



From the Commissioner

Looking forward, some of DEP's major initiatives planned for the coming year are part of a comprehensive plan to upgrade and integrate the Agency's technological capabilities. Planned for the upcoming year is the major overhaul and improvement of the network at DEP's Lefrak offices. Once implemented at Lefrak, DEP is planning further upgrades at other facilities. In addition to this infrastructure upgrade, I'd also like to take this time to mention a few major systems being developed by some of our bureaus:

- The Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations is initiating the conversion of the water distribution system to a **GIS (Geographic Information System)** format, developing a direct link to the Hansen system, and enabling a more efficient means of scheduling field crews, defining problem areas, modeling water quality events and system performance, and facilitating capital planning work. BWSO is also working to link the sewer system to Hansen, integrating for the first time the Department's sewer records into a graphic, electronic format.

- To better serve DEP's customers and to improve its collection efforts, the Bureau of Customer Services is enhancing its **Customer Information System (CIS)** to facilitate an earlier, more systematic identification of delinquent accounts, as well as the issuing of notices to those accounts to increase collection capacity. In the future, BCS may be teaming up with BWSO on its GIS mapping project, to reconcile and increase the agency's capacity to track accounts and assets.

- DEP's Bureau of Wastewater Treatment will be working to implement its **CMMS (Computerized Maintenance Management System)** starting this year. CMMS will enable BWT to track equipment maintenance schedules and monitor metrics, plan maintenance instead of scheduling it reactively, and streamline the bureau's inventory. CMMS was already rolled out at the Coney Island Plant, and early feedback is very positive.

- DEP recently completed construction of the new West of Hudson **SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition)** system to provide monitoring and control of 30 upstate facilities. In addition to enhancing DEP's ability to manage water supply operations and to respond to emergencies, the new SCADA system allows DEP to control reservoir stream releases from a single control room.

- DEP has been working closely with **Hansen** to assess the current usage of, and potential improvements to, our main service request system. Currently, BWSO and BEC are the primary users of Hansen for inspection requests and work orders. In the near future, we will be adding BWT Grease Inspection case management. In our assessment, Facilities Maintenance and Construction work orders, Environmental Health and Safety audit items, DEP Police actions, and agency-wide correspondence tracking are also being considered for inclusion into Hansen. Furthermore, we are discussing with Hansen consultants the possibility of migrating to a new version of Hansen, which would impact all Hansen users both here at DEP and at the 311 Call Center.

In closing, I also want to remind you of the Office of Information Technology's new Help Desk line at x4160, or available by e-mail, at "HelpDesk," in order to request technical assistance or desktop support.

Very truly yours,

Christopher O. Ward

DEP Plays Role in National Water Management Case

The Shandaken Tunnel, part of the Catskill water supply system, can carry 650 million gallons of drinking water per day from the Schoharie Reservoir to the Esopus Creek in Ulster County. Water that is discharged from the Tunnel mixes with water in the Creek and the combined flow moves down the Creek to the Ashokan Reservoir, from which it flows to the Kensico Reservoir and then into the City through the Catskill Aqueduct.

For many years, DEP and its predecessors operated the Tunnel based on decisions reflecting water levels in the reservoirs, water quality, State regulations, and in-City demand. In March 2000, certain fishing and sporting groups filed a lawsuit against the City and DEP under the federal Clean Water Act, claiming that DEP was violating federal law by discharging turbid water from the Tunnel without a permit. (Water released from the Tunnel is often very turbid, especially after heavy rains in the Schoharie Reservoir basin.) The petitioners claimed that operation of the Tunnel amounted to an addition by DEP of a "pollutant" to the

Esopus Creek, and thus required the City to obtain a permit to operate the Tunnel under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). In New York State, these permits are issued by the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and are referred to as "SPDES" permits.

In October 2000, the City succeeded in having the lawsuit dismissed, arguing that



The Esopus Creek, Ulster County, NY.

the turbidity in question was due to naturally occurring clay deposits in streambeds, and that DEP did nothing to alter, change, or treat the water being moved from the Schoharie Reservoir to the Creek. A year later, a federal appeals court reversed the

dismissal, and held that because water from the Schoharie Reservoir would not otherwise reach the Esopus Creek but for the intervention of the Shandaken Tunnel, a permit was required.

At the same time, a similar lawsuit was proceeding in the State of Florida. In the Florida case, a Native American tribe sued the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The Tribe contended that a pump station operated by the (Cont'd next page)

DEP Creates Motor Pool for Lefrak

In order to better match DEP's operational needs with its available vehicles, the Agency recently established a carpool to serve Lefrak-based employees engaged in official City business. An assortment of 25 vehicles - ranging from sedans to vans to pickups and SUVs - has been collected from the major operating bureaus and made available for intra-day use.

Reserving a vehicle is easy. Check first with your bureau liaison (**see next page**) to see if a bureau vehicle is available; if one is, the liaison will assign it directly to you and not release it for pool use that day. If no vehicle is available, or if you do not work in one of the bureaus which has a liaison identified below, simply call or email John Lento with your request. Vehicles are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Detailed procedures are available from your bureau liaison or John Lento.

You may have noticed the yellow-numbered spaces on the southeast section of the roof. These are the spots reserved for pool vehicles in order to facilitate the smooth operation of the pool. We appreciate your cooperation in ensuring that non-pool vehicles do not park in these spots!

Not only should the carpool help make cars available to the bureaus which most need them at a given time, but it also should prove to be a valuable asset for Lefrak-based employees whose job functions generate an occasional need for a vehicle. Please feel free to make use of it by contacting your bureau liaison or John Lento.

