

Water Board: Keeping Watch Over City's 'Lifblood'

Managing the New York City water supply is a major responsibility undertaken by DEP and its nearly 6,000 employees. Whether it is delivering clean drinking water or promoting a sustainable environment, it's hard to imagine that there's more that must be considered outside of what DEP does. For instance, it is easy to forget that so much work goes into ensuring that New Yorkers are being delivered water at a fair rate. Detailed analysis and consideration are key to ensuring the necessary costs of maintaining the essential water and wastewater infrastructure are covered. Enter the New York City Water Board.

Alan Moss, Chair of the NYC Water Board is a public servant of consid-



erable experience having served four mayors and two presidents. Mr. Moss explains, "The NYC Water Board was created to make our water supply and disposal system financially independent, self-sustaining and to rescue it from years of neglect. The Board, is keenly aware that the water system is the 'life-blood' of our great

(Continued on reverse side)

Spotlight on Safety

EHS Audit Finding of the Month

A new monthly feature for the Spotlight on Safety column will offer a closer look at some recurring EHS audit findings.

Bowery Bay WWTP Finding Ref No. 1778: "The partial remains of broken 4 foot used fluorescent light bulbs were not properly managed as hazardous waste."

Environmental regulations require proper management of both "universal" waste (intact fluorescent light bulbs, batteries and mercury-containing equipment) and hazardous waste (generated by a broken fluorescent light bulb or compromised mercury-containing equipment). Universal waste must be properly handled and recycled to prevent release of harmful elements into the environment. The amount of mercury in a fluorescent lamp is between 3.5 to 15 milligrams. Although lighting manufacturers

have reduced the amount of mercury in the bulbs, they have not completely eliminated it. Millions of mercury-containing lamps are sold each year, and most are improperly discarded. Although the amount of mercury in a single fluorescent lamp is small, collectively, large numbers of fluorescent lamps release mercury into the environment. Mercury-containing bulbs often break when thrown into a dumpster, trash can or compactor, or when they end up in a landfill or incinerator. To prevent the release of mercury, these bulbs should be stored at your facility in a way that keeps them intact and then sent to a recycler before they break. DEP has a Universal and Electronic Waste Recycling Policy and all bureaus have contracts or other means to manage universal and electronic waste. Questions? See ☺ or contact your EHS staff.

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EHS liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city.

CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH PIPELINE. HELP IS ON THE WAY. ☺

Commissioner's Corner

This is my first Commissioner's Corner since I was appointed by **Mayor Bloomberg** last Wednesday. While I hope to meet all of you in person, for now I'd like to briefly introduce myself. When Deputy Mayor **Cas Holloway** asked me in 2010 to join him at DEP as the Deputy Commissioner for Sustainability, I was eager to be able to put in practice the City's environmental agenda I had helped develop at the Mayor's Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability. I had earlier worked on environmental law and policy for many years at the Environmental Protection Bureau of the New York Attorney General's Office and the Rutgers Environmental Law Clinic. DEP's rich tradition of pioneering efforts to develop high quality drinking water supplies, developing a comprehensive wastewater treatment system, and promoting ecological recovery has produced impressive results, and I looked forward to working with DEP's deep talent pool to put sound environmental policies into action. Next week I'll describe in details some of the signature initiatives I have worked on since coming here, but the greatest takeaway so far from my time here is the quality of our workforce. DEP's nearly 6,000 employees are as dedicated a group of employees that can be found at any level of government, and I am honored to be part of the team.

This was on full display just last week. On August 14, nearly eight inches of rain fell near JFK Airport—a city record. Though flooding from rain of this intensity is difficult to completely avoid—especially in low lying areas like parts of Staten Island and Southeast Queens—our BWSO crews did an amazing job mitigating the impact. To start, BWSO inspected more than 100 flood prone locations before the rain started. Once the storms began, up to 32 sewer maintenance crews, totaling up to 100 personnel, were out in the field responding to complaints of clogged catch basins, highway flooding and sewer back-ups. DEP's water maintenance crews and repair yard crews also pitched in. Over the two days of the storm, we handled more than 1,000 calls to 311, which is less than the high of 1,800 calls from the 2007 storm, but still a significant number. It was a great job by everyone involved at BWSO, but I

DEP offices and sites in-city and upstate felt the effect of this afternoon's earthquake in Virginia. DEP has crews assessing and inspecting all critical water and wastewater infrastructure. There were no immediate impacts as of this afternoon.

particularly want to thank **Ferdinand Ricci, Joseph Gentile, Paul Beyar, Christopher Devoy** and **Vincent Pasqueralli**, who stepped up to help handle the additional workload. It also showed that some of our investments to upgrade our 7,400 miles of sewer mains—nearly \$2 billion since 2002 alone—are paying off.

