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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PR- 407-10

September 28, 2010

#### **MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMISSIONER HOLLOWAY ANNOUNCE NEW GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN TO REDUCE SEWER OVERFLOWS, IMPROVE QUALITY OF CITY WATERWAYS AND SAVE \$2.4 BILLION**

*Plan will Reduce Combined Sewer Overflows by 40 Percent, while Reducing Energy Consumption and the City's Carbon Footprint*

*Advances PlaNYC and Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy Goal of Opening More Waterways to Recreation*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and [Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway](#) today unveiled a new plan to utilize “green infrastructure” to improve the quality of waterways around New York City by capturing and retaining stormwater to reduce sewer overflows. New York City, like other older urban centers, is largely serviced by a combined sewer system where stormwater and wastewater are carried through one system. During heavy storms, the system often reaches capacity and must discharge a mix of stormwater and wastewater – called a combined sewer overflow – into New York Harbor. If the overflows were not discharged, the City’s 14 wastewater treatment plants could be comprised and unable to treat wastewater. The new plan, called NYC Green Infrastructure, will replace the existing approach for sewer overflow control, which relies solely on traditional investments like holding tanks and tunnels, with a mix of green infrastructure and cost-effective traditional infrastructure that will reduce sewer overflows into waterways by 40 percent by 2030 by capturing more stormwater. The plan will reduce the City’s long-term sewer management costs by \$2.4 billion over the next 20 years, helping to hold down future water bills. The NYC Green Infrastructure plan will make more of the City’s waterways available for recreational use, a key goal of [PlaNYC](#) – the Mayor’s long-term vision for a greener, greater New York – and of the Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy – the City’s initiative to revitalize more than 500 miles of waterfront. The Mayor also was joined by Deputy Mayor for Operations Stephen Goldsmith, Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability Director David Bragdon, City Council Committee on Environmental Protection Chair James F. Gennaro, Eric Goldstein of the Natural Resources Defense Council, Hudson Riverkeeper Paul Gallay, and President of the League of Conservation Voters Marcia Bystryk at the announcement at P.S. 118 in Queens, where a green

roof was installed as a part of the successful demonstration pilot.

"The City's waterways are the cleanest they have been in a century, thanks in large part to the significant investments we have made in protecting our waterways," said Mayor Bloomberg. "But our *PlaNYC* goal of making 90 percent of City waterways suitable for recreation requires we do more, and that means reducing the combined sewer overflows that have plagued the City for decades. Our green infrastructure plan is bringing a new approach to an old problem by using natural means to capture the stormwater that too frequently overloads the system. The plan will help clean our waterways, green the city and reduce the costs for residents and business owners, who pay the bills for maintaining the City's water and sewer systems."

"By moving to a green investments approach, we can protect the City's waterways in the most environmentally friendly way, which is also the most efficient and least expensive way," said Deputy Mayor Goldsmith. "New Yorkers want their waterways protected, but they should not have to pay more for water system investments when we can spend less and get the results they deserve."

"Improving water quality is critical to opening as much of the City's waterfront as possible for New Yorkers, and the green infrastructure plan will do it in a way that achieves immediate results – at a price we can afford," said Commissioner Holloway. "The EPA and New York State DEC have expressed support for green approaches to achieving water quality standards, and this plan commits unprecedented expertise and resources to do green right. But for the plan to truly succeed, we will need to work in a creative collaboration with our regulators and stakeholders now, and for many years to come. The traditional enforcement dynamic must give way to a partnership model that demands success, but is flexible enough to accommodate change along the way. With clean water as our common goal, I am confident that the City can work with our partners at EPA and DEC to make the green infrastructure plan a success."

"Protecting water quality by investing in green infrastructure makes both fiscal and environmental sense," said Director Bragdon of the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability. "This innovative approach captures stormwater runoff and also achieves other important objectives such as cleaner air, enhanced open space, and reduced vulnerability to climate change. It's all part of the Mayor's Sustainable Stormwater Management Plan and *PlaNYC*: building a greener, greater New York."

"In Queens, we know all too well of the problems associated with insufficient stormwater management infrastructure," said Council Member Gennaro. "Too-frequently, street flooding has been an unfortunate fact of life in Southeast Queens for generations. Fortunately, thanks to Mayor Bloomberg and his NYC Green Infrastructure Plan, the days of excessive street flooding are numbered. This innovative plan will give the residents of Southeast Queens what they have long needed and rightfully deserved – dry streets and dry basements. Special thanks to Mayor Bloomberg's environmental commissioner, Cas Holloway, and his team for conceiving of and designing this landmark environmental initiative."

"New York City is lucky to be surrounded by beautiful rivers and New York Harbor, but unfortunately nearly 30 billion gallons of sewage overflows pollute these waterways every year," said Peter Lehner, Executive Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "This gives the City a chance to be a national leader on how to clean them up. Tackling this problem will require extensive green infrastructure improvements on land that make a real difference in

the water. We look forward to working with the City, State and EPA to further develop today's proposals and to make New York City a better, greener place to live."

"Riverkeeper supports New York City for embracing green infrastructure as an integral part of its plan to reduce sewage pollution of New York City's waters," said Hudson Riverkeeper Paul Gally. "We're counting on the City to work with State regulators and environmental groups to find the right mix of stormwater control techniques for improved water quality and a more livable city."

