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# DIGEST



VOLUME NO. 2, ISSUE NO. 4, OCTOBER 2004

## A FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM COMMISSIONER WARD

I am distributing this newsletter on my last day as Commissioner of DEP. As I previously expressed via email to you all, being Commissioner has been the most gratifying and challenging job I have ever had. The decision to leave DEP was the hardest decision I have had to make, but it was made easier by my ability to look back on the many significant accomplishments we have achieved together during the past two and a half years.

Of the dozens I could focus on, I want to take this opportunity to highlight one that may seem less significant than some of our more tangible achievements, but which I feel really underscores the entire agency's strong standing. For the first time ever, Standard and Poors, a municipal bond rating service, raised its rating on the New York City Municipal Water Finance Authority's water and sewer bonds from "AA" to "AA+" this past summer. The Municipal Water Finance Authority is the independent agency that issues the bonds to fund DEP's capital program. The improved ranking shows that the business community believes that the Authority is financially sound, and that the operations which the Authority's bonds support—that is, DEP's activities—are highly valuable and highly valued.

This rating increase really reflects on all the other successes this agency has achieved over the past few years. The "AA+" rating recognizes the essential nature of the work DEP does in providing water and sewer services to nine million users and the expectation that these services will continue to be provided with a high degree of confidence. It shows that the water supply, distribution, collection and treatment systems function admirably and are expected to be well-maintained for years to come. It shows that we have a rational and constructible capital program that accurately identifies our long-term needs and sets out a plan to address these needs. It shows that we bill for these services fairly and are able to collect from our customers effectively. It shows that we have the internal resources in place—trained personnel, judicious legal guidance, efficient procurement, application of advanced technologies, a thorough compliance program—to continue supporting our daily operations. In sum, the Authority's high marks are a reflection of our own.

So while I leave with some sadness, I can also take enormous pride in the things we have done together. I congratulate you all on a job well done, and thank you for making my few years here so special. I look forward to hearing more about the agency's future successes, as I am certain they will be many. The job that you do helps make New York City possible. And that is the greatest accomplishment of all.

All the best,

*C.W. Ward*

October 29, 2004

## DEP EXPANDS AND ENHANCES WATER SUPPLY SECURITY

In addition to supplying the consumers in the City and throughout the watershed with clean, safe drinking water, it is also DEP's responsibility to protect the water supply and its treatment and distribution infrastructure. For the past several years, DEP has increased its focus on water supply security, and worked to implement a three-tier strategy to ensure the safety of the water supply, focusing on prevention, protection, and consequence management.



### A DEP Police Mobilization Drill

At the center of this water supply protection strategy is the DEP Police Force. In the past five years, the DEP Police have been significantly reorganized and enhanced, and headcount has increased three-fold, from 59 officers and staff to 211 officers and staff. These officers are divided into three specialized divisions: the Environmental Enforcement Division, the Special Operations Division, and the Detective Bureau and Intelligence Division.

The Environmental Division is responsible for patrol and protection functions, conducting preliminary investigations of crime, pollution, and terrorism, monitoring access and security systems, and providing access control and intrusion detection. The Special Operation Division contains patrol groups specialized for protecting the watershed, such as DEP's Emergency Services and Strategic Patrol units, as well as Canine, Scuba, and Aviation units. DEP Police's Detective Bureau and Intelligence Division is responsible for long-term investigations, intelligence gathering, and working with federal, state, and local law enforcement. The Detective Bureau and Intelligence Division is also on permanent assignment within the NYPD Intelligence Division, the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, and the Upstate New York Regional Intelligence Center (UNYRIC).

In addition to increased manpower and specialization, DEP has increased the support network for officers and created an Environmental Police Academy, the first of its kind in the (Continued ...)

## Learning about Water with Trout in the Classroom

For the past eight years, DEP has been a supporter of the hands-on, multidisciplinary program, Trout in the Classroom. By raising brown and brook trout from eggs to fry, students from New York City and its watersheds have learned about river ecology, the New York City water supply system, water quality, and watershed issues. The students' connection to their water resources is not just discussed, but also experienced, and culminates in a field trip to release the trout fry into coldwater streams in the City's watershed.

While urban and rural students observe and care for their growing trout, teachers enjoy the flexibility to incorporate the trout into lessons varying from data collection and analysis to art and nature poetry. Teachers are given the opportunity to use their own lesson plans, as well as those shared at annual teacher meetings, organized in the fall and spring of each school year.

(Continued ...)

## DEP Explores the Brooklyn-Queens Aquifer System

DEP has embarked upon a broad program to integrate the City's surface water supply from its upstate reservoirs with groundwater supplied by the aquifer system hundreds of feet below Brooklyn and Queens. This will enable the City to expand its long-term water supply management options, while providing the communities in southeast Queens with some immediate resolution to long-standing problems.

