

# Weekly Pipeline

At Ashokan Reservoir, announcing new operating procedures that will continue to **preserve and protect** the **water supply** for nearly **10 million New Yorkers** and the **vital watershed communities!**

July 3, 2024





# Commissioner's Corner



**Rohit Aggarwala**

State Senator **Michelle Hinchey**, Ulster County Executive **Jen Metzger**, **Jeremy Cherson** from Riverkeeper, and elected leaders of downstream municipalities to announce actions that will

***This historic shift in the Ashokan's releases emphasizes DEP's commitment to working closely with all stakeholders to continue our mission of providing the highest quality drinking water possible to half the state's population.***

On Monday, I joined with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Interim Commissioner **Sean Mahar**,

limit muddy water releases from the Ashokan Reservoir into the Lower Esopus Creek.

Under newly implemented release protocols, DEP will limit downstream releases of Ashokan Reservoir water when it appears highly turbid, or muddy brown, and will expand releases from both of the reservoir's basins (i.e., east and west basins) rather than restricting releases to only the west basin, which is often more turbid. These new actions are formalized in the newly revised DEC-regulated Interim Release Protocol (IRP), a set of standards for DEP's releasing of water from the Ashokan Reservoir to the Lower Esopus Creek through the reservoir's release channel.

Since the reservoir's construction, water releases from the Ashokan have occasionally resulted in high levels of turbidity in the Lower Esopus Creek, causing impacts to recreation and aesthetics. Based on public input and community concerns about turbidity, the revised IRP limits muddy water releases from the Ashokan unless specifically requested by DEC to support the aquatic habitat. Last year, DEP commissioned computerized modeling scenarios to develop potential alternative reservoir operations that would limit



muddy discharges after conversations with State Sen. Michelle Hinchey regarding DEP's history of turbid discharges into the lower Esopus Creek and the communities' hopes for improvements.

The Ashokan Reservoir supplies about 40 percent of New York City's drinking water each day. DEP utilizes water discharges from the Release Channel to the Lower Esopus Creek to maintain reservoir levels, enhance flood mitigation downstream and provide flow to the lower Esopus Creek for habitat protection and recreation. It has also previously been used as an alternative to reliance on the use of chemical treatment within the water supply, specifically the use of aluminum sulfate, during episodic turbidity events.

Turbidity is typically caused throughout the eastern Catskills by severe weather eroding reddish clay glacial sediment within stream channels and stream banks that is ultimately transported and flows into the Ashokan Reservoir. The Ashokan Reservoir was built with two basins more than 100 years ago to help alleviate turbidity, enabling suspended particles to settle in the west basin before water passes into the east basin.

This historic shift in the Ashokan's releases emphasizes DEP's commitment to working closely with all stakeholders to continue our mission of providing the highest quality drinking water possible to half the state's population. DEP is dedicated to using the gold standard in science to protect and enhance the watershed while working hand in hand with our community partners helping to improve the quality of life for all residents throughout the region.

I want to thank Senator Hinchey for her advocacy and leadership, DEC Interim Commissioner Mahar and County Executive Metzger for their partnership, and all local leadership throughout this community for championing this issue. I look forward to continuing our collaboration on the important work that still lies ahead.

I also want to applaud Deputy Commissioner **Paul Rush** and his Bureau of Water Supply team for taking a fresh look at this issue. Using advanced computer modeling, combined with their experience and expertise, they were able to successfully devise and implement a plan to end the turbid, muddy releases.





## Happy Retirement!



Chief Financial Officer **Joe Murin** has officially retired from DEP after an exemplary career in public service. Joe joined DEP 24 years ago following more than a decade across NYC government at DOT, OMB, and the Board of Education. In his tenure as Assistant Commissioner for Budget and then Chief Financial Officer and Executive

Director of the Water Board, he led DEP's growing expense and capital budgets, navigated the business impacts of a pandemic and inflationary environment, and oversaw major overhauls of DEP's IT systems. He leaves us in a strong financial position and with a capable team. Thanks Joe for your dedication to DEP and congrats on your retirement!

## DEP Celebrates Pride



On Sunday, DEP employees, friends, family, and allies marched alongside each other in this year's NYC Pride March in celebration of Pride Month! Pride Month is dedicated to honoring the diversity, resilience, and achievements of the LGBTQIA+ community. This significant occasion al-

lows us to reflect on the progress made towards equality, recognize the challenges still ahead, and celebrate the vibrant culture and contributions of LGBTQIA+ individuals. DEP's participation in this year's NYC Pride March was a wonderful way to celebrate our agency's pride and unity.

