



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation



## *History of DEC and Highlights of Environmental Milestones*

### **The 1970s**

The decade begins with the creation of the Department on the first Earth Day. During the 1970s, the agency not only assumed responsibility for existing water quality programs, such as water treatment plants, but began creating programs to handle emerging issues like air pollution and solid and hazardous waste. Important steps were taken to acquire and protect vital lands, and DEC facilitated stronger relationships among government agencies and between government and the private sector to work cooperatively to improve the environment. Important legislation was passed and long-term funding sources for environmental purposes were developed. Milestones include:

#### **1970**

- On April 22, the first Earth Day, legislation is signed, merging the duties of the existing Conservation Department with some programs of the State departments of Health, and Agriculture and Markets, and certain state commissions under the newly created New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).
- DEC officially opens its doors on July 1, and immediately begins to wrestle with urgent problems like the health risks of pesticides, mercury pollution, solid waste management and recycling, flood protection, and recreational access to wilderness areas.
- DEC begins to develop air quality plans to comply with national, health-based standards for air pollutants and auto emissions under the federal Clean Air Act.
- DEC creates the first New York State endangered species list.
- New York State bans the use of lead paint in schools and the interiors of homes, building on an earlier lead paint ban in New York City. A federal ban is not enacted until 1978.

#### **1971**

- New York State bans DDT, a widely used pesticide that was found to cause cancer. DEC's pesticide controls are the most comprehensive in the country. EPA follows New York's lead one year later with a nationwide ban on DDT.
- New York State establishes the Adirondack Park Agency.

- DEC's Division of Law Enforcement is created, and legislation upgrades the newly named Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO) to be granted police officer status, providing them the authority to enforce all New York State laws. The first 240-officer force is trained at the State Police Academy.

## 1972

- The federal government passes the Clean Water Act, which delegated a number of new responsibilities to DEC, including wastewater discharge permitting.
- New York begins to allocate billions of dollars through DEC's Construction Grants Program to build an advanced network of sewage treatment facilities to reduce raw sewage flowing into rivers, lakes, and streams. These projects will serve a major part of the state's wastewater infrastructure.
- The U.S. and Canada sign the binational Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to begin cleanup of the Great Lakes, which contain 95 percent of the nation's freshwater. DEC implements a number of programs under the agreement, including the Toxics Reduction Initiative and six remedial action plans to address the most severely impacted areas in the Great Lakes Basin.
- New York voters approved the Environmental Quality Bond Act to fund land acquisitions, solid waste projects, sewage treatment, air pollution control, and resource recovery.
- DEC's Five Rivers Environmental Education Center outside Albany is dedicated.

## 1973

- New York State bans phosphorus in all cleaning products, except dishwashing detergents, to reduce water pollution. Prior to the ban, high levels of phosphates led to green water—caused by excessive aquatic growth—especially in Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.
- The Federal Endangered Species Act was enacted to protect habitat for plants and wildlife. DEC works closely with federal partner agencies to protect and restore listed species found within the state's borders.
- State controls are established on the use of tidal wetlands to protect the delicate ecological balance of these important areas, which provide: marine food production; wildlife habitat; flood, hurricane, and storm control; recreation; and other benefits.
- EPA begins to phase out the use of lead in gasoline, resulting in a 98 percent reduction in lead levels in the air. The phase-out protects millions of children from serious, permanent learning disabilities.

## 1974

- New York passes the Rare and Endangered Plants Act, protecting rare and endangered native state plants.
- The Forest Tax Law passes, providing tax breaks to landowners who actively manage land for wood production.
- Under the new Safe Drinking Water Act, EPA begins work to protect public health by setting health-based standards governing the quality of the public water supply, including requirements for physical and chemical treatment of drinking water.
- EPA sets the first national standards limiting industrial water pollution.

## 1975

- The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) passes, requiring expanded environmental review of projects undertaken by state and local governments.
- DEC partners with Cornell University to begin a seven-year survey of hundreds of mountain lakes and streams to evaluate their vulnerability to acid rain.
- Both the Tidal and Freshwater Wetlands Acts pass, providing important protection for wetlands, which play a vital role in surface and groundwater quality, flood and erosion control, and fish and wildlife habitat.
- New York passes the Mined Land Reclamation law, requiring restoration of land after mining ceases.
- DEC takes steps to prevent discharge of cancer-causing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into the Hudson River from General Electric industrial plants.

