day, these 20 interns are staffing DEP's Water-On-the-Go fountains seven days a week in all five boroughs, including high profile events such as the ticker tape parade for the U.S National Women's Soccer Team, the First Annual Disability Pride Parade, and Summer Streets. They have braved high temperatures and long hours to make sure New Yorkers have a safe place to get refreshing NYC tap water. DEP thanks them for all their hard work and dedication.

**We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: [newsletter@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:newsletter@dep.nyc.gov).**