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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 17-73
August 16, 2017
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City Completes Largest Ever Expansion of the Bluebelt System on Staten Island



\$48 Million Investment in the Woodrow Area Included New Catch Basins, Storm Sewers and Wetlands to Reduce Flooding; Nearly 600 Homes Off Septics

Photos of the Project and a Map of the Work Area are Available on [DEP's Flickr Page](#)

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza and Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Acting Commissioner Ana Barrio today announced the completion of the largest ever expansion of the Staten Island Bluebelt system. Prior to the work, very few streets in this area were equipped with catch basins or storm sewers and roadway flooding often occurred during heavy rainstorms. The \$48 million infrastructure upgrade added more than three miles of storm sewers, installed hundreds of catch basins, replaced existing water mains, and included the largest ever expansion of the Bluebelt system. The catch basins will allow precipitation to drain from the roadways into the new storm sewers which will then direct it to the Bluebelt wetland where it will be naturally filtered to protect the environment. In addition, four miles of new sanitary sewers were installed that allowed nearly 600 homes to connect to the City sewer system and discontinue the use of septic tanks. The project, which was funded by DEP and managed by DDC, began in the spring of 2014 and was completed ahead of schedule. The Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI) recognized the project with its Envision Silver Award, just the second New York City project to receive the award.

“The Bluebelt system on Staten Island has proven to effectively manage stormwater, reduce localized flooding and raise nearby property values,” said

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DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza. “Investing \$48 million in the Woodrow area allowed us to extend sewers to nearly 600 homes in the area and allow them to discontinue the use of septic tanks, which will reduce headaches for those homeowners.”

“The largest Bluebelt project ever is a capstone on the Sweet Brook system that’s been in development for close to 20 years,” said **DDC Acting Commissioner Ana Barrio.** “Working with DEP, we are able to preserve open space while effectively managing stormwater runoff in a way that protects local wetlands and waterways. We’ll continue to find ways to invest efficiently in Staten Island.”

“I would like to thank DEP for yet another expansion of our Bluebelt system. Each time the system is expanded, it means there will be less flooding in an area and the beautification of the community,” said **Borough President Oddo.** “I’ve said it many times before, but it is worth repeating that our Bluebelt system represents an ongoing success story, an engineering feat that controls storm water by working with nature and not against it. In all areas with a completed Bluebelt, residents have enjoyed neighborhoods that are safer, drier, and more pleasant. I look forward to its continued expansion to even more areas.”

“The robust marshes and wetlands in Staten Island’s Bluebelt system have long proven themselves to be a natural and effective means of regulating the flooding that often occurs with heavy rainfalls,” said **NYS Assembly Member Ron Castorina, Jr.** “Considering the heavy floods that have caused great distress to residents across the island, I’m pleased to hear the \$48 million investment into infrastructure has been completed ahead of schedule. I thank both the DEP and the DDC for their efforts in utilizing the natural landscape to find a solution to this longstanding issue.”

“I’m thankful for Commissioner Sapienza and the DEP’s continued investments in our beloved Bluebelt system, and I know that my constituents appreciate the expansion of the city sewer system to hundreds of additional homeowners,” said **Council Member Joseph Borelli.**

The installation of 15,059 linear feet of new storm sewers, 197 catch basins and 133 manholes will help to better manage the precipitation that falls in the area and reduce localized flooding. In addition, 23,278 linear feet of new sanitary sewers will allow 590 homes to connect to the City’s sewer system and discontinue the use of septic tanks.

The award winning Bluebelt program preserves natural drainage corridors such as streams and ponds, and optimizes them to help control and filter stormwater. As part of this project, the stormwater that is collected from local roadways will be directed to the new wetland that was built on City-owned property at the east end of Sheldon Avenue. The work included the planting of 723 canopy trees, 166 shrubs, 36,850 plants and wildflowers, and 115,000 square feet of seeding. The Bluebelt will hold and naturally filter the stormwater before it eventually drains into the Arthur Kill.

Over the last ten years DEP has built Bluebelts for approximately one third of Staten Island’s land area. In the South Richmond and mid-Island areas, the City has purchased approximately 400 acres of wetland property for Bluebelts that provide drainage for 19 watersheds, covering about 14,000 acres. The Bluebelts also provide important open spaces and serve as a habitat for diverse wildlife. Expanding the use of Bluebelts to reduce flooding and improve the water quality of New York Harbor is one of the operational goals outlined in *Strategy 2011-2014*, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation.

While the roadway was opened to add the new sewers, the City also upgraded the drinking water delivery system by replacing the old cast iron water mains with new ductile iron mains. As part of the project, 12,580 linear feet of 8 and 12-inch diameter distribution water mains were installed. Upgrading the water main network will help to ensure a reliable supply of high quality drinking water for area


residents and businesses.

ISI describes its Envision process as a rating system for sustainable infrastructure providing “a holistic framework for evaluating and rating the community, environmental and economic benefits of all types and sizes of infrastructure projects.” It covers a broad range of criteria to address a project’s impact on the surrounding community and environment, technical considerations regarding materials and processes, and other critical choices spanning a project’s lifecycle. Envision also helps communities and elected officials make responsible choices about their natural resources.

The ISI’s Envision Silver Award is granted when a project fosters a dramatic and necessary improvement in the sustainability performance and resiliency of infrastructure, and is issued as a result of an independent peer-review process conducted and overseen by the ISI. The evaluation assesses project performance across 60 sustainability criteria addressing a wide range of indicators including community, quality of life, management, planning, materials, energy, water, environmental impacts, emissions, and resilience.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing approximately 1 billion gallons of high quality drinking water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8.5 million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 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 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$20.7 billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

The Department of Design and Construction is the City’s primary capital construction project manager. In supporting Mayor de Blasio’s lenses of growth, sustainability, resiliency, equity and healthy living, DDC provides communities with new or renovated public buildings such as such as firehouses, libraries, police precincts, new or upgraded roadways, sewers, water mains in all five boroughs. To manage this \$15 billion portfolio, DDC partners with other City agencies, architects and consultants, whose experience bring efficient, innovative, and environmentally-conscious design and construction strategies to city projects. For more information, please visit nyc.gov/ddc.

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