On my first few days on the job, I made stops in the field to meet some of DEP's employees and thank them for their often unnoticed work. On Wednesday, a few hours after I was named Commissioner, I toured the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant with Deputy Commissioner **Vinny Sapienza**, North River Superintendent **Stephen Askew**, BEDC Portfolio Manager **Jim Lauria** and Senior Stationary Engineer **Bill Grandner** to see the damage caused by the recent fire. The impact was extensive, smoke charred walls in every direction and several floors below the fire. It is a real testament to our workers there that the plant was up and running in such a short time. I also stopped at a sinkhole that formed on 82nd Street and Central Park West, where I met with the Manhattan Field Operations crew who were trying to determine the source of the undermined roadway. On Thursday, my first full day on the job, I visited Manhattan Repair and met with members of the field crews responsible for responding to water main breaks and repairing hydrants. I returned to the North River plant Friday with Associate Commissioner **Matt Mahoney** and Director of Plant Operations **Artie Spangel** to tour the recovery operation with Councilmembers **Gale Brewer, Robert Jackson** and **Ydanis Rodriguez**, who were impressed with the work we have done there.

I look forward to following this tradition of keeping everyone at the agency informed through our newsletter, the Weekly Pipeline. I know we will be accomplishing great things together.

Focus on the Field



In New York City, the Water Board is responsible for setting water and wastewater rates for the revenue that is collected to fund New York City's water and wastewater infrastructure. During the 18 years that **Greg Asciero** has been an attorney with the New York City Water Board, the scope of his work has ranged from the micro, like dealing with a customer's water bill appeal, to the macro, when working with consultants on a rate study.

When a customer disagrees with billed charges, the customer will first contact DEP's Bureau of Customer Services (BCS) to dispute the bill. If the customer disagrees with BCS's resolution, the customer can then write a final appeal letter to the Water Board. "Our ultimate goal in

all cases," said Greg "is to issue fair and accurate charges."

During the final appeal, "it is important that customers understand why they were billed the amount on the bill." Greg values providing good customer service. For example, when Greg furnishes a customer with a clear detailed explanation of the water and sewer charges, it goes a long way and often results in a satisfied customer even when the appeal doesn't mean a reduced water bill.

Besides the ongoing appeal work, Greg advises the Board on regulatory requirements. For example, New York State's Public Authority Reform Act of 2009 required increased transparency for public authorities, including the Water Board. One of the requirements is increased disclosure on the Water Board's website, including the posting of a mission statement, meeting minutes, governance and procurement policies, a code of ethics, governing documents, and annual financial and operating data.

In his spare time Greg roots for his twin children who play for several sports teams including softball, basketball, and football. Greg also enjoys swimming in the ocean.

WATERSHED TREK:

On August 19, 15 boys from Olive Boy Scout Troop 163 – along with their scoutmasters – began a nine day trek from the Ashokan Reservoir in Ulster County to the Central Park Reservoir in New York City. This approximately 100-mile trek commemorates the 100th anniversary of Troop 163, formed by Sydney Clapp and other Board of Water Supply engineers who helped build the Ashokan Reservoir and Catskill Aqueduct. The trek route will follow the Catskill Aqueduct, North County Trailway (for 20 miles of biking) and the Old Croton Aqueduct. Throughout the trek, the scouts will participate in educational programs and local service projects to learn about the NYC water supply system.

On Friday, August 26, the scouts will enter New York City and will be met by Bronx scouts who will escort Troop 163 through Van Cortlandt Park along the Old Croton Aqueduct to the subway and then into Manhattan for an overnight at the American Museum of Natural History. On Saturday, parents and special guests – including BWSO Assistant Commissioner Ed Coleman who will read a Mayoral Proclamation and the Watershed Agricultural Council, Catskill Watershed Corporation, Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, New York State Parks and other watershed and NYC trek partners—will welcome Troop 163 in Central Park and honor them for completing their Catskills to Central Park trek.