## 1976

- New York begins Bald eagle restoration efforts.
- DEC initiates action to prevent General Electric Company from discharging PCBs into the Hudson River.
- New York places controls on aerosol cans containing chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). CFCs destroy the Earth's ozone layer, which protects life from the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun.
- Responding to public concern over "midnight dumping" of toxic wastes, EPA starts to establish controls over hazardous waste from the time it is generated, through transportation, treatment, storage and disposal, under the new Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Many aspects of the law are delegated to DEC for implementation.
- The federal Toxic Substances Control Act passes, and EPA begins efforts to protect public health through controls on toxic chemicals. DEC works with state and federal partners to advance the goals set forth in the law.

## 1977

- The federal government amends the Clean Air Act, adding more stringent requirements to clean up air pollution. Controls are established on industrial sources, and automobile exhaust emission standards are put in place for carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons, leading to marked improvements in air quality. Many aspects of the law are delegated to DEC for implementation, including the permitting of large air emission sources.
- DEC begins Osprey restoration efforts on Long Island.

## 1978

- New York State declares a public-health emergency when toxic pollutants seep into homes in the Love Canal development in Niagara Falls.
- Legislation is enacted giving DEC the authority to regulate hazardous wastes and the location of future hazardous waste facilities. The agency also receives the authority to oversee inactive hazardous waste sites.
- DEC's Division of Law Enforcement creates a K-9 Program with one officer and one German shepherd. There are currently nine K-9 teams stationed throughout the state, helping officers to locate lost individuals and apprehend poachers.
- EPA and other federal agencies ban the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as a propellant in most aerosol cans due to the damage CFCs cause to the earth's ozone layers.

## 1979

- The first female Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO) is appointed.
- Because of their potential for causing cancer and other adverse health effects, EPA bans two herbicides containing dioxins.

## Other Milestones of the 1970s

- The State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) is created to help control discharges of wastewater into New York's streams, rivers, lakes, and marine waters.
- DEC works with Vermont and Quebec to restore trout and salmon fisheries in Lake Champlain.
- Sport falconry is legalized in New York.
- Fisher are reintroduced into the Catskills.
- The State purchases or otherwise protects approximately 134,000 acres of land, including the 12,500-acre Santanoni Preserve; 7,100 acres in the Long Island Pine Barrens; and 9,182 acres in the Adirondacks (including 12 mountain peaks), with an easement on another 7,000 acres.
- The statewide Urban and Community Forestry program is established, promoting education and tree plantings in urban areas.
- DEC begins a new era of Great Lakes fisheries management with the enactment of major clean waters legislation, long-term research and monitoring of fish communities, broader international cooperation, and intensive trout and salmon stocking efforts.

## The 1980s

During the 1980s, there was greater attention on environmental issues that had previously received little attention; for example, what to do about hazardous wastes and how to control acid rain. DEC continued to promote strong forestry and fish and wildlife programs, and continued its land acquisition and waste management efforts.

## 1980

- DEC opens the Salmon River Fish Hatchery in Oswego County to raise Pacific salmon and steelhead trout for stocking in Lake Ontario, and also modernizes its other fish hatcheries to increase production.
- Building on earlier efforts to clean up toxic waste sites, EPA develops a nationwide program for toxic waste site cleanups under the new Superfund law, as well as establishing a list of the most hazardous toxic sites in the U.S. Contaminated properties that threaten public health and the environment have been addressed by a number of state laws. In 1979, New York enacted the "Superfund Program" to clean up contaminated sites by enabling the state to order responsible parties to clean up those sites that pose the most serious threat.

## 1981

- New York State's new Coastal Erosion Law provides critical protection for shoreline erosion-hazard areas.
- DEC implements enhanced oil and gas well programs to improve safety and protect surface and groundwater resources.

## 1982

- DEC's Division of Law Enforcement creates the Bureau of Environmental Conservation Investigations to conduct investigations of inactive hazardous waste dump sites and the transport and disposal of hazardous waste. The bureau's name was later changed to the Bureau of Environmental Crimes Investigations (BECI).
- New York's Return A Gift to Wildlife program begins, enabling state residents to voluntarily contribute to DEC's Conservation Fund through personal income tax returns.
- New York's "Bottle Bill" is passed, requiring deposits on certain beverage containers to encourage recycling and reduce litter.

## 1983

- The Hazardous Waste Remedial Fund legislation increases criminal sanctions for violations and establishes a fund to supplement federal Superfund money for contaminated site cleanups.
- Falcons nest in New York City after a 20-year absence.

