

Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) Gowanus Canal Kickoff Meeting – Summary of Meeting and Public Comments Received

On November 19, 2014 DEP hosted a Public Kickoff Meeting to initiate the water quality planning process for long term control of combined sewer overflows in the Gowanus Canal waterbody. The two-hour event, held at P.S. 32, 317 Hoyt Street in Brooklyn, served to provide overview information about DEP's Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) Program, present information on the Gowanus Canal watershed characteristics and status of waterbody improvement projects, obtain public information on waterbody uses in Gowanus Canal, and describe additional opportunities for public input and outreach. The presentation can be found at <http://www.nyc.gov/dep/ltcp>. Approximately 50 stakeholders from different non-profit, community, planning, environmental, economic development, governmental organizations and the broader public attended the event, and two reporters from local Brooklyn papers.

The Gowanus Canal LTCP Kickoff Public Meeting was an opportunity for public participation in the LTCP. As part of DEP's LTCP Public Participation Plan, Gowanus Canal Long Term Control Planning process will be posted on DEP's website, shown above. The public will have more opportunities to provide feedback and participate in the development of Gowanus Canal waterbody-specific LTCP. Specific questions asked during the public kickoff meeting are summarized below with DEP's responses for each.

- Is sewage being brought to the Canal?
 - *The Flushing Tunnel and Pump Station do not bring sewage to the canal. They bring clean river water from the Buttermilk Channel to the head end of the canal. It is clean river water and is improving the water quality in the canal significantly.*
- Where is the 3 times the flow mentioned in the presentation going?
 - *The flows go to the Red Hook Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) for treatment. The plant is designed for 2 times the dry weather flow.*
- Does the City monitor bioswale performance?
 - *Yes, DEP constructed three Neighborhood Demonstration Areas and installed equipment to monitor the performance of individual bioswales. Equipment was also installed in the sewers to monitor the performance of multiple bioswales within the same tributary area. A Post Construction Monitoring Report will be available on the website in early 2015.*
- What is being done to control runoff for non-city properties such as the new Atlantic Yards?
 - *In 2012 the City promulgated a new stormwater rule for new construction and major building alteration projects. The rule requires these projects to detain significantly more stormwater on their property than what the previous rule required. These projects can also use green infrastructure practices such as rain gardens and perforated pipes to meet the new detention requirement.*

- Why is DEP in the process of suing the DEC?
 - *The issues associated with the current litigation are complex. DEP and DEC are working to determine the best plan for water quality improvements. The social and economic impacts are being evaluated. DEP hopes a resolution will be reached in the near future.*
- Why is DEP just getting going on this since the guidance dates back to 1994?
 - *DEP has been working on CSO issues for over two decades with significant progress made in improving water quality throughout the City during that time period. The recently completed upgrade of the Gowanus Flushing Tunnel and Wastewater Pumping Station is one example of the projects that the City has invested in to reduce CSOs and improve water quality. DEP and DEC have worked together in 2012 to develop schedules for the LTCPs and related work which will set the direction for future water quality improvements throughout the City.*
- What are the water quality objectives for the Gowanus Canal?
 - *The DEP and DEC goal is to improve the water quality in the canal. The recent operation of the Flushing Tunnel and Pump Station brings clean water from the East River to the head end of the canal and significant improvement in water quality has resulted. The canal may be upgraded to Class SB in the future.*
- Did you include hurricane Sandy in the modeling forecasts?
 - *The water quality modeling is done for a full 10 year period to account for fluctuations in rainfall. Sandy was not a high rainfall event and is not included in the 10 year modeling data. Most of the damage was due to tidal surge and wind.*
- Is DEP going to look at other data such as citizens' data?
 - *DEP will look at all data. Please submit any data to DEP.*
- How do DEP and EPA goals intersect?
 - *DEP uses a toolbox of alternatives for the evaluation step. The EPA tanks are included in the toolbox. Different levels of CSO control and cost are evaluated with a cost effective preferred alternative ultimately recommended for DEC and EPA review.*
- Does the use of weir adjustments cause house flooding?
 - *The hydraulic sewer analysis is required to say hydraulically neutral. This means an increase in the water levels in the sewers is not allowed. Any adjustments in weirs must not cause an increase the water levels.*

