



[Home](#) »
 [Public Involvement and News](#) »
 [News](#) »
 [Press Releases](#) »
 State and Six Capital Region Communities Adopt Plan to Improve Hudson River Water Quality

- [Outdoor Activities](#)
- [Animals, Plants, Aquatic Life](#)
- [Chemical and Pollution Control](#)
- [Energy and Climate](#)
- [Lands and Waters](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Permits and Licenses](#)
- [Public Involvement and News](#)**
- [News](#)**
- [Press Releases](#)**
- [State and Six Capital Region Communities Adopt Plan to Improve Hudson River Water Quality](#)
- [Regulations and Enforcement](#)
- [Publications, Forms, Maps](#)
- [About DEC](#)

For Release: Thursday, January 16, 2014

State and Six Capital Region Communities Adopt Plan to Improve Hudson River Water Quality

\$136 Million in Upgrades Will Significantly Reduce Sewage Discharges

Hudson River water quality will be improved significantly and discharges of stormwater-diluted sewage will be reduced drastically under an agreement between the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and six Capital Region communities, DEC Commissioner Joe Martens announced today. Under a consent order with DEC, the Albany Pool communities and the Albany County and Rensselaer County sewer districts will upgrade their systems as well as complete green infrastructure projects.

"These local communities understand the need to take decisive action to prevent pollution from entering the Hudson River after storms and have worked closely with the State to develop an effective solution," said DEC Commissioner Joe Martens. "We are committed to creating a cleaner, healthier and more vibrant Hudson River. This plan is an important step in achieving that goal and will improve the river's water quality while providing additional opportunities for fishing and other recreational activities for local residents and visitors."

As a result of the required water quality improvements from the Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP) announced today, recreational use of the Hudson River is expected to be able to resume within 10 hours after most typical rainstorms in the area (up to 1 inch per 24 hours, which represents 90 percent of rain events in the area). Currently, recreational uses may not resume activities in the river for days after heavy precipitation in the area.

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The Albany Pool includes the cities of Albany, Troy, Rensselaer, Cohoes and Watervliet and the Village of Green Island. These six communities, along with the two county sewer districts, will implement the LTCP. The plan, which was approved by the legislatures in each community, will significantly reduce and properly control combined sewer overflows to the Hudson River that occur when the amount of collected rain or snowmelt and sewage in the sewers exceeds the capacity of the county wastewater treatment plants. Combined sewer overflows (CSOs) are direct discharges of stormwater-diluted sewage into a waterway.

The projects, which will cost \$136 million, will bring the Albany Pool and the Rensselaer and Albany County Sewer Districts into compliance with New York State water quality standards and federal Clean Water Act requirement. A majority of the improvement projects will be completed within 10 years and a significant number of the projects to reduce bacteria will be completed in the first five years of the plan.

Once the LTCP is fully implemented, Albany Pool communities and the two county sewer districts will be able to capture 85 percent of the CSO volume and treat it for bacteria and sewage-related floatable waste. The plan also will implement a strategy to maximize the use of green infrastructure practices designed to achieve additional CSO reductions over time.

The Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) and its consultants represented the Albany Pool communities in the development of the LTCP and helped to address complex technical issues related to the plan. The communities signed an initial inter-municipal agreement to collaborate effectively and carry out the LTCP, with additional agreements to follow under the consent order with DEC.

Key elements of the LTCP include:

- Maximizing the flow of combined sewage from the Albany Pool communities to the Albany County and Rensselaer County wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs); pump stations upgrades; sewer system improvements; and, sizing the new bacterial disinfection systems in the county treatment plants to accommodate and treat more stormwater-related volume.
- Building and operating a new satellite treatment facility to disinfect CSO flow and control of sewage-related floatable waste at the largest CSO outfall in the system, located on Broadway by the U-Haul Building in the City of Albany.

- Implementing multiple projects to separate combined sewers (create separate lines for stormwater and sewage) to eliminate some existing CSOs.
- Adding facilities to control the discharge of floatable waste at major CSO outfalls in the city of Cohoes and at the Corning Preserve in Albany.
- Implementing a long-term green infrastructure (GI) strategy to further reduce CSO releases above the 85 percent capture and treatment level. The strategy will maximize the use of GI in the Albany Pool communities which will reduce CSOs over time. GI practices help control stormwater at its source, remove pollutants, and reduce the amount of runoff and waste that ends up in sewer systems and local water bodies. Examples of GI practices are green roofs, pervious pavement and rain gardens.

Additional information about the [Long-Term Control Plan](#) is available on DEC's website.

The State Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) is available to provide low-interest financing for the sewer upgrades under the Long-Term Control Plan. EFC regularly provides financings of a similar size and scope as the Albany Pool project, and stands ready to assist these communities in ensuring better and more consistent treatment of their wastewater systems.

EFC President and CEO Matthew J. Driscoll said, "EFC is the arm of Governor Cuomo's administration that provides financing to local governments to improve their wastewater and drinking water infrastructure. Through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, EFC is able to provide the lowest possible financing for collection system improvements and other projects envisioned in this Long-Term Control Plan. We look forward to working with these Capital Region communities to provide an affordable solution to meet their clean water needs, as they take these important steps to protect public health and the quality of water in the Hudson River."

