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MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND COMMISSIONER STRICKLAND DETAIL \$20 BILLION INVESTMENTS IN CITY WATER SYSTEM SINCE 2002 AND ANNOUNCE WATER QUALITY UPGRADE PROJECT AT THE GOWANUS CANAL TO BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF 2013, DESPITE IMPACT OF HURRICANE SANDY

Upgraded Pumping Station and Flushing Tunnel Will Better Manage Wastewater, Dramatically Reduce Runoff and Improve Canal Water Quality

New York Leads Cities Nationwide with More Than \$20 Billion in Water Quality Investments, Allowing Delivery of One Billion Gallons of Clean Drinking Water Every Day

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter H. Strickland, Jr. today detailed \$20 billion in investments to the City's water system since 2002, and announced that the water quality project at the Gowanus Canal will be completed by the end of the year, despite flooding and other damage that resulted from Hurricane Sandy. The Gowanus Canal project broke ground in 2009 and includes two components: an upgrade to a wastewater pump station that will reduce Combined Sewer Overflows into the Canal by more than 30 percent; and an upgrade to the tunnel that will feed oxygen-rich water into the Canal, improving water quality. The Department of Environmental Protection made repairs and developed new improvements to protect the facility from future storms, including raising mechanical systems to a higher elevation. The project is one of several key investments the Bloomberg Administration has made: New York leads the nation with more than \$20 billion in investments to protect drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The Mayor and Commissioner made the announcement at the Gowanus Canal facility in Brooklyn, where they were joined by Council Member and Chair of the Council's Committee on Environmental Protection James F. Gennaro, and Robert D. Yaro, President of the Regional Plan Association.

"New Yorkers consumer more than one billion gallons of water each day, making it an essential part of our quality of life and economic growth," said Mayor Bloomberg. "The upgrades to the Gowanus Canal facility are among the unprecedented investments we've made to protect our world-renowned water quality. By committing more than \$20 billion to safeguard New York's drinking water and make our rivers and harbors cleaner, we're ensuring that New Yorkers can continue to benefit from clean and reliable water."

(more)

“Providing a reliable supply of high quality drinking water to more than 8.3 million New Yorkers, and collecting and treating to federal Clean Water Act standards more than 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater every day requires both long-term planning and innovative approaches,” said Commissioner Strickland. “Under Mayor Bloomberg’s leadership we are constantly piloting and then bringing up to scale new treatment technologies and operational strategies in order to improve our performance, clean the environment, and control costs.”

“New York City’s drinking water system and wastewater treatment system is the largest, most pure and most reliable in the country, as well as one of the greatest engineering marvels in the world. And it didn’t get that way by accident – it is the system it is because of generous yet prudent investment and cutting edge innovation. I salute Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Strickland not only for their innovation and investment in this irreplaceable system, but also for their efforts to contain costs,” said Council Member Gennaro, Chair of the City Council’s Committee on Environmental Protection. “Their successful initiatives to ‘push back’ against costly unfunded state and federal mandates have saved New York City ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars on projects that do not improve water quality and to advance projects that do. It is the leadership of Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Strickland that has allowed this unprecedented investment and unsurpassed water quality at a modest cost.”

“Hurricane Sandy severely tested the infrastructure of many east coast cities but thanks to the Bloomberg Administration’s foresight and financial commitment New York City’s drinking water remained safe and its wastewater systems were back on-line in short order,” said Yaro, President of the Regional Plan Association.

“Investing in New York City’s water infrastructure is an essential, if often overlooked, role of government,” said Peter Lehner, Executive Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council. “We are pleased to see that, despite many challenges, the Bloomberg Administration is continuing to invest to maintain, preserve and enhance our critical water infrastructure for future generations.”

Since 2002, the Bloomberg Administration has invested more than \$20 billion in water quality projects – the largest commitment to water supply and wastewater infrastructure of any U.S. city. Of that, more than \$10 billion have been committed to upgrades that protect the city’s drinking water supply, including:

- \$3.2 billion for the Croton filtration plan;
- \$1.6 billion to construct the largest ultraviolet disinfection facility in the world, which will treat water and kill harmful microorganisms;
- \$1.6 billion to replace outdated water mains and pipes, including the installation of more than 470 miles of new pipes;
- \$380 million to purchase and protect more than 125,000 acres of land around reservoirs to prevent contaminants from reaching the City’s water supply; and
- \$250 million to upgrade City dams.

Another \$9.5 billion has been allocated toward projects that better treat wastewater and make waterways cleaner. The work includes \$190 million for the Gowanus Canal pump station and tunnel, as well as:

- \$5 billion to upgrade the Newtown Creek wastewater treatment plant;
- \$2.2 billion for more than 600 miles of new or reconstructed sewer lines; and
- \$1.1 billion to reduce nitrogen emissions at water treatment facilities.

The City has significantly invested in the Third Water Tunnel, the largest public works project in City history. The Administration has spent \$3.6 billion and has committed another \$1.1 billion to complete the tunnel by 2026. The Manhattan section is expected to open later this year. Construction on Tunnel No. 3 began in 1970 and will allow for the inspection and repair of Tunnel Nos. 1 and 2 for the first time since their installation in 1917 and 1936, respectively.

These investments have ensured the reliability of the City’s water supply during and after Hurricane Sandy. New York City’s drinking water remained potable. The City was also able to treat 99 percent of all wastewater within three days of the storm; and 100 percent of all wastewater within two weeks. The City’s 14 wastewater treatment plants – which all meet or exceed the highest national standards – prevented billions of gallons of toxic wastewater from being discharged into rivers, harbors and bays.




Alongside infrastructure upgrades, the City has launched the Green Infrastructure Plan, an alternative approach to improving harbor water quality that combines traditional infrastructure upgrades and the integration of green infrastructure to capture and retain storm-water runoff before it ever enters the sewer system. Over the next 20 years, the Department of Environmental Protection is planning for \$2.4 billion in public and private funding for targeted green infrastructure installations, as well as \$2.9 billion in cost-effective grey infrastructure upgrades. Taken together, these investments will lead to a greater improvement in harbor water quality, and at a lower cost to ratepayers, than traditional upgrades alone.

Even while undertaking these projects, the City has worked to become more efficient to cut costs for water customers. In the last decade, 65 percent of the Department of Environmental Protection’s capital spending went toward unfunded mandates that Federal and State governments required the City to initiate – no matter the priority of other projects or debt. Those requirements cost an average New York City water customer \$258 last year. The Department has worked with the regulators to reduce burdensome requirements, which will allow the City to prioritize projects and keep debt in line. The City has also established a three-year pilot program to cap the Water Board’s rental payment, which will save customers nearly \$60 million and keep rates as low as possible.

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