## 1984

- New York passes the nation's first law to address "acid rain" from in-state air pollution sources. In addition, DEC initiates an acid rain control policy called the State Acid Deposition Control Act (SADCA), identifying the Adirondacks, Catskills, and Hudson Highlands as susceptible to acid rain.
- DEC and the Empire State Electric Energy Research Corporation sponsor a three-year water chemistry and fish survey of 1,469 Adirondack lakes and ponds to assess acid rain.
- Concerns about gasoline and hazardous chemicals seeping from storage tanks and landfills into underground drinking water supplies prompt new amendments to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). EPA begins efforts to prevent such contamination and require treatment of hazardous wastes prior to land disposal; DEC is delegated permitting authority for hazardous materials storage, transportation, and disposal under the RCRA program.
- DEC assumes responsibility for the oil and hazardous substance spill program from the NYS Department of Transportation and establishes a statewide, toll-free line to report spills.

## 1985

- The Catskill Park State Land Master Plan is adopted.
- The Omnibus Oil, Gas and Solution Mining Law passes, regulating oil and gas drilling and production across New York State.

## 1986

- The New York State Environmental Quality Bond Act passes, providing \$1.2 billion to clean up hazardous waste sites and \$250 million to acquire parks and other environmentally sensitive lands.
- New York acquires the 292-acre Reinstein Woods property in Erie County. DEC later builds an environmental education center at the site that offers an array of outdoor activities and programs for schoolchildren, families, and people of all ages.
- Public concern about explosions and leaks of toxic chemicals, leads to passage of the U.S.'s first community right-to-know law directing manufacturers, users, and storers of certain chemicals to keep records about the location, quantity, use, and any release of those materials. EPA is required to make such information available to the public and begins to work with states and localities to prevent accidents and develop emergency plans in case of releases of dangerous chemicals. DEC works with state and federal partners to advance the goals set forth in the law.

## 1987

- DEC, EPA, Environment Canada, and the Ontario Ministry of Environment enter into an international agreement to clean up toxic chemicals in the Niagara River.
- The New York State Atmospheric Deposition Monitoring Network is set up to assess the effectiveness of DEC's acid rain control policy and other strategies aimed at reducing the effects of acid rain.
- DEC's Division of Law Enforcement concludes an undercover investigation of illegal deer and bear hunting called Operation Berkshire. Lasting 2.5 years and stretching over seven states and one Canadian province, the investigation results in 28 arrests and more than 1,000 charges. This action set a precedent for including undercover surveillance in day-to-day operations of fish and wildlife investigations in New York.
- The Adirondack State Land Master Plan is approved.
- The U. S. is one of 24 nations to sign the Montreal Protocol, pledging to phase out the production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which were linked to destruction of the ozone layer.
- From March until October, the Mobro 4000, commonly known as the infamous "garbage barge," began its odyssey from New York to ports in the U.S. and Central America without being allowed to unload its rotting cargo. The widely publicized incident led to significant improvements in solid waste management at both the federal and state levels.
- DEC creates an integrated state solid waste management plan and implements Part 360 solid waste regulations, bringing New York State into compliance with the provisions of the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The plan sets visionary and aggressive, yet achievable, goals, and includes periodic updates to ensure continued progress.

## 1988

- The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State is published, listing the species of birds observed to be breeding in the state, as well as their estimated population and distribution.

- The Solid Waste Management Act is passed. The Act provides grants for municipal solid waste projects and recycling programs, and created DEC's Bureau of Waste Reduction, Reuse and Recycling.
- New York's solid waste regulations are revised and enhanced, becoming one of the nation's most comprehensive set of requirements for solid waste management facilities. The regulations include provisions for recycling, composting, solid waste transfer, beneficial uses of solid waste, waste-to-energy, and landfills.
- New York passes laws related to infectious medical waste, which are later broadened to include all medical waste.

## **1989**

- DEC and the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) begin providing low-interest local government loans through the New York State Revolving Fund (SRF) for projects to protect drinking water supplies and prevent water pollution.
- DEC helps form the Niagara River Toxics Management Plan and Lake Ontario Toxics Management Plan with EPA, Environment Canada, and the Ontario Government to jointly reduce the discharge of contaminants that accumulate in the fish of those waters.
- New York State ends the operation of a low-level radioactive waste disposal site in West Valley, the only commercial radioactive waste disposal and burial site in the state.
- State regulations are drafted specifying water quality standards for 95 toxic chemicals, and how sites for petroleum bulk storage facilities should be chosen, as well as how they should be built, monitored, and shut down.
- The New York State Solid Waste Management Plan is issued, detailing how recycling, source separation, and landfill closures will be handled in New York State.
- DEC adopts regulations that require that gasoline vapors be recovered during refueling at service stations and that low volatility gasoline be marketed statewide during the summer.
- DEC's Bald Eagle Restoration Project achieves its goal of 10 nesting pairs.