Water quality improvements to the Hudson River already underway through other New York State consent orders and the State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit program include:

- Installing equipment in the Rensselaer County Sewer District to disinfect treated effluent. Seasonal disinfection will begin on May 1, 2014.

- Addressing discharges in the Rensselaer County Sewer District and the cities of Troy and Rensselaer that can result in sewage spills during dry weather.
- Completion of improvements at the East Greenbush WWTP and within its sewer system by December 31, 2014 to eliminate sewage overflows during wet weather.
- Installing disinfection systems in the Albany County Sewer District for its treated effluent by 2014 and beginning seasonal effluent disinfection at its north and south plants in 2014.

Capital District Regional Planning Commission Executive Director Rocky Ferraro said, "The Capital District Regional Planning Commission is very pleased to have had the opportunity to provide the staff support for the development of the multi-community Albany Pool Long-Term Control Plan addressing combined sewer overflows into the Hudson River. This joint effort demonstrates the value of inter-municipal cooperative efforts to identify and implement cost-effective measures to achieve our shared goals to protect this important regional and statewide asset."

Albany Mayor Kathy M. Sheehan, said, "I want to thank Commissioner Martens and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation for their great work on this project. As Albany and other river communities continue to develop our waterfronts we need to protect the Albany's water quality and make sure that all our residents can enjoy and access the Hudson River."

Troy Mayor Lou Rosamilia said, "The regional efforts put forth to make this Long-Term Control Plan come to fruition have been immense. Those efforts will benefit our river communities for years to come. A cleaner river, stronger infrastructure and fewer sewer overflows will aid in future development, improved recreation and reduced flooding throughout our cities."

Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy said, "On behalf of Albany County I am pleased that our local partners and the DEC have come to an agreement on a comprehensive plan to improve water quality in the Hudson River. I want to commend all the communities and our Sewer District for representing the county as the parties worked through the complex issues involved. This is good news for the region."

Watervliet Mayor Mike Manning said, "Our waterfront is a vital part of what makes Watervliet a great place to live and work. In 2006 the city adopted Watervliet's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program to increase waterfront access and

maximize the benefits of our parklands such as the Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail and our Hudson Shores Park. It's great to see an initiative like this come together with collaboration from other communities, benefiting the Hudson River, one of the Capital Region's most critical resources."

Ellen M. McNulty-Ryan, mayor of the Village of Green Island, said, "Over a decade ago, staff from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) approached my father, then recently retired Mayor John J. McNulty, Jr., and asked him his opinion as to how to address the Combined Sewer Overflow issue in the Hudson River. He quickly stated that it should be a shared approach and he arranged the initial meeting with me and the other Mayors of the six (6) communities and the DEC to discuss. I am proud to be standing here today with the present leaders of those same six (6) communities and the DEC to announce that we now have a viable Long Term Control Plan to clean the great Hudson River, one that together we can all be proud of."

Assemblyman John McDonald said, "Since 2004, the Albany Pool communities have worked closely and collaboratively with the DEC to address the generations old challenge of combined sewer overflows. As a former mayor and the Assembly member who now represents the Albany Pool communities, I know firsthand the amount of effort that went into this Long Term Control Plan and I commend all of the parties involved for agreeing to a plan that improves the water quality of the Hudson River while at the same time implementing a plan that is sensitive to the ratepayers. This collaboration amongst these communities and the DEC is a model for future collaborative efforts of local governments and state agencies and is an effort that all should be proud to have been a part of."

Paul Gallay, president and Hudson Riverkeeper, said "When these waters are fishable and swimmable again, we will look back on this agreement as the turning point. Congratulations to DEC and the Albany area communities for putting us on the right track to a clean Upper Hudson."

Ned Sullivan, President of Scenic Hudson, said, "Congratulations to Commissioner Martens for his leadership and to all the cooperating parties for achieving this important milestone in improving the health of the Hudson River. The Albany Pool is a critical resource at the head of the Hudson River Estuary, and the comprehensive plan is a major stride forward in enhancing the natural resource and ensuring its recreational and economic benefits are fully realized."

"Stormwater runoff is among the most serious water quality problems affecting the Hudson River -- one of the state's most valuable recreational and ecologically important waterbodies. The plan being announced today holds the promise of significantly reducing such pollution discharges via sensible and cost-effective strategies, including green infrastructure investments. Governor Andrew Cuomo, DEC Commissioner Joe Martens and all of the participating communities deserve credit for advancing compliance with these Clean Water Act programs and we look forward to insuring full implementation of the entire plan," said Eric A. Goldstein, senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

New York League of Conservation Voters President Marcia Bystryn said, "Today's agreement marks critical milestone in the effort to revive and restore one of America's greatest waterways. These strategic investments will yield significant environmental improvements while also controlling costs. We applaud the Department of Environmental Conservation and the municipalities involved for a collaborative solution to this regional problem."