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Fall Foliage

Ashokan Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System



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NYC Submits Permit Application to Continue to Acquire Lands for Watershed Protection

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has submitted its application for a permit to continue to acquire land to protect the watersheds, the sources of clean drinking water for half the residents of New York State. The permit, to be issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), will allow DEP to acquire additional properties to ensure that the undeveloped, environmentally-sensitive watershed lands extending more than 125 miles away from New York City remain protected.

Watershed protection is widely considered the best way of maintaining the quality of drinking water. New York City's program, one of the most comprehensive in the world, has been so successful at protecting the integrity of New York City's water supply that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded the City a 10-year Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) in 2007. The success of New York City's Watershed Protection Program is one of the main reasons why New York City remains one of only five large cities in the United States that is not required to filter its drinking water.

"Since the beginning of the FAD, New York City has committed \$541 million to purchase land to protect our unfiltered drinking water supply," said Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway. "We are acutely aware of the need to balance water quality preservation with the interests and economic vitality of watershed communities. In all, the City has already invested over \$1.5 billion in watershed protection programs, including nearly \$55 million to help watershed homeowners repair or replace failing septic systems, almost \$125 million to construct new wastewater infrastructure in communities with concentrated areas of substandard septic systems, and more than \$175 million to upgrade existing wastewater treatment plants to provide the highest levels of treatment."

DEP supplies 1 billion gallons of drinking water to 9 million New York State residents every day, including 8 million in

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New York City, and residents in portions of Ulster, Orange, Putnam, and Westchester Counties. DEP's watershed is comprised of 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and seven wastewater treatment plants. Approximately 1,000 DEP employees live and work in watershed communities as scientists, engineers, surveyors, administrative professionals, and they perform other critical responsibilities as well.

Specific guidelines for the acquisition of land were set forth in the 1997 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), signed by New York City, New York State, EPA, environmental groups and 77 counties and municipalities in the Watershed. The 2007 FAD requires the City to continue an active land acquisition program, focusing on properties selected for their water quality protection benefits. The City only acquires lands from willing sellers and pays fair market value based on independent appraisals.

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