

Commissioner's Corner



Vincent Sapienza
Commissioner

I want to take this opportunity to share some very good news with all of you—during Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, New York City recorded the fewest water main breaks in any year on record. During FY 2020, which ended on June 30, there were 347 water main breaks—25 percent fewer water main breaks than the previous FY (460), and a 45 percent drop from FY 2000, when there were 621.

New York City has one of the most reliable water main systems in the country, far outperforming the national average. Large cities across the United States average 25 breaks for every 100 miles of

water main per year, while the industry has set a best practices goal of 15 breaks for every 100 miles of main. With approximately 6,800 miles of water mains, New York City now averages about five breaks for every 100 miles of water main.

All main breaks waste water, and breaks on large mains can cause property damage, so DEP continually strives to improve the performance of the distribution system. Operators make around-the-clock adjustments to water pressure in each of the five boroughs to minimize fluctuations that had previously led to nighttime breaks. During FY 2020, DEP staff expanded the testing of the tens of thousands of valves that are connected to water mains to ensure quick



shutoffs in the event of a break. DEP has also widened the network of sensors that provide real-time data, allowing crews to make adjustments before a break occurs. And each week on average, about a mile of old water mains are retired and replaced with new, more durable ones.

Mayor de Blasio has made it a priority to keep our essential infrastructure in a state of good repair and during this past year he further focused resources on

the upkeep of the City's water distribution network. Delivering a reliable supply of water to all New Yorkers is one of our primary missions and driving down the number of water main breaks to a new low is a testament to the hard work of our staff. I want to particularly thank Deputy Commissioner for Water and Sewer Operations **Tasos Georgelis** and his team for all their efforts in keeping the water distribution system performing optimally. Keep up the great work.

Spotlight on Safety

Stand-Down to Prevent Falls

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recognizes September 14–18 as the [National Safety Stand-Down](#) to Prevent Falls in Construction Week. This annual event provides employers an opportunity to focus on fall hazards and reinforce the importance of fall prevention.

Some suggestions for stand down activities include:

- planning toolbox talks or other safety activities
- taking a work break to talk about fall hazards and prevention
- providing training for all employees

To prevent fall fatalities and injuries, OSHA requires:

- fall protection at elevations of four feet in general industry workplaces and six feet in the construction industry
- fall protection when working over dangerous equipment and machinery, regardless of the fall distance
- informing employees about fall hazards, the importance of fall prevention, protective methods, and policies

OSHA also has fall prevention requirements for [non-construction industries](#). For more information, visit OSHA's [Fall Protection](#) resource page.

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 [EH&S EMPLOYEE CONCERNS](#). HELP IS ON THE WAY.



Loneliness During COVID



Jonathan Glotzer
Director of Staff Support
and Assistance

We have all coped with feelings of loneliness at several points in our lives, and COVID has certainly increased the intensity of this complex experience. Being physically alone and feeling lonely are two different things. We can be lonely while around others and, on the other hand, may not feel lonely when we are physically alone. During stressful times such as the pandemic, many of us have felt heightened anxiety, sadness, and/or anger. These intense emotions can make it difficult to feel safe, secure, and attached to others, which then can lead to feelings of loneliness. Then there are those of us who actually are alone and feeling

lonely. With stay at home orders, many people found themselves in a quasi solitary confinement without the normal socialization opportunities that working on site, the gym, corner store or other gathering places usually offered. Adding to the 'pandemic' of loneliness is the fact that many of us have been unable to see loved ones for several months.

To continue reading this article, please visit [The Source](#).

DEP VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Join Director of Staff Support and Assistance Jonathan Glotzer as he facilitates "Multitask Parenting" and "Coping with Post Pandemic Stress" on alternating Thursdays at 4pm and "Coping with Isolation and Loneliness" every Friday at 2:45pm. If you are interested in joining one or all of these virtual sessions, contact Rachel Reeves at rreeves@dep.nyc.gov. Space is limited.