- Will DEP and EPA coordinate the sewer construction along Carroll Street?
 - *The HLSS study and design work is underway. The schedule for these projects will be coordinated when the design work is completed.*
- Citizen data shows there is more pollution in the turning basins, can HLSS be discharged to the turning basins?
 - *DEP will look into the option of discharging to the turning basins. Other projects may be planned for the turning basins.*
- Shouldn't all planning be coordinated with EPA to save time?
 - *DEP is coordinating with EPA and DEC. The consent decrees all have schedules that have been reviewed and approved by EPA and DEC as appropriate.*
- Superfund is based on toxins, are toxins being monitored?
 - *Yes, sampling, analysis and modeling of the chemical constituents is being done.*
- Will the cost of the EPA tanks be included in the DEP budgets?
 - *Yes, construction costs are paid for by the rate payers of the City. The cost of the tanks will become part of the DEP budget once the concept is approved.*
- Odors in the canal continue are worse than other neighborhoods. Can the odors be reduced? Raw sewage exists in the canal.
 - *Odors will be reduced with the Flushing Tunnel and future improvements.*
- Is there higher water use for Gowanus Canal citizens?
 - *DEP's recent records show flows to the WWTPs are declining. This is due to water conservation and improved sewer controls. The WWTPs have excess capacity at this time.*
- How is the CSO pilot project going?
 - *The CSO flow monitoring pilot project data analysis is ongoing. Preliminary conclusions are that CSO flow monitoring is challenging in the existing regulators due to complex hydraulics and infrastructure configuration. Based on previous NYC investments in calibrated models and telemetry, the effectiveness of these tools in estimating and predicting CSOs, the need to minimize instrumentation complexity and operation and maintenance requirements, DEP has chosen to implement CSO flow monitoring on a temporary basis for critical outfalls under the CSO LTCP program. This decision allows DEP to make strategic investments to gain valuable insight into the collection system and CSO outfall dynamics while minimizing the long-term burden of ongoing O&M, instrumentation replacement and recalibration requirements.*

- Is DEP looking at synthetic and natural Green Infrastructure mitigation? Can more trees be incorporated?
 - *Green infrastructure promotes the natural movement of water by collecting and managing stormwater runoff from streets, sidewalks, parking lots and rooftops and directing it to engineered systems that typically feature, stones, soils, plants and trees. Over the course of 2015 DEP will construct approximately 90 bioswales in the Gowanus watershed and many will include trees. DEP also works with City agencies such as the Department of Parks and Recreation and New York City Housing Authority to design green infrastructure practices such as rain gardens which may feature new trees as well.*
- Why not wait until the EPA work is completed?
 - *EPA is targeting chemicals and DEC is targeting water quality. DEP is working on integrating both agencies objectives into a common approach that is cost effective and affordable.*
- Aren't we playing catch-up with these programs?
 - *The programs are working with agreed upon consent orders and schedules. DEP has fourteen WWTPs operational, 90 pump stations and they meet secondary standards. DEP also has plans to improve the treatment processes to meet more stringent water quality regulations.*
- With the increase in development in the area, is additional flow being considered?
 - *DEP is working with the Bridging Gowanus group, zoning department and is aware of the newer developments being planned. The impacts to the entire system are small for these developments. The local sewers and new connections are reviewed in the planning and permit reviews. The LTCP includes population projects through 2040.*
- The DEP website does not have a Gowanus Canal page, how do the public comment?
 - *The information presented tonight will be posted tomorrow on the DEP website listed in the handouts. Questions can be posted to the site or sent to the representatives listed in the handout.*
- Will CSO flows increase at the head end of the canal?
 - *Flow projections for the outfall at the head of the canal (RH-034) are declining. The projects have reduced for 182 MG to 142 MG. These projections are still being developed and the values may change somewhat.*