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**DEP Releases Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement for Mid-Island Bluebelts on Staten Island**

**Study Assesses Benefits of Stormwater Management in the Mid-Island Area; 60-Day Period Now Open for Public Comment**

Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland today released the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) for the proposed amended drainage plans for the Mid-Island Bluebelt watersheds on Staten Island. The Staten Island Bluebelt is an award-winning, ecologically-sound and cost-effective storm water management system that uses natural features, like streams and ponds, to convey stormwater rather than using traditional underground pipe infrastructure. The proposed amended drainage plans cover approximately 5,000 acres in the Oakwood Beach, New Creek and South Beach watersheds, and will reduce flooding on streets and private property while preserving wetlands as has been done already in other Bluebelt areas in Staten Island's south shore. The first project scheduled in this multi-phase program is the restoration of the West Branch of New Creek, which will help relieve flooding in the Midland Beach neighborhood that was severely impacted by Hurricane Irene and other storms. Construction is scheduled to start in 2013.

"The Bluebelt program is being expanded to help address chronic flooding in Staten Island," said Commissioner Strickland. "This proven approach is effective at managing stormwater and will also preserve the area's natural beauty without the disruptions that would go with the construction of traditional underground stormwater systems. The \$222 million that has been invested since 2002 in the Staten Island Bluebelt program has already shown its value, and this expansion is another significant step in the city's plans to invest \$263 million more in Staten Island Bluebelts over the next 10 years."

"On behalf of the people of Staten Island, I applaud Mayor Bloomberg and DEP Commissioner Strickland for the continued strong support for the Mid-Island Bluebelt," said Borough President James P. Molinaro. "This storm water management system is one of Staten Island's success

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stories due to its positive impact on our neighborhoods and our quality of life. The Mid-Island Bluebelt will bring long-awaited relief for several Staten Island communities suffering from flooding while preserving our wetlands."

"As if we need any additional proof, the torrential downpours of this summer have demonstrated just how vital the Mid Island Bluebelts will be to the lives of thousands of Staten Islanders," said Councilmember James Oddo. "Help and hope are on the way, and it cannot come soon enough!"

"After the damage and headaches suffered by East Shore residents in the aftermath of this summer's storms, this is certainly welcome news. These people have been dealing with chronic flooding for decades, but by releasing the Environmental Impact Statement, DEP has shown that we are ready to take the next step toward bringing much-needed relief," said Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis. "I will be working closely with my colleagues and DEP to ensure that our path to an effective Bluebelt system is followed in a timely and skillful manner."

The DEP's existing Bluebelt system, serving 16 watersheds in Staten Island, is an integral part of PlaNYC, the city's sustainability program to create a greener, greater New York. The system channels stormwater into natural drainage corridors, including streams, ponds and other wetland areas, instead of into storm sewers. Preservation of these wetland systems allows them to perform their functions of conveying, storing and filtering stormwater. In addition, the Bluebelts provide important open spaces for the public and diverse wildlife habitats. In January of last year, Clear Waters Magazine, a New York Water Environment Association publication, honored the Staten Island Bluebelt program for its environmentally sound approach to managing stormwater.

The Mid-Island Bluebelt system in Staten Island includes three watersheds: Oakwood Beach, New Creek and South Beach. As part of the amended drainage plans, the city will add new surface water features such as streams, ponds, and other wetlands which will work in conjunction with natural topography to help with the collection, conveyance, and management of stormwater. The proposed project also includes conventional storm sewers under roadways that will drain into streams, ponds and other wetland areas that make up the Bluebelt system. At every location where the storm sewer ends and the Bluebelt surface water system begins, special drainage features are proposed to control flooding, improve stormwater quality, attenuate flow velocities and enhance the natural beauty of the area. In addition, the proposed project would construct three new stormwater outfalls to the Lower Bay. These new outfalls, along with several enlargements of existing outfalls, will convey stormwater runoff to the Lower Bay to further reduce local flooding. Additional and upgraded sanitary sewers in the area will convey sanitary waste to the Oakwood Beach Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement identifies the range of impacts that may occur under the proposed program and allows for appropriate mitigation. Since this multi-phase program will be accomplished over a period of time, mitigation measures identified in the DGEIS will be tailored to individual capital projects as they are designed in the future. The implementation of the proposed amended drainage plans requires discretionary actions including approval from Federal, State and City agencies.

DEP will conduct a 60-day comment period, including written comments and a public hearing. A public hearing will take place at the Staten Island Community Board #2 Office located at the Community Service Building, Seaview Hospital at 460 Brielle Avenue, in Staten Island, NY 10314 at 7:30 pm on Thursday, October 27. The DGEIS is available at [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep). Hard copies of the DGEIS will also be available at public libraries, Staten Island Borough Hall Office and Community Boards # 2 and 3 offices.

Written comments can be sent to:

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The city will issue the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement in 2012 with any changes that are deemed appropriate based on public comments. DEP will then proceed with the design process for the first capital project at the West Branch in New Creek.

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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