## **Other Milestones of the 1980s**

About 250,000 acres of land were acquired or otherwise protected by the state, including the purchase of 4,163 acres from Camp Harriman; acquisition of Tivoli Bay National Estuarine Research Preserve; acquisition of Valcour Island on Lake Champlain; Sloop Hill in Orange County; 14,400 acres of land and 40,000 acres of easements on Diamond International lands in the Adirondacks; and 341 acres of Barcelona Neck on Long Island Sound.

## **The 1990s**

In DEC's third decade, emphasis begins to shift from large-scale programs to education and programs developed for small-scale operations and the average citizen. In addition, expanding environmental awareness begins to emphasize prevention of pollution, rather than just cleanup. New ways of using technology, and new ways of looking at the relationship between habitat and land, and the animals and plants that use them, enable DEC to continue to build on its tradition of excellence in natural resource programs.

## 1990

- New York City signs an agreement with the state to clean up, improve operations, and submit an application to operate Fresh Kills Landfill, which, at the time, was the largest landfill in the country.
- Under EPA's new Clean Air Act amendments, New York and other states must, for the first time, demonstrate continuing progress toward meeting national health-based air quality standards for harmful pollutants such as ozone and carbon monoxide.
- New York adopts the Hazardous Packaging Law, setting specific requirements and restrictions on the use of lead, mercury, cadmium, and hexavalent chromium in packaging. The law is designed to reduce the toxicity of packaging, which comprises up to one-third of all solid waste, and will allow more post-consumer materials to be recycled without health and safety concerns.

## 1991

- Significant amendments to the state's Mined Land Reclamation Law are enacted, establishing annual regulatory fees and encouraging more effective reclamation.
- The use of lead shot is prohibited for waterfowl hunting in New York State.
- A new executive order directs all state agencies to reduce the amount of solid waste they generate, recycle recoverable material from solid waste, and purchase recycled products when possible.

## 1992

- The first NYS Open Space Plan is signed, forming the blueprint for acquisition and protection of unique and environmentally sensitive lands.
- New York City signs an agreement with the state to design and build Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) abatement facilities.
- New York State adopts California's stringent vehicle emissions standards. Under federal Clean Air Act Amendments, DEC works to improve air quality for the entire state and control urban smog, acid rain, toxics, and stack emission pollution.
- DEC, in a cooperative effort with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Friends of the Greenway, opens the 90-mile Genesee Greenway along the abandoned Genesee Valley Canal.
- To protect seashore recreation, ocean life, and the fishing industry, EPA bans dumping of sewage sludge into oceans and coastal waters.

## 1993

- New York creates the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which provides millions of dollars annually to support state and local programs that preserve open space, farmland, coastlines, and municipal parks. Funds are also available for closing landfills and improving recycling programs.
- Zebra mussels are discovered in Lake Champlain. DEC releases a comprehensive aquatic invasive species management plan.
- DEC and the Lake George Park Commission reach an agreement on oversight of Lake George water levels.



## 1994

- The number of active landfills in New York State drops from more than 500 in 1984 to about 50.
- DEC presents its first annual Governor's Pollution Prevention Awards—which evolved into the NYS Environmental Excellence Awards in 2004—to recognize entities that improve and protect New York's environment and contribute to a healthier economy by advancing sustainable practices and by forming creative partnerships.
- New York becomes one of 14 states to hold a "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" workshop, sponsored by DEC and other organizations, to teach women skills relating to fishing, hunting, and other outdoor activities.
- DEC approves a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the cleanup of Long Island Sound. The State of Connecticut and EPA adopt the plan shortly afterwards.
- EPA removes the bald eagle from the Endangered Species List.
- New York reaches agreement with Occidental Chemical Corp to settle Love Canal litigation, including payment by Occidental of \$120 million in cleanup costs and restoration of the Lake Ontario fishery. The agreement is one of the largest natural resource damages settlements in the nation at that time.

