



**Environmental  
Protection**

## **Department of Environmental Protection Completes \$280 Million Upgrade to Hunts Point Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Bronx to Further Improve Harbor Water Quality**

### **Nitrogen Discharges into East River and Long Island Sound Reduced by 45 Percent to Date; Second Phase of Upgrade Will Reduce Discharges by More than 70 Percent by 2016**

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced that the \$280 million installation of new technology at the Hunts Point Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Bronx has reduced nitrogen discharges from the plant into the East River and Long Island Sound by approximately 45 percent. Nitrogen, a naturally occurring element found in food and other organic materials, is present in wastewater when it enters treatment plants. Because nitrogen is not a pathogen and poses no threat to human health, the treatment plants were never designed to remove that element. However, research shows that high levels of nitrogen can degrade the overall ecology of a waterway by reducing levels of dissolved oxygen and promoting excessive algae growth, especially in warm weather months. The new technology at DEP's Hunts Point Plant converts the organic nitrogen present in the wastewater into inert nitrogen gas that is released harmlessly into the atmosphere before the treated water is released into the East River and Long Island Sound. A second, \$8 million phase of the upgrade at the Hunts Point Plant will result in a total reduction of nitrogen discharges of 70 percent by 2016. The work is being funded by DEP and is the result of an agreement between DEP, the Office of the New York State Attorney General, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

“Since Mayor Bloomberg took office we have invested more than \$10 billion towards improving New York Harbor water quality and this substantial commitment has led to

significant improvements to the ecological health of our waterways,” said Commissioner Strickland. “As we continue to expand fishing, boating, and other recreational uses of our waterways, this treatment will help ensure the vitality of fish and aquatic life, and that our harbor and rivers are clean and attractive.”

DEC Commissioner Joe Martens said, “With the installation of new technology at the Hunts Point Wastewater Treatment Plant, Commissioner Strickland and DEP are on schedule for meeting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Total Maximum Daily Load limits for nitrogen in the Long Island Sound by 2017. DEP’s goal is to reduce nitrogen from a total of 101,000 pounds per day to a total of 44,000 pounds per day, as outlined in the final consent order negotiated with the Attorney General’s office. We will continue our compliance oversight at the Hunts Point Wastewater Treatment Plant to ensure improvements in dissolved oxygen and the ecological health of the Long Island Sound.”

"For years, the Office of the Attorney General has worked with the City of New York to achieve major reductions in the level of nitrogen discharged by the City's wastewater treatment plants into the East River and Long Island Sound," New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman said. "The upgrade to the Hunts Point treatment plant announced today is a key step forward in on-going efforts to improve the quality of the waters of New York Harbor as well as the quality of life of New Yorkers."

“We are pleased that DEP has succeeded in cutting nitrogen discharges from its Hunts Point wastewater plant by 45 percent. This advance, along with those planned at other city facilities, will enhance water quality in Long Island Sound and the East River, and improve recreational opportunities for millions of New Yorkers,” said Eric A. Goldstein NYC Environment Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council. “The benefits from investing in the protection and modernization of our sewage infrastructure are often overlooked; but they are essential to providing a sustainable future for our city.”

“Riverkeeper commends DEP for the remarkable progress it has made to reduce nitrogen pollution into the East River from this plant,” Phillip Musegaas, Hudson River Program Director at Riverkeeper. “We fully support this type of infrastructure investment, because it benefits the Harbor estuary ecosystem and provides cleaner waterways for New Yorkers who work and recreate on these incredible waters.”

The western end of Long Island Sound is funneled into a narrow area bounded by lower Westchester, western Nassau, the Bronx, northern Queens, and Connecticut and flows into the East River. Wastewater treatment facilities that serve more than a dozen municipalities along the Connecticut and New York coast are the primary sources of nitrogen in the Sound and the area is periodically impacted by algae blooms that reduce the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water and impair the survival of fish and other marine organisms. Algae colonies can flourish with an ample supply of sunlight and nutrients, such as nitrogen.

The \$280 million first phase of the work required significant upgrades to the plant's electrical substation, generators, aeration and sludge pumping systems and will add \$2 million to the annual cost to operate and maintain the plant. This investment will ensure that the plant remains in a state of good repair for decades to come. The second phase, to be completed over the next three years, will build on the earlier upgrades and add tanks and pumps to feed liquid carbon into the treatment process to accelerate the conversion of the nitrogen into an inert gas. The second phase is expected to add approximately \$6 million to the annual cost of operating and maintaining the plant.

DEP is investing an additional \$770 million in nitrogen reduction measures at the Bowery Bay, Tallman Island and Wards Island Treatment Plants, all of which are located on the Upper East River. An additional \$500 million is being invested in similar upgrades at the Jamaica Bay and 26th Ward Treatment Plants located on Jamaica Bay.

The Hunts Point Wastewater Treatment Plant began operating in 1952 and is designed to treat up to 400 million gallons of wastewater a day from a 16,000 square acre area with approximately 684,000 residents in the northeastern section of the Bronx. The new treatment technology has reduced the discharge of nitrogen from 22,000 to 12,000 pounds per day. The second phase of the upgrade, to be completed by 2016, will reduce the amount of nitrogen discharged to 6,500 pounds per day.

Activating these advanced treatment technologies is a key component of DEP's Strategy 2011-2014, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to help make it the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York

City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels, and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including nearly 1,000 in the upstate watershed. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep), like us on aacebook at [www.facebook.com/nycwater](http://www.facebook.com/nycwater), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/nycwater](http://www.twitter.com/nycwater).

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