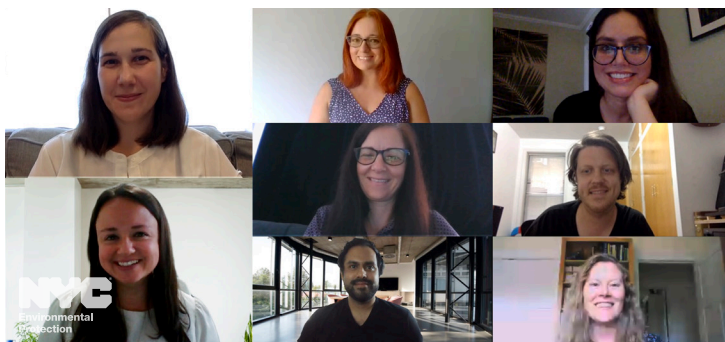
Trakas Visits Nature Walk



As work continues to expand the Newtown Creek Nature Walk, the artist, **George Trakas**, was recently on-site as the 385-million-year-old tree fossils from the area of Gilboa Dam in Schoharie County were delivered. The fossils, evidence of one of earth's oldest forests, will be on permanent display as a part of the expanded nature walk. Trakas is an environmental sculptor who works with derelict urban areas to create spaces that explore the relationship between nature, the built environment, and human presence. Trakas conceptualized the nature walk as a part of the Department of Cultural Affairs' Percent for Art Program's commission for the Newtown Creek WRRF in the late 1990s, and phase I was completed in 2007. Construction on phases II and III is scheduled to be completed this fall.

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov.

Citywide Mapping Effort



On August 1, 2015, the City of New York received a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) Permit from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). This permit requires the City to implement measures to reduce pollution in stormwater runoff. This is the City's first comprehensive MS4 Permit.

DEP assumed the role of being the coordinating agency for the entire City's Mapping Program responsibilities of this tremendous undertaking. The Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations (BWSO) Geographic Information System Unit (GIS), under the supervision of **Andreea Vlaiconi** and her talented team of GIS specialists, **Silvia Lorenzo**, **Asif Zaman** and **Joseph Blair** were assigned the lead, along with **Meaghan Burke** from the BWSO Project Management Office as the project manager for this effort. In addition to the highly complex technical aspects involved with the modeling of the city-wide collection system infrastructure GIS data, Andreea managed both the DEP

internal cross departmental and NYC interagency coordination. The work covered areas such as the standardization of data and methodologies utilized, protocols and requests for GIS infrastructure discrepancy investigations and incorporation of numerous surveys for data related to drainage and land use. The MS4 mapping program was also supported by the Bureau of Environmental Planning and Analysis staff including **Sara Lupson**, **Erin Morey**, and **Karolina Rybicka-Kosiec** who addressed other permit mapping requirements such as impervious surface coverage in the MS4, municipal solid waste facility information, and agency responsibilities within the MS4.

Thanks to Andreea and her teams' incredible effort, on August 1, 2020, DEP submitted to DEC the final map of this permit cycle for MS4 drainage areas and outfalls. It is an enormous achievement made possible only by the hard work of this highly skilled team of professionals. They are truly a tremendous asset to this agency and the numerous other NYC agencies involved in this endeavor.

MEND NYC

MEND NYC is a new citywide initiative to provide free mediation and conflict resolution services to address quality-of-life issues that impact both New York City residents and businesses in the hospitality industry, which includes bars, clubs, restaurants or live music venues. The program is a collaboration between the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings' Center for Creative Conflict Resolution and the Office of Nightlife at the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment and was launched this summer. The goal of MEND NYC is to use mediation and facilitative processes to create an opportunity for New York City residents and businesses to connect directly and establish a respectful ongoing dialogue to better determine for themselves how to live together peacefully in their communities. Visit nyc.gov/mendnyc for more information.