## 1995

- DEC celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Division of Fish and Wildlife, which began as the Fisheries, Game and Forest Commission in 1895.
- The New York River Otter Project begins. Over five years, 270 North American river otters will be released in Central and Western New York, where they had been absent for more than a century due to loss of habitat, water pollution, and unregulated hunting and trapping.
- New York sets a goal of preserving one million acres of environmentally significant land throughout the state.
- Two-thirds of U.S. metropolitan areas with unhealthy air in 1990 now meet air quality standards, making the air safer to breathe for 50 million Americans in major cities.
- DEC forest rangers, Division of Lands and Forests personnel, and ECOs respond to a major Long Island Central Pine Barrens wildfire, known the Sunrise Fire because it burned on both sides of the Sunrise Highway. The fire was successfully controlled after burning more than 3,000 acres; there were no fatalities.
- A series of severe thunderstorms blow down thousands of trees in and around the Five Ponds Wilderness area in the Adirondacks, an incident that becomes known as the Blowdown of 1995.
- Invasive zebra mussels are discovered in Lake George.
- DEC revises its forest preserve access policy to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines, which will open up new recreation opportunities for all people.
- For the first time, DEC limits the fishing season for winter flounder in New York State's marine waters to prevent overfishing.

## 1996

- New York State voters approve the \$1.75 billion Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, which will fund various environmental projects, including land acquisition, clean water and air,

dam safety and flood control projects, historic preservation, and brownfields redevelopment.

- Giant hogweed, a poisonous invasive plant, is discovered growing near Buffalo.
- The state enacts the Pesticide Reporting Law, which requires licensed commercial businesses to report the specific pesticides they are using and post signs at treated sites warning that pesticides have been applied. The new law is among the first of its kind in the nation.

### **1997**

- DEC signs a landmark agreement with New York City that forms the basis for protecting the NYC watershed, which supplies clean water to residents and businesses.
- DEC creates the New York State Bird Conservation Area (BCA) Program to safeguard and enhance bird populations and their habitats on state lands and waters.

### **1998**

- DEC establishes the Pollution Prevention Unit to plan, monitor, manage, coordinate, and encourage efforts by business and industry to prevent pollution at its source.
- The Lyme disease pathogen is found to be endemic in the southern counties of the Adirondacks.

### **1999**

- A special State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit category is created for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) to ensure proper management of agricultural waste from large livestock facilities.
- DEC establishes the Office of Environmental Justice to address environmental concerns in underserved areas and ensure community participation equality in the state's environmental permitting process.
- The High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan is approved after 21 years of study.
- DEC initiates a program that requires utilities to cut their sulfur- and nitrogen-oxide emissions by 50 percent. These two chemical compounds are major components of acid rain, smog, and ozone.
- Forty-two mating pairs of endangered Peregrine falcons are reported to be nesting in New York State.

### ***Other Milestones of the 1990s***

- DEC acquires or protects more than 100,000 acres of land from 1990 to 1998, including the addition of 15,000 acres to the Adirondack Park from the wealthy Whitney family's estate.
- DEC establishes the Natural Resources Damages Unit to recover damages caused by polluters and invest the funds in natural resource restoration projects.
- New York takes over stormwater discharge control programs from the EPA.
- DEC starts the Voluntary Cleanup Program to encourage private parties to clean up hazardous waste sites in which they were involved.

### ***The First Decade of the 21st Century***

As the new century begins, Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers assume expanded roles in protecting both the public and the environment following the terrorist attacks on 9/11/01. Major environmental law enforcement investigations yield record-setting arrests for illegal wildlife trafficking and hunting violations. Important programs, including those aimed at redeveloping brownfields and greatly reducing air pollution, come to the forefront. A renewed emphasis is placed on protecting and preserving land throughout the state. Fighting the spread of wildlife diseases and invasive species spawn new laws and programs.

## **2000**

- The Deer Management Assistance Program is created to help landowners control deer populations.
- New York State adopts a revised rare plant list to provide greater protection of these plants.
- New York State enacts the Pesticide Neighbor Notification Law.
- DEC coordinates an extensive survey of breeding birds in New York.

## **2001**

- DEC moves into its new headquarters building in Albany—the first government building in New York State to earn a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver rating by the U.S. Green Building Council.
- Executive Order 111 directs state agencies to improve energy efficiency and promote energy conservation in their own facilities. DEC hires its first energy manager.
- DEC staff participate in cleanup and environmental assessment efforts after the September 11 terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center in Manhattan.

