

## The Water's Fine—Come on In!



New York City is mostly surrounded by water, and there are over 600 miles of coastline throughout the five boroughs.

Protecting that shoreline and our waterways is a big responsibility. That's why DEP works closely with the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene (DOHMH) to ensure that the water quality at our beaches and beyond continues to support recreation and commerce throughout the year.

As an overview, DEP patrols the water quality in our harbor waters, and DOHMH conducts tests at the beaches. Both DEP and DOHMH monitor for bacteria to ensure public health, but there's a lot more overlap and commu-

nication between the two agencies. For instance, if DOHMH finds something at a beach, they notify DEP to track down and abate the source. Sometimes our employees find an illegal sanitary connection to a storm sewer and other times we find nesting seagulls to be the problem. DEP also uses computer modeling to predict how glitches at the treatment plants, pumping stations or regulators could affect nearby beaches. If the model shows that there may be an impact at a beach, BWT's Marine Sciences Section will notify DOHMH, so that additional tests can be conducted. This cooperative effort between our agencies is helping us to achieve Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC vision for 90% of the

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## Spotlight on Safety

### Your Environmental Health & Safety Staff

DEP's Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) bureau personnel are an integral part of the agency. They are comprised of experienced and knowledgeable individuals responsible for coordinating, facilitating and fostering adherence to DEP's EHS policies.

Some of the key tasks they perform include communicating DEP procedures to employees; implementing EHS programs; assessing the effectiveness of EHS policies and procedures;

coordinating and implementing initial and refresher training for employees; monitoring compliance with EHS regulations, policies and programs; and coordinating the procurement and maintenance of adequate and appropriate safety equipment.

By providing guidance and technical assistance in identifying, evaluating, and correcting health and safety hazards, the EHS personnel help to promote the value of safety for all of DEP's nearly 6,000 employees.

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 PIPELINE. HELP IS ON THE WAY.

## Special Guest Commissioner's Corner



**Dr. Thomas Farley, MD, MPH**, the Commissioner of the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene is a guest commentator this week

New York City has undergone many transformations during the past century, but some rituals haven't changed. Come summer, we still flock to the seashore, toting beach bags, blankets, and a cache of cold drinks. This season, 8 million of us are expected to enjoy the city's 14 miles of beachfront: from Coney Island and Wolfe's Pond, Staten Island to Orchard Beach, the "Bronx Riviera," and Rockaway, the city's only designated surfing beach.

It's easy to take the beauty of our beaches for granted, but they're not that way by happenstance. It takes partnerships, such as the one between the Health Department and the Department of Environmental Protection, to keep our shorelines clean and safe. Each day, we work with DEP to monitor combined sewer overflows, which can cause unsafe levels of bacteria in some waterways. Thanks to improvements in wastewater treatment and pollution control, our waterways are the cleanest they have been in more than a century.

The Health Department also maintains a rigorous beach monitoring program. Every one to two weeks, our inspectors visit 21 city beaches to make sure they're complying with city and state water-quality regulations. Inspectors check for the presence of floating debris, medical waste, and other contaminants that could pose a risk to public health. They even get their feet wet, wading into three-foot-deep

salt water to collect samples that are analyzed by our Public Health Laboratory. Twice during the bathing season, inspectors also interview lifeguards and check beach facilities and safety equipment to ensure that they too meet health code standards.

If a water analysis indicates that bacteria levels may contribute to illness, or inspectors observe sewage or floating debris, the department may issue an advisory notifying the public that swimming is not recommended. If an inspection reveals dangerously high levels of bacteria, or surveillance data indicates a cluster of water-related illnesses, the department may temporarily close the beach to bathers. We inform the public about these changes through signs posted on the beach and via our website ([nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)) and 311.

In partnership with DEP, we work equally hard to protect the water New Yorkers drink. By all accounts, we're doing our jobs well. As a result of ongoing public works projects and state-of-the-art engineering, we have the largest, cleanest water system in the nation. In my opinion – and I'm sure Mayor Bloomberg would agree – NYC tap water is also the most delicious. In fact, it repeatedly wins independent taste tests.

Water is good for your health. It regulates body temperature, keeping you cool when it's hot, helps prevent kidney stones and urinary infections, reduces fatigue, and keeps you alert. And because water contains zero calories, zero sugar and zero fat, it helps you maintain a healthy weight. A typical 12-ounce can of soda contains about 150 calories and the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar. Sports drinks, which are marketed as healthy alternatives, have as many calories as sugary beverages and usually contain high levels of sodium.

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## Focus on the Field



Protecting the shorelines and harbor waters that shape New York City is an important job. Recreation, tourism and commerce all benefit from the quality of our beaches and waterways.

