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## DEP Takes Steps to Improve Water Quality in Jamaica Bay

### Seeks to End Raw Sewage Releases from Boats to Improve Bay's Ecology; Harbor Survey Program Increases Testing Locations

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today announced that DEP is seeking a No Discharge Zone designation in the open waters and tributaries of Jamaica Bay. The designation, made possible because DEP has developed sufficient sewage pump-out locations where vessels are able to discharge waste, will improve the bay's water quality and ecology. Currently, boats are not permitted to discharge untreated sewage within three miles of the coast, but the new designation expands the discharge prohibition to include treated sewage as well. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has applied to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the designation on behalf of DEP. Additionally, DEP announced an expansion of the Harbor Survey Program from 65 to 72 testing locations, with four of the seven new testing locations in Jamaica Bay. The program conducts water and sediment sampling year round to monitor the health of New York Harbor, including Jamaica Bay.

"Making Jamaica Bay a No Discharge Zone and expanding the sampling locations of the Harbor Survey Program will improve water quality and protect the ecology and overall health of this national treasure," said Commissioner Holloway. "These improvements build on the historic agreement city reached last year with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the Natural Resources Defense Council, and other stakeholders, that will reduce nitrogen discharges into the bay by 50% or more over the next decade. I want to thank DEC Commissioner Joe Martens and his team for working with us to seek this important designation for Jamaica Bay, which we estimate will eliminate discharges from approximately 1,200 registered boats that use the bay for recreational purposes.

"Jamaica Bay is a national treasure that has suffered serious injuries which we are working to redress," said Joe Martens, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. "Today's announcement of

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our petition to EPA for a marine no discharge zone is just one of many efforts underway toward restoring the Bay. These efforts include reducing harmful nutrient nitrogen discharges from sewage treatment plants, addressing combined sewer overflows, facilitating boater access and reconstructing marsh island habitats. Commissioner Holloway and the entire DEP team have been fantastic leaders and partners with DEC in efforts to bring back the Bay."

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation applied for a No Discharge Zone designation from EPA on behalf of New York City in accordance with the Clean Water Act section requiring that a State has to formally request designation of a specific portion of a waterbody. The designation will help to improve water quality management and reduce pollutants that impair water quality in the bay and will also help protect and restore coastal habitats. This designation is now possible because each of the four pumping stations roughly serves 300 to 600 boaters, the minimum requirement from the EPA to grant the No Discharge Zone permit. The three inland pump-out stations have been located at Coney Island Wastewater Treatment Plant since 2000, the Hudson River Yacht Club in Paerdegat Basin since 2005, and the Rockaway Wastewater Treatment Plant since 2008. The mobile station is NY/NJ Baykeeper's 24-foot sewage pump-out vessel that since 1994 has provided service to boat owners anchored in Jamaica Bay from April through October. These pump-out stations are part of the State's Clean Vessel Assistance Program that was established to protect and improve water quality in New York's navigable waterways.

Receiving a No Discharge Zone designation is a key element of the Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan, which outlines several objectives and management strategies that use environmentally-sound and ecologically-sustainable practices to help reduce nitrogen loading and improve the wildlife habitats in the bay. The Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan was the result of research and dialogue with stakeholders and consultation with the Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan Advisory Committee. The plan was undertaken in accordance with Local Law 71, which requires DEP to assess the technical, legal, environmental and economic feasibility of protection measures for Jamaica Bay and produce a report every three years.

The Harbor Survey Program is also adding seven new monitoring stations, increasing the total from 65 to 72 citywide. Of the four new Jamaica Bay sites, there are two at Fresh Creek and two at Bergen Basin, and there will now be 24 testing locations in Jamaica Bay, up from 13 in 2010. The Fresh Creek sites will be sampled twice a month throughout the year, and the others weekly during the summer, and monthly in other seasons. Bay and harbor testing gives DEP vital information needed to ensure that the city's 14 wastewater treatment plants meets treatment standards and enables the safe recreational use of navigable waterways.

DEP has taken many steps to ensure that the bay can be fully enjoyed for generations to come. Last year, the city reached an agreement to reduce nitrogen discharges into the bay by 50% over the next 10 years. DEP also unveiled the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan, which will reduce sewer overflows citywide by 40 percent over the next 20 years, and has piloted a number of cutting-edge environmental restoration projects in the bay, like planting oysters to restore natural filtration. Last month, DEP opened the

Paerdegat Basin Combined Sewer Overflow Facility that will cut sewer overflows by 1.2 billion gallons per year into the bay.

Jamaica Bay is the largest estuary waterbody in the New York City metropolitan area covering an area of approximately 20,000 acres. The bay is a diverse ecological resource that supports multiple habitats, including open water, salt marshes, grasslands, coastal woodlands, maritime shrublands, and brackish and freshwater wetlands. Jamaica Bay is known for its wildlife refuge and excellent fishing and these habitats support 91 fish species, 325 species of birds, and many reptile, amphibian, and small mammal species.

DEP manages the city's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. New York City's water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, and comprises 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,400 miles of sewer lines take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep) or follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nycwater](http://www.facebook.com/nycwater).

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