## **2002**

- The urban fishing program, "I Fish NY," begins. DEC hires its first fisheries biologist for New York City.
- DEC creates Clean Sweep NY, a program to provide schools with economical and environmentally safe collection and disposal of unwanted pesticides, chemicals, and mercury-containing devices, as well as recycling of pesticide containers.
- DEC and the Land Trust Alliance create the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP). This public-private partnership provides Environmental Protection Fund grants to land trusts, which leverages conservation funding and helps communities conserve environmentally significant land across the state.

## **2003**

- The passage and signing of the State Superfund/Brownfields Act helps DEC establish a new Brownfields Cleanup Program, with \$120 million available annually to help clean up unused or abandoned industrial areas and return them to productive use.
- The State Waste Tire Management and Recycling Act is passed. By 2009, 26.5 million waste tires were removed from tire dumps across New York.
- DEC's wildlife pathology facility is modernized, enabling the new laboratory to assist in efforts to study wildlife mortality and chronic wasting disease, and protect public health against the threats of rabies, West Nile virus, and botulism.

## **2004**

- The gasoline additive MTBE is banned in New York State due to concerns over pollution of groundwater sources.
- The Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites becomes available online as a searchable database.
- DEC's Environmental Excellence Awards (EEA) program is launched, recognizing businesses, organizations, local governments, and individuals that excel in innovative and sustainable environmental practices and partnerships.
- All but one sewage treatment plant in the state achieves the secondary treatment requirements of the Clean Water Act.
- DEC adopts regulations to help carry out the goals of the Acid Deposition Reduction Program (ADRP), which requires selected electric power generators to reduce sulfur dioxide levels to 50 percent below federal standards by 2007, and extend controls on nitrogen oxides.
- The Mercury-Added Consumer Products Law is enacted, restricting the sale and disposal of certain mercury-containing products, especially in relationship to schools. Later revisions to the law in 2005 and 2011 strengthen these restrictions by prohibiting the sale of additional mercury-containing products.

## 2005

- John Dillon Park, the first wilderness park designed for people with disabilities, opens in the Adirondacks, highlighting DEC's ongoing efforts to make outdoor recreation accessible to all.
- DEC succeeds in reducing energy usage in its own buildings by more than 30 percent from 1990 levels.
- New York and six other northeastern states establish the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), creating the nation's first market-based, cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning power plants.

## 2006

- DEC and EPA reach agreement with Honeywell International, Inc. to conduct the cleanup of contaminated sediments in Onondaga Lake.
- DEC's CleanSweepNY program receives an EPA Environmental Quality Award, having collected nearly 964,000 pounds of pesticides and hazardous chemicals.
- The Law Enforcement Dispatch Center in Ray Brook expands to a 24/7 operation, with statewide coverage after regular business hours. In the first year, calls to DEC's Turn In Poachers and Polluters (TIPP) hotline increase 265 percent.
- Viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS), a fatal fish disease, is confirmed as the cause of a fish die-off in the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. After studying the extent of the threat, DEC issues emergency regulations to stop the spread of the disease.
- DEC and other state agencies provide support and assistance as floods ravage many communities in New York State. In the Upper Susquehanna River Basin, cooperative maintenance of the levee system by DEC and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prevents an estimated \$360 million in damage.
- Water quality in the lower Oswego River and harbor at the Lake Ontario outlet improves and is the first of 32 sites in the U.S. portion of the Great Lakes watershed to be delisted as an "area of concern" after meeting the water-quality improvement goals established by the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and federal Clean Water Act.

- DEC and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation adopt a snowmobile plan for the Adirondack Park that minimizes environmental impacts to Forest Preserve lands.

## 2007

- DEC creates an Office of Climate Change to respond to growing concerns about the effects on the environment due to increasing amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere from human-caused sources.
- New York State surpasses the goal of preserving more than one million acres of environmentally significant land throughout the state.
- White-nose syndrome, a fungal disease lethal to many species of bats, is found in the United States for the first time in Hailes Cave in the John Boyd Thacher State Park. DEC works with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other states to study the problem, which kills up to 90 percent of the bats in caves where it is found.