The first of these concerns involves groundwater quality in southeastern Queens. Historically, the privately operated Jamaica Water Supply Company (JWS) served this region using groundwater wells. In 1996, after years of community concern over declining groundwater quality under JWS's management, New York City purchased JWS and took responsibility for the delivery of drinking water to the community. DEP was able to improve quality quickly by mixing the groundwater supply with water from the City's upstate reservoirs. However, this solved one problem and created another: because using groundwater wells had kept the water table below its natural level, once DEP reduced the amount of water being taken from the wells, the water table rose and flooding complaints in facilities with deep basements in the area increased.

In order to address both groundwater quality and flooding concerns, DEP constructed a pilot filtration plant for the ground water supply, to evaluate several different methods of filtration. Through coordinated education and outreach efforts about the possibility of filtering groundwater to improve water quality and lowering the region's water table, the Jamaica community has grown to support the construction of a full-scale filtration plant for groundwater being pumped from the wells.

In addition to improving the supply of groundwater from the aquifers through filtration, DEP is developing an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) project to augment the City's primary surface water supply. This project will utilize the Lloyd Aquifer, which exists below other aquifers that supply the southeastern Queens well system, to store drinking water.

Over time the Aquifer's resources are depleting, due mostly to the fact the rate of consumption by Long Island communities is greater than the aquifer's natural rate of recharge. ASR would help to replenish the Lloyd Aquifer by injecting surplus water from New York City's upstate reservoirs into the aquifer. The Aquifer would store this water and, when necessary, the City could extract a portion to supplement its drinking water supply. If implemented, New York City would benefit from a new in-City drinking water supply - one created without many of the construction costs and community disturbances involved in traditional capital projects, and, most importantly, one that allows us to have a temporary alternate water supply in case of an emergency, such as a drought or the need to shut down one of the City's three aqueducts.

The injection process would also have the benefit of recharging the Aquifer. On average, the City would retrieve only 90% of the stored water, leaving the remaining 10% of the stored water in the Aquifer, which would assist in recharging it. This would help to stabilize the Aquifer's salt-front, protecting Long Island beach communities' underground drinking water from salinization, a long-term threat to their supply.

DEP is currently in discussions with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation regarding the project's necessary approvals and permits; due to increasing development in the region, the State Legislature has placed a moratorium on drilling into the Lloyd Aquifer to prevent its depletion. However, given the potential benefits of DEP's plan, the Agency hopes that discussions with the State and local communities in Long Island will result in allowing us to demonstrate the potential of this innovative water management program.

(Police, cont'd ...) nation. This Academy provides training for environmental police recruits, as well as in-service training and security awareness training.

The DEP Police force continues to be the core of DEP's water supply protection strategy, which has also included the creation of emergency operations centers, the creation of five new precincts to protect our water supply infrastructure, increased electronic surveillance, and security upgrades both in the City and upstate.



On September 10th, "Ziggy," the beloved mascot of the Red Hook WTP, passed away at the ripe old age of 10 years. He will be missed by all.

(Trout, cont'd ...) The program's success is reflected in the stories that teachers tell. Brian Hugick, an Earth Science teacher at Somers High School, had one student who frequently cut class. He put the student in charge of the morning trout feedings. The young man did not miss a day after that and requested to assist in the trout release.

Needless to say, all of this organization, from setting up the tanks to gathering classes for release trips, has taken the efforts of many devoted volunteers, with backing from organizations including DEP, DEC, Catskill Watershed Corporation, Hudson River Foundation, Con Edison, Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, and Trout Unlimited. This August, Matthew Rota, the first full time Trout in the Classroom Coordinator, was hired by Trout Unlimited through an in-kind agreement with the DEP. This agreement houses Matt, an environmental educator, within DEP's Office of Education, Bureau of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. With the program centralized within DEP's Lefrak offices, and with a full-time coordinator, the 100+ participating schools (about half in the City and half in the watersheds) will continue to experience, appreciate, and care for the City's water resources.

For additional information, contact Matt at (718) 595-3503 or via email at [mrota@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:mrota@dep.nyc.gov).

## CONGRATULATIONS!

- Thank you, to all agency operations and support personnel who played a critical role in addressing the substantial flooding in both the City and upstate during August and September.
- Two members of BWT received New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) honors: **William Grandner** received the 2004 Uhl T. Mann Award for Wastewater Facility Maintenance, and the late and much-missed **Michael Bizzoco** received the 2004 William D. Hatfield Award for Distinguished Professionalism.
- On September 30th, the **Grand Gorge Plant Operators in the West of Hudson watershed** received the NYSDEC Andrew M. Weist Award in Operations and Maintenance in the Small Advanced Category.
- The **Jamaica Bay Hackleheads** won 5th Place overall in the national Operator's Challenge in New Orleans, Louisiana—and 3rd Place in the pump event, DEP's best finish to date!