



Fall Foliage

Schoharie Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System



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DEP Releases Updated Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan

Plan Focuses on Water Quality Improvements and Ecological Restoration

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today announced the release of the updated Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan. The plan, first issued in 2007, focuses on water quality improvements, ecological restoration and enhancing valuable natural resources. The updated report shows the progress DEP is making on its goals to protect one of the most bountiful wildlife habitats in the Northeastern United States and tracks initiatives including wastewater treatment plant upgrades, oyster and eelgrass pilot restoration projects, a wetlands restoration at Paerdegat Basin, green infrastructure projects such as streetside swales and enhanced tree pits, and wetlands mapping. The updated plan is available online at www.nyc.gov/dep.

"Due in large part to \$6 billion of harbor water quality investments since 2002 alone, New York harbor is cleaner and healthier than at any time in the last hundred years," said Commissioner Holloway. "And Mayor Bloomberg has made the restoration of Jamaica Bay a special priority in this effort. This year alone, we reached an historic agreement with State DEC and the Natural Resources Defense Council to reduce nitrogen levels by 50%; added 1,000 eelgrass plantings as part of a pilot program to evaluate the potential for establishing small eelgrass beds; and restored 10,000 oysters to help filter excess nutrients from the water. Because of these efforts and the dedication of environmental and community stakeholders, we are on track to achieve the goals outlined in the Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan that will substantially improve the overall quality of the bay's ecology."

The 2007 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.

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This has been a landmark year for Jamaica Bay:

- ▶ In an historic agreement between the City, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Natural Resources Defense Council and other environmental stakeholders, the City announced in February that it would make \$115 million in new investments to improve the overall water quality and mitigate marshland loss in Jamaica Bay. The investments include \$100 million to install new nitrogen control technologies at wastewater treatment plants located on Jamaica Bay. The investments, made in concert with \$95 million the City already has committed for nitrogen control upgrades, will reduce the nitrogen loads discharged into Jamaica Bay by nearly 50% over the next ten years. The City also will invest \$15 million for marshland restoration projects around the bay. Since 2002, the City has invested \$37.4 million to reclaim more than 440 acres of environmentally sensitive land adjoining Jamaica Bay and plans to remediate nearly 100 additional acres.
- ▶ In June, DEP launched an enhanced water quality testing program in Jamaica Bay, increasing the number of sampling sites there by 50% — from 13 to 20 locations. Bay and harbor monitoring gives DEP vital information needed to ensure that the City's 14 wastewater treatment plants meet or exceed State and Federal treatment standards.
- ▶ In May, DEP launched the second phase of the Eelgrass Restoration Project to help improve Jamaica Bay's local ecosystem. The project consists of 1,000 individual plantings and is part of the City's efforts to improve the overall water quality and ecology of Jamaica Bay. The project is being done in collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension and the National Park Service and includes approximately 1,000 eelgrass plantings at three sites near Breezy Point, Breezy Point Yacht Club, and Dubos Point. Eelgrass is a type of submerged aquatic vegetation that grows in estuaries and shallow bays. It is important for fish and shellfish as shelter and habitat. Additional future eelgrass plantings in the bay is planned.
- ▶ Last month, Mayor Bloomberg unveiled the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan, which will improve harbor water quality by capturing and retaining stormwater runoff before it enters the sewer system. Some of the first green infrastructure projects for this plan are being piloted in the Jamaica Bay Watershed.
- ▶ Last week, a small oyster bed and a field of reef balls were placed within Jamaica Bay to evaluate oyster growth, survival, reproduction, water quality and ecological benefits. Oyster reefs once thrived in Jamaica Bay, forming an important habitat for many species and filtering Bay water. The findings of this pilot will inform future attempts to restore oyster habitat in the Bay.

Jamaica Bay is a 39-square-mile water body with a broader watershed of approximately 142 square miles that includes portions of Brooklyn, Queens and Nassau County. 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. These habitats support 91 fish species, 325 species of birds and many reptile, amphibian and small mammal species. The bay is a critical stop for birds along the Eastern Flyway migration route and has become an internationally renowned birding destination. Portions of the bay, most notably the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, have been designated as Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats by the federal and state governments.

DEP manages the city's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. 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. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater.

Related Documents and Links

- ▶ [Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan Update 2010](#)
- ▶ [Jamaica Bay Education Resource Directory 2010](#)

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