DEP Works to Restore the Health of Jamaica Bay

Jamaica Bay and its surroundings are an important part of New York City's environment, and a complex part of the City's ecology. Over time, the development of New York City has changed the physical character of the region. These developments have included the construction of JFK airport and its runway system, deepening and straightening channels in the bay, and engineering the landscape to meet the needs of a growing city.

Additionally, the growth of industry has led to an increase in the amount of pollutants that can enter the Bay. Sources of the pollution range from combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and raw discharges from unsewered areas of the City, to seepage from landfills and water pollution control plants. Increases in pollution can lead to a number of problems, including: eutrophication (increases in algae levels that can result in fish kills); a reduction in dissolved oxygen levels, which is harmful to aquatic life; sediment mounds, which can lead to odor and aesthetic issues; and a deteriorated level of water quality that can prohibit recreational activity.

To counteract the effects of urbanization and industrial growth, DEP has enacted a number of programs to aid in the restoration of Jamaica Bay. New practices and infrastructure improvements in the region that surrounds Jamaica Bay, as well as the pursuit of technological innovation, will help to improve water quality.

A large part of DEP's infrastructure improvements are the upgrades to the four wastewater treatment plants that surround Jamaica Bay: 26th Ward; Jamaica; Coney Island; and Rockaway. The City is under a judicial order to develop a comprehensive nitrogen control plan for Jamaica Bay by 2006, of which these plant upgrades are part.



*Paerdegat Basin CSO,
Under Construction in Brooklyn.*

As part of a multi-year CSO Abatement Program, DEP is also building retention tanks to hold overflows near heavily impacted bays and tributaries, as well as installing new sewers where insufficient sewerage exists. Currently, five CSO facilities are being planned for or built in the areas that overflow into Jamaica Bay.

Litter can also cause a number of ecological problems for the Bay, including damaging wastewater treatment plants, clogging storm drains, and causing sewer backups and flooding. DEP has a multi-faceted program in place to combat floatables, which includes regular catch basin maintenance, netting CSO sites, and the operation of skimmer vessels throughout the region.

In addition, DEP operates a Shoreline Survey Program to monitor the City's miles of shoreline for evidence of recent dumping.

DEP is committed to a number of other programs designed to improve the Jamaica Bay ecosystem, which range from landfill remediation to ecosystem restoration, co-sponsored with the US Army Corps of Engineers. DEP

is also conducting water quality monitoring and modeling to track and evaluate the conditions of the Bay.

Jamaica Bay and its ecosystem present a complex challenge for DEP. The Agency is committed to enhancing the Bay, and to developing a comprehensive plan to improve water use and water quality. The Agency's efforts are leading to definite improvements in the quality of the bay - dissolved oxygen levels have increased in the past thirty years, and DEP programs have significantly reduced fecal coliform levels since the mid-1980s to well below New York State standards. DEP is currently committing \$2 billion toward its programs that are focused on the health of the Bay, in order to achieve these goals.

(DEP/Supreme Court cont'd) SFWMD added a pollutant to a water conservation area, thereby requiring a NPDES permit. As in DEP's case, a lower court and a federal appeals court in Florida sided with the Tribe and held that a permit was required to operate the pump station.

The Florida case has now been appealed to the United States Supreme Court, and was argued on January 14, 2004. DEP Legal Affairs worked with the City Law Department on two amicus ("friend of court") briefs filed in support of SFWMD, seeking a reversal of the appeals court decision in Florida. This would, in effect, provide for a reversal of the appeals court decision in our own Catskill Mountains case). A decision in the case is expected in the Spring or early Summer 2004. In the meantime, DEP has received a draft SPDES permit from the State DEC for operation of the Shandaken Tunnel. This permit is currently under review by staff in the Legal Affairs division and the Bureau of Water Supply.

DEP Refines Its 311 Response

Since the inception of 311, the Citywide hotline for government information and services, many DEP staff have taken calls forwarded by the 311 Call Center. A number of these calls have been referred to incorrect extensions at the Agency, or have been with callers who have been transferred numerous times in search of assistance. Although many of these complications can be attributed to the challenges that face the start-up of a comprehensive citywide initiative like 311, it is priority for the Office of the Mayor, as well as for DEP, that the questions and concerns of New Yorkers are addressed in an efficient and effective manner.

In response, the Commissioner has appointed Michael Egan as DEP's coordinator and liaison for all issues related to the 311 Call Center. Please feel free to contact Michael concerning any 311-related issues or concerns; he can be reached at x6573. In addition, we have established a 311 hotline to handle, route, and track misdirected 311 calls more effectively. The hotline is currently operational, and all misdirected calls coming from or related to 311 should be directed to (718) 595-6692, where someone will provide assistance, or where a voicemail message can be left should a call be received after regular office hours.

To date, the feedback we have received has been extremely helpful, so we ask that you please continue to provide us with any information regarding misdirected 311 calls you may receive. Even if you are able to handle a misdirected call appropriately yourself, please let Michael know how it was incorrectly forwarded to you initially, so that this information can be tracked and corrections can be suggested to the 311 Call Center.

DEP will continue to work with the 311 Call Center Project Team to solve DEP-related issues regarding 311, so that we can help ensure that 311 remains a valuable tool for all New Yorkers.

Motor Pool Bureau Administrators

Engineering Audit: Leslie Laylock, x3315

Environmental Engineering: Jeff Elberger, x6251

Customer Service: Vincent Ortiz, x6998

Wastewater Treatment: Walter Goyzueta, x4925

Water Supply: Joe Ribando, x6374

Environmental Compliance: Virginia Smyth, x4404

Management and Budget: Rick Morales, 326-6104

Water and Sewer Operations:
Debbie Toledo, x5378

Legal Affairs: Julia Bourdier, x6555

Lefrak Carpool Operations: John Lento, x3424