RE-LAUNCH OF THE CITY'S OFFICIAL ON-LINE STORE:

The city recently re-launched its official online shop, www.nycshop.com. The site features new and exclusive New York City merchandise and apparel that are not only for tourists, but also for proud New Yorkers. Please click here [👉](#) to read more, and get a 10% discount coupon.

Kudos Corner

A Tap Card is a record of the type, size and location of water service connections and they are required for all permitted work on these connections. The information in these cards is vital to DEP records for responding to emergencies, repairing leaks and locating services. By 2011, due to the large number of cards received, a backlog of more than 40,000 cards had accumulated. A task force comprising 20 members from BCIA, BWS and the Executive office, including **Clara Bloom, Claudia Tobon, Kori Smith, Anna Hadjigeorgiou, and Nicole Diunte**, came together to enter them into the Tap Card database. **Janet Amaro, Mahsa Abnoosi and Lionel Dieudonne** from BWSO managed the project and the technical aspects of the database. Due to the incredible work of the entire team, the backlog was eliminated within two months.

Greg J. Goldstein, Supervisor for the town of Neversink, recently shared his thoughts about the DEP Police Officers stationed in the Grahamsville barracks. In a letter to Lt. **Christian Gallagher**, he states "The Town of Neversink is fortunate and grateful to have a police force which we can rely on to assist us when the need arises. Kudos to the Grahamsville DEP police officers and thanks for your dedication to the community!!" To read the full letter, please click here [👉](#).

(Water Board: Keeping Watch Over City's 'Lifeblood'... continued)

city. But the water system we have inherited is often taken for granted. New Yorkers expect the best water when we open the faucet and that everything will disappear when we flush the toilet. The funding of these expectations is at the core of the Board's responsibilities. Each year the Board is challenged with the task of setting the water and sewer rates, insuring that the water supply and disposal systems are properly operated, maintained and repaired. This important responsibility requires that the Board resist the pressures that seek to compromise its mission."

Created in 1984, the Water Board assures the public that their water charges are set at a rate that is fairly calculated. This undertaking is more than just picking a number and setting a rate; it is a full-time job. The annual rate setting process involves totaling all expenses projected for the coming fiscal year, calculating the revenues needed to cover such expenses, and then deriving a rate that will result in sufficient revenues. To this end, the staff of the Water Board is responsible for tracking daily cash flows and the capital and operating expenses for DEP, as well as helping the rest of DEP evaluate the financial aspects of projects that will impact the system.

As Water Board Treasurer, **Mathilde McLean** explains, "There's such a variety of work we do as Water Board staff - from tracking and disbursing \$3 billion in revenue this year, to responding to customer bill appeals, to helping other bureaus at DEP evaluate the financial aspects of projects that have a tremendous impact on all of us who live in the city. Each day, there's

a new and interesting challenge to tackle."

In terms of public outreach, the Water Board is responsible for responding to customer bill appeals and communicating with the public in the process of setting water rates. In recent years, communication has increased. As New York is increasingly switching accounts to metered billing, where bills are based on actual consumption (rather than a building and fixture-based rate structure), and as additional consumption information is available through the expansion of wireless meter reading to nearly 90% of our customers, the public is generally more aware of water rates, as each customer's bills reflect the amounts of water consumed. The Water Board traditionally holds water rate hearings in all five boroughs, in which presentations are given to inform the public of how the rates are devised. Last year, then DEP Commissioner **Cas Holloway** went out of his way to deliver presentations himself at each of the borough meetings. This is just one example of the efforts the Water Board and DEP have made to educate the public and build a lasting relationship.

As DEP continues to address all of the issues that fall under its purview, the public can rest assured that the Water Board goes to great lengths to establish water and wastewater rates that meet the demands of adequately funding NYC's highly regarded system while maintaining fair rates for its customers. To learn more about the Water Board and the process of establishing rates, visit their website by clicking here [👉](#).

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov. [👉](#)