



February 7, 2025

Dear Village Manager Bryan Healy

Rohit T. Aggarwala
Commissioner

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As we begin 2025, I wanted to once again take a few moments to recap the last year and preview some of the major initiatives and investments coming up this year in DEP's water supply region throughout the Catskills and Hudson Valley. I consider it imperative that DEP maintains and expand on the productive partnerships we have established in recent years and maintaining consistent communications is key to that effort

Much like last year, we recently issued a press release ([NYC DEP Infuses \\$165 Million Into Nine Hudson Valley and Catskills Counties In 2024 | City of New York](#)) noting DEP's \$165 million in school and property tax payments throughout the Catskills and Hudson Valley on city-owned land and infrastructure. For the year, DEP remained the top taxpayer in Ulster, Delaware, Schoharie and Putnam counties as well as in many towns and school districts throughout the region. We were the second highest taxpayer in Westchester County. DEP pays taxes at full assessed value on all land, reservoirs, dams and taxable structures owned and controlled through the 2,000-square-mile watershed in the Hudson Valley and Catskills, including the tens of thousands of acres open to the public for recreational purposes such as hiking, fishing, hunting and boating, as well as on property used for agricultural purposes.

At the same time, DEP worked closely throughout last year with regional communities and stakeholders on a variety of consensus-building initiatives. We made tremendous progress adjusting land acquisition practices to the benefit of both water quality protection and quality of life throughout the Catskills region. We committed to a change in operations at the Ashokan Reservoir eliminating the need for highly turbid releases in the lower Esopus Creek. We also previewed an initiative to expand much needed wireless communications coverage throughout the region while endeavoring to ensure added connectivity benefits for our neighboring communities.

East of the Hudson, DEP broke ground last year on more than \$3 billion in new infrastructure investments in Westchester County. The \$1.2 billion Hillview Reservoir Improvements Project in Yonkers is an overhaul of the water treatment facilities at the balancing reservoir and includes upgrades to the site's water management infrastructure. Separately, we began site preparation work for a new \$2 billion two-mile long water tunnel connecting the Kensico Reservoir with the Catskill Delaware Ultraviolet Treatment Facility near Valhalla. That project will improve flexibility between vital water supply facilities that serve more than 9 million people in New York City and Westchester County. Both sites will see significantly expanded construction activities throughout this year.

Further north, DEP paused the final phase of the largest and most complex capital repair project in the history of New York City's water supply, the repair of leaks in the Delaware Aqueduct, the longest tunnel in the world. The final phase of that project was put on hold after we endured the driest October on record and declared a systemwide drought warning last November. Using a new bypass tunnel under the

Hudson River between the Town of Newburgh in Orange County and Wappinger in Dutchess, DEP now plans to complete the repair starting again this coming October with the shutdown of the Delaware system, and spring 2026 for the anticipated completion.

We also anticipate a focus this year on the environmental review and potentially the start of isolated construction activities for what will be a significant restoration to most of the Ashokan Reservoir's infrastructure. The decade-long state-of-good-repair investment is expected to be the largest capital project undertaken in the Catskills in generations.

Source water protection activities remain a top priority for DEP and we will fund more than \$100 million worth of programs and initiatives again this year designed to maintain the high quality of the supply. Work is proceeding on several important projects to improve wastewater treatment at various locations in the watershed. DEP also remains very focused on the climate change driven shifts in precipitation patterns and we're reviewing our operational and watershed management strategies to adapt, while also anticipating and adapting to an evolving regulatory environment that includes provisions for new and emerging potential contaminants. Last year we announced a three-year \$4.8 million contract with the Centers for Western Weather and Water Extremes (CW3E), part of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego, to bring cutting-edge science and forecasting as part of those efforts.

As always, while we face the challenges ahead, myself and my staff remain committed to being accessible and responsive to your interests and concerns as our work touches every corner of the watershed region in some capacity. Maintaining strong partnerships with you, the communities you serve, and all stakeholders involved will remain a top priority. And frankly, the communities I am talking about are quite a bit more than just partners with DEP, they are also home to our near 1,000 employees working to keep the system running.

I sincerely look forward to continuing to work together in 2025.

Best regards,

Paul V. Rush, P.E.
Deputy Commissioner
Bureau of Water Supply