**Geneive Hall**, a Water Ecology Scientist for BWT's Marine Sciences Section, is an important part of protecting the City's harbor waters. Geneive joined DEP in May 2006 and works under the supervision of Section Chief **Beau Ranheim** and overall direction of DC **Vincent Sapienza**. On DEP's floating lab, *Osprey*, Geneive takes samples from more than 50 locations and she performs water ecology tests on them, such as dissolved oxygen, transparency, and pH. She also prepares incubation plates for

bacteria samples that are later analyzed at our new Microbiology Lab at Newtown Creek.

Geneive and her crewmates evaluate the information they collect to assess trends in local water quality. Using various statistical methods and models to interpret the data, they prepare the annual Harbor Survey report. Geneive also contributed to the historic Centennial Harbor Water Quality Report, which we expect to publish shortly. That report will show that local water quality is better now than at any time in the last 100 years. "A lot of research, historical data, graphs and other written reports were necessary to complete it," says Geneive. "I'm pleased to be a part of this historic study."

Geneive received her BS from Lehman College in Biochemistry/Anthropology and is now working in completing a graduate school program at Queens College in Biochemistry. In her spare time, she likes to dine, attend plays and shows, fish, and listen to all types of music.

## Operations Challenge-BWT



Sludge Fellas 📍



Trash Talkers 📍

Last week, the Owls Head "Sludge Fellas" and the Tallman Island "Trash Talkers" competed in the New York State Operations Challenge. The squads squared off against each other and two other teams representing the rest of New York State in a friendly competition to test the skills they rely on every day. There, the Sludge Fellas took second place, and will now advance to the national finals in New Orleans.

Congratulations to the Trash Talkers, **Melvin Newton**, **Fernando Herz**, **Deepak Raminarine** and **Salvatore Scap-**

**elito**—for reaching the State competition and doing a great job representing their plant and their agency. And, congratulations to the Sludge Fellas—**James DiTomasso**, **Dennis Marotto**, **Jon Paul Lessard** and **William Sedutto**—for making it all the way to the National competition. We're so proud of both teams for representing DEP's incredible wastewater treatment system, which treats over a billion gallons of wastewater every day in a safe, environmentally-sustainable way.

Great work and best of luck in Louisiana!

## Milestones

Congratulations to **Lori Emery**, BWS, who was married to **Melissa Mills** on April 9. A celebration was held on June 12.

Congratulations to **Mauro Orpianesi**, BEDC, whose baby boy, **Lucio Saturnino Orpianesi**, was born on June 1, and to **Steve Boek**, BWS, whose wife **Allison** gave birth to a baby girl, **Madeline Cecilia Boek** on June 8. Both Allison and baby are doing fine.

Congratulations to **Mahalia Myrie**, BEPA, who graduated from Hunter College, with a Master of Science Degree in Environmental and Occupational Health Science.

Best wishes to **Helen Rhodes**, BCS, who is retiring this month.

(The Water's Fine—Come on in!... - continued)

City's waterways to be open for recreation by 2030.

DEP's Marine Sciences Section performs a Harbor Survey, taking dozens of samples each month throughout the City's waterways. On its floating lab, the *Osprey*, the section collects and tests samples for a variety of parameters. Samples are also taken to the recently opened Newtown Creek Microbiology Lab for bacterial analysis.

The City's rich legacy of protecting our harbor waters and coastline is reflected in the findings of

the Harbor Survey. DEP and its predecessor agencies have been conducting the harbor survey for a hundred years, and we will soon be releasing a centennial report. Years ago, beaches were frequently closed due to pollution. According to legend, at the turn of the 20th Century, paint would peel off boats moored in the City's waters. Today, through the efforts of DEP and DOHMH, the City's harbor waters are cleaner than they've been since testing began 100 years ago. Now that it's summer, take a trip to a local beach and find out for yourself!

(Commissioner's Corner... - continued)

New York City water has another major advantage: it's easy on your wallet. Beginning July 1, at approximately one penny per gallon—about 1,000 times less expensive than bottled water—the City's tap water is a great

deal. Yet, thousands of people still choose bottled water over tap, assuming it's cleaner and safer. Not so, according to many research studies. Plus, those plastic water bottles pollute the environment.

## Did You Know?

...that the first water pollution control facility in the City was opened in 1886, when a small plant was constructed in Coney Island to protect the bathing beaches.

## Event Calendar:

**Adventures NYC**, 6/19, from 11:00 am – 4:00 pm: NYC Water is the "Official Water" of Adventures NYC - presented by NYC Parks & Recreation-Special Events; Central Park, the Bandshell Area (enter at 72nd Street) 📍

**DEP June Blood Drive**, 6/15, 6/16, 6/17, from 8:00 am – 1:30 pm, 6th Floor Training Rooms, Lefrak High Rise. To read the Commissioner's Memo, please click here 📍

**We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: [newsletter@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:newsletter@dep.nyc.gov).** 📍