## 2008

- The NYS Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I) is launched to promote cost-effective methods to conserve energy, reduce wastes and improve performance. NYSP2I, which includes RIT and other universities in the state, helps businesses incorporate sustainability into everyday practices, improve productivity and reduce their carbon footprint.
- DEC becomes a founding member of the Climate Registry, a nonprofit group that sets consistent and transparent standards for calculating, verifying, and publicly reporting greenhouse-gas emissions.
- The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resource Management Compact is signed, placing a ban on the export of water from the Great Lakes watershed.
- The Office of Invasive Species is established to coordinate public outreach, legislation, and research on the growing environmental and economic problems caused by invasives.
- An independent audit finds that State Forests managed by DEC meet the highest standards for protection and sustainability, earning them “green certification” from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council.
- Regulations restricting the movement of firewood are issued to prevent the spread of invasive forest pests such as the emerald ash borer and Asian long-horned beetle. Under these regulations, it is illegal to bring untreated firewood into New York State or transport untreated firewood more than 50 miles from its source.
- The Junior Hunter Mentoring Program law is signed, providing 14- and 15-year-olds the opportunity to hunt big game with firearms as long as they are accompanied and supervised by an experienced adult hunter.
- DEC’s Office of Public Protection (OPP) Training Academy moves to a facility in Pulaski, NY, finally finding a permanent home after more than a century.
- A record 573 bald eagles are counted in New York State, attesting to the success of restoration efforts that began in 1979.

## 2009

- The dredging of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from the Hudson River begins. The project is one of the biggest environmental dredging projects ever undertaken in the United States.

- The ban on open burning of trash and debris is expanded to all areas of the state to improve air quality and prevent wildfires.
- Operation Shell Shock, the largest undercover illegal wildlife trade investigation in the state's history, results in 27 arrests for wildlife crimes and nearly \$200,000 in fines relating to illegal trade in reptiles and amphibians.
- Emerald ash borer (EAB), a destructive invasive beetle that kills North American ash trees, is discovered in Cattaraugus County. DEC and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets impose a quarantine restricting the movement of ash trees, ash products, and firewood of all tree species to help prevent the spread of EAB.
- Executive Order No. 24, establishes a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in New York State by 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050. The order also creates the Climate Action Council.
- More stringent dam safety regulations take effect, in response to concerns about proper maintenance of aging privately owned dams.
- A record 72 territorial pairs of endangered peregrine falcons are reported in New York, attesting to the success of restoration efforts that began in the mid-1970s.

### ***The Second Decade of the 21st Century***

DEC continues to tackle urgent issues, including preparing for the effects of climate change, controlling invasive species, and preserving the last two undeveloped Finger Lakes.

#### **2010**

- New York's Invasive Species Council implements the first state classification system of non-native plants and animals to help prevent the spread of invasives.
- The City of Rochester and the state agree to preserve the last two undeveloped Finger Lakes, Hemlock and Canadice.
- The Electronic Equipment Recycling and Reuse Act becomes law, establishing the most comprehensive electronic waste (e-waste) product stewardship program in the country.
- DEC adopts a policy requiring some power and industrial plants to use closed-loop cooling systems, leading to reducing incidental fish kills by more than 90 percent.
- Following the lead of DEC and other 13 other states, the U.S. EPA issues more stringent vehicle emission standards.
- The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Act becomes law, requiring manufacturers of some rechargeable batteries to collect and recycle the batteries statewide.
- DEC issues a revised State Solid Waste Management Plan, proposing new ways for government, businesses, and individuals to take a more sustainable approach toward waste management that reduces greenhouse gases and pollution, saves energy, and creates new environmental jobs. The plan sets the ambitious goal of reducing the average amount of solid waste per day that each New Yorker produces by 85 percent by 2030.

#### **2011**

- DEC issues a statewide ban on the feeding of black bears in response to increasing conflicts between bears and people.

- DEC responds to severe flooding in northern and central New York caused by the combination of a snowy winter and relentless spring rains. DEC provides assistance to both prevent damage during the flooding and help with repairs and recovery.
- Improved water quality allows DEC to reopen more than 3,000 acres of marine waters off Long Island that had been closed to shellfishing for decades.