"One of the most challenging environmental questions facing New York City is how best to clean up our waterways," said Marcia Bystryn, president of the New York League of Conservation Voters. "The NYC Green Infrastructure Plan is a comprehensive response that will reduce pollution, protect critical habitat and make investments where they will have the greatest impact. We applaud Mayor Bloomberg, Commissioner Holloway, Deputy Commissioner Strickland and everyone involved for this important step toward a more sustainable city."

"A good number of environmental justice communities live and work on or near the waterfront," said Executive Director of UPROSE Elizabeth C. Yeampierre, Esq. "The NYC Green Infrastructure Plan is an important step in addressing environmental justice concerns about climate mitigation, community resilience and environmentally related public health disparities."

Green infrastructure installs natural features on buildings, roads and other locations to absorb and retain stormwater. The minimal energy and manpower required for operation, and the relatively quick installation of green infrastructure makes the plan cost-effective and able to provide immediate benefits.

Examples of green infrastructure projects include: blue roofs and green roofs, which use mechanical devices or vegetation to slow roof water from draining too quickly and overwhelming storm sewers; porous pavement for parking lots that allows water to seep through it and be absorbed into the ground rather than running-off into the sewer system; tree pits and streetside swales for roadways that allow water to pool in underground holding areas until it can dissipate in the ground or transpire through plants; wetlands and swales for parks; and rain barrels in some residential areas.

By shifting from the exclusive use of traditional infrastructure like holding tanks and tunnel systems – known as "grey infrastructure" – to green infrastructure, the City will reduce combined sewer overflows by more than 12 billion gallons per year by 2030, a 40 percent reduction. The plan will reduce the cost of maintaining the City's sewer system by \$2.4 billion over the next 20 years by eliminating the tanks and tunnels the City is currently required to build. The savings will reduce future water bills paid by ratepayers.

Under the plan, first inch of rainfall on 10 percent of the impervious areas in combined sewer areas of the city will be captured and will not enter the sewer system. Green infrastructure investments will be installed throughout the City's combined sewer drainage areas, including the South Bronx, Flushing and northeastern and southeastern Queens, and the area around the Gowanus Canal.

The City currently operates under a Combined Sewer Overflow Consent Order with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation that includes specific plans for 13 individual combined sewer drainage areas throughout the city. The NYC Green Infrastructure Plan has been submitted for approval today to the State Department of Environmental Conservation as an

alternative plan.

Under the existing grey infrastructure plan currently required, the City would invest \$6.8 billion in traditional sewer infrastructure, paid for with New York City Municipal Water Finance Authority Bonds, which are repaid through residential and commercial water bills. As an alternative the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan will invest \$2.9 billion in cost-effective grey infrastructure and \$2.4 billion in green infrastructure – a total of \$5.3 billion. The funding for the green infrastructure plan includes \$900 million of funding from new development, bringing the total savings for the City's water customers to \$2.4 billion. The funding will be generated through enhanced regulations and standards for onsite stormwater detention and infiltration to be incorporated into the design of new construction projects.

The City already has more than 30 green infrastructure demonstration projects that have been built, are under construction, or are in design, to test the performance and costs of green infrastructure over time. A robust monitoring program measures and analyzes the effectiveness of each of these demonstration projects.

New Yorkers produce, and the City treats, more than 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater every day. The wastewater is collected through 7,400 miles of lateral sewers that flow downhill into large interceptor sewers, which lead directly to the City's 14 wastewater treatment plants. The plants have capacity to handle New York City's wastewater on any "dry weather" day. Two-thirds of New York City's sewered areas have a combined sewer system that collects wastewater and stormwater runoff together in the same pipe from properties and streets. During heavy rainstorms, treatment plants can reach their capacity and to relieve the sewage system, the interceptor sewers have "regulators" equipped with overflows weirs that divert combined stormwater and wastewater into New York City's surrounding waterways. Upgrades to the City's wastewater treatment plants and sewers have allowed for the capture a greater amount of overall flow, from about 30 percent in the 1980s to more than 72 percent today, and overflows are more dilute, with the percentage of sanitary waste decreasing from 30 percent in 1980 to approximately 12 percent today.

The Bloomberg Administration has made a larger commitment to maintaining and improving the City's water system than any administration in history. Approximately \$21 billion has been allocated for water system capital projects, including:

- \$2.6 billion invested and committed to City Water Tunnel No. 3 – more funding for the tunnel than the previous five administrations combined;
- Acquisition of nearly 77,000 acres of land upstate to protect the City's watershed – allowing New York City to remain one of only five large cities in the country to obtain the majority of its water from unfiltered sources;
- \$2.8 billion for the Croton Filtration Plant, which will filter drinking water from the Croton Watershed;
- \$1.6 billion for the Ultra-Violet Disinfection Facility, which will provide an extra level of drinking water protection for water from the Catskill and Delaware Watersheds; and

\$6 billion for upgrading the City's 14 wastewater treatment plants and more than \$1 billion to reduce combined sewer overflows, which has helped bring harbor water quality to an all-time high since testing began 100 years ago and allowed wastewater treatment plants to meet the Federal Clean Water Act's secondary treatment

standards for the first time ever.

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