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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEP Wastewater Treatment Operators Compete In Operators Challenge**"The Olympics of Sewage Treatment"**

Commissioner Emily Lloyd kicked off the 19th annual Operators Challenge this morning at the Jamaica Wastewater Treatment Plant in Queens. The Operators Challenge, often called "*The Olympics of Sewage Treatment*," is a national competition developed by the Water Environment Federation (WEF) to formally recognize the expertise and skills of wastewater treatment plant operators as they safely and effectively operate their facilities. The New York Water Environment Association – the local chapter of the WEF – is sponsoring the event along with DEP.

Commissioner Lloyd said, "DEP's 14 wastewater treatment plants operate 24 hours a day, treating approximately 1.3 billion gallons of raw sewage. This competition gives our treatment plant operators and maintenance staff a chance to demonstrate their skills as well as the high degree of competence and pride they bring to the complex round of tasks they perform. At the same time, it gives them an opportunity to obtain recognition for the special services they provide to maintain New York City's health and safety. We at DEP are proud to highlight their achievement," continued Commissioner Lloyd, "and we appreciate this opportunity to participate in this nationwide competition."

The Challenge requires teams of four sewage treatment workers to compete in five timed events: safety and emergency procedures, pump maintenance and repair, laboratory procedures, process control, and sewer collection systems maintenance. The competition also includes an oral question and answer session. The two highest scoring teams will go on to compete in the Statewide Competition on June 5 during the 2006 joint meeting of the New England Water Environment Association and the New York Water Environment Association meeting in Groton, Connecticut. From there winners at the State contest will compete in the Nationals to be held in Dallas, Texas in October during the annual WEF Technical Exhibition Conference.

Four teams will vie for the chance to compete in the State competition in June. Two teams from the Bowery Bay Plant in Queens, the Bowery Bay "Bang Ins" and the Bowery Bay

MORE INFORMATION

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"Boys" will face off against their borough competitors, the Tallman Island "Trackers," and the Jamaica "Jesters."

The WEF is the largest professional organization representing the wastewater treatment industry. Its membership comprises national and international wastewater professionals from the public, private and commercial sectors. The goal of the WEF is the preservation of the nation's water environment through effective water quality management and by promoting professional, public training and education programs.