## New 'Green' Playground for Inwood



DEP recently joined Trust for Public Land, NewYork-Presbyterian, the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ), and several elected officials at the Inwood Community Campus in Manhattan to proudly celebrate the opening of the newest Community Schoolyard. The newly renovated schoolyard—shared by the Harold O. Levy School (I.S. 52), the High School for Excellence and Innovation, and the Inwood Early College for Health and Information Technologies—

will feature fitness equipment, a volleyball court, picnic tables, an outdoor classroom, and pollinator gardens. It will also feature green infrastructure to capture nearly 1 million gallons of stormwater annually to ease pressure on the area's sewer system, reducing flooding and, in turn, improving water quality of the East River. Trust for Public Land's [Community Schoolyard program](#) helps transform asphalt playgrounds into green spaces and aims to improve student education outcomes, community health, and climate resiliency.





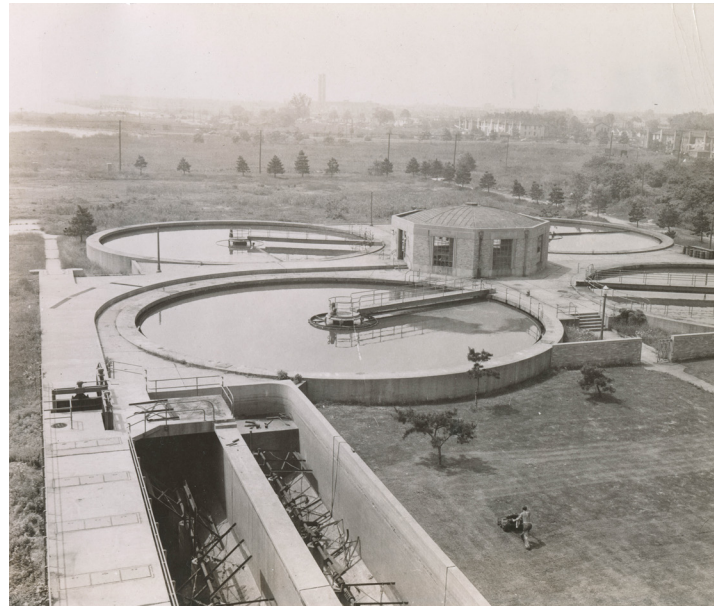
## Building Bridges in the Watershed



Work is progressing on DEP's \$33 million project to replace two bridges along Route 28A near Ashokan Reservoir. The project will relocate about one-half mile of the roadway and expand the Boiceville Bridge Trailhead for the Ashokan Rail Trail. The largest component of the project involves replacing the bridge that carries Route 28A over the Esopus Creek in Boiceville. The existing bridge, known locally as the Five Arches Bridge, was built during

the original construction of Ashokan Reservoir and put into service in 1913. The 384-foot-long new bridge is being constructed just south of the existing bridge and will sit atop two new piers that will be driven into the bed of the creek. The second, smaller bridge carries Route 28A over the rail corridor that is owned by Ulster County. The new bridge will be 43-feet long and preserve access to the corridor. The project is expected to be completed by 2025.

## Out of the Archives



June 27, 1948—Mowing the lawn at NYC's first "modern" wastewater treatment plant. Built in 1935 when there was still farmland nearby, today the Coney Island Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility

looks completely different after many upgrades and cleans more than 110 million gallons of wastewater from 600,000 Brooklyn residents every day, protecting the waterways and beaches in the area.

## Celebrating Eid



The Bureau of Business Information Technology (BIT) recognizes the importance of sharing and celebrating the diversity of our many teams within the agency. In the spirit of collaboration and understanding, BIT and others in the agency gathered together for lunch in recognition of Eid ul-Adha on Monday, June 24. Eid ul-Adha, also known as the "Festival of Sacrifice," commemorates

the willingness of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God. This festival additionally reminds us of the importance of sacrifice, the broader concept of selflessness, and the sacrifices we make for the betterment of others. It teaches us compassion, generosity, and the importance of sharing our blessings with those less fortunate.

## Social Media Highlight



This [#NationalSafetyMonth](#), we want to remind EVERYONE how important it is to take a break to hydrate! [#BeatTheHeat](#)



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