## 2012

- New York acquires 69,000 acres of the former Finch Paper lands and other Nature Conservancy lands throughout the Adirondacks.
- New York acquires a 2,146-acre parcel within the Adirondack Park to be added to the state's Forest Preserve, and a 651-acre parcel outside the park to become a new state forest.
- Under an agreement between DEC and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to improve the water quality of New York harbors, New York City pledges to invest approximately \$187 million over three years, and an estimated \$2.4 billion in public and private funding over the next 18 years to install green infrastructure technologies to manage stormwater before it enters the City's combined sewer system.
- A new law designed to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the state's waters, takes effect. The law limits the percentage of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers and restricts the time of year and locations where fertilizers can be used.
- The number of Spring wildfires decreased 60 percent from the previous 10-year average, a period before the 2010 burn ban was enacted.
- New York State and New York City renew a multi-state water management agreement to protect fisheries habitat in the Delaware River and mitigate peak flood levels, while preserving NYC's ability to provide sufficient, high-quality water to more than nine million City residents.
- New York becomes the first state in the nation to adopt regulations to analyze possible environmental impacts and limit CO2 emissions from power plants near at-risk communities.
- Two female lake sturgeon carrying eggs are discovered downstream of Oneida Lake; they are the first mature females found since state restoration work began nearly 20 years ago.
- A special youth firearms deer season is established for junior hunters ages 14 and 15 who possess a big game hunting license.

## 2013

- The first phase of the Sewage Pollution Right to Know Act, a system for collecting discharge reports of untreated and partially treated sewage released from public wastewater systems, takes effect on May 1.
- DEC permanently adopts recreational fishing rules for summer flounder (fluke), scup (porgy), and black sea bass.
- New York issues regulations that prohibit the importation of deer into the state that are susceptible to chronic wasting disease (CWD).
- To protect public health from potentially harmful levels of coliform bacteria found during routine water quality monitoring, DEC changes designated shellfishing areas for more than 3,500 acres of Long Island water.

- A newly enacted law requires manufacturers to collect and recycle mercury-containing thermostats at no cost to consumers to ensure that hazardous mercury is properly handled, preventing potential adverse health effects and damage to the environment.
- DEC purchases more than 3,500 acres of public land in the Catskill and Adirondack Forest Preserves, Columbia County, the Lake George area, and Oneida County.

## 2014

- DEC institutes a new computerized system for purchasing sporting licenses, registering for recreational marine fishing, and reporting game harvests.
- New York's 2013 hunting season had the lowest number of hunting-related shooting incidents to date, thanks in large part to DEC's Sportsman Education program.
- DEC issues a General Permit to allow the demolition of Hurricane Sandy-impacted homes adjacent to state-regulated freshwater wetlands, which will create open space to serve as buffers against future flooding.
- New York adopts updated fluke (summer flounder) rules to expand opportunities for state saltwater anglers, and potentially result in a 50 percent harvest increase.
- New state regulations require boaters to clean and drain boats prior to launching at or leaving DEC lands, an important step to prevent the spread of aquatic invasives.
- DEC and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets issue final regulations to prevent the spread of invasive species in NYS and to address the damage they cause.
- DEC issues final unit management plans for fire tower historic areas.
- DEC announces a new toll-free hotline to report poachers and polluters, which will help ECOs protect New York State's natural resources.
- DEC releases the Hudson River Estuary Habitat Restoration Plan to guide the actions of community groups, government agencies, scientists, and conservation organizations in sustaining priority habitats.

## 2015

- Following an extensive seven-year review, New York State officially prohibits high-volume hydraulic fracturing.
- The Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Management Plan, which provides a statewide framework for New York and its partners to address the threat presented by AIS, is completed and \$2 million in grants is available to organizations to prevent the spread of AIS.

## 2016

- The final Fisher Management Plan reflects changes based on biological data and input from trappers and will guide fisher management for the next 10 years.
- As a result of DEC's Innovative E-Waste Recycling Program, more than 318 million pounds of electronic waste are diverted from landfills and recycled since 2014.
- Funding up to \$500,000 is available for projects to assist communities in detecting, monitoring, and reporting combined sewer overflows to the public under the Sewage Pollution Right to Know Law.
- DEC denies the water quality certificate required for the proposed Constitution Pipeline.
- New legislation allows pharmacies to take back unused, unwanted, and expired drugs for proper disposal.



- New regulations for deer and bear hunting: increase opportunities for junior hunters to take bears; rescind an antlerless-only rule from 2015 in portions of southeastern New York and the Lake Plains; reduce antlerless harvests in two management units in the western Adirondacks; and clarify when special season tags may be used by bow and muzzleloader hunters.
- Stewart Air National Guard Base is declared a state Superfund site for PFOS contamination, and DEC acts to ensure continued clean drinking water for the City of Newburgh.
- DEC challenges the effectiveness of the EPA's remedy for cleanup of the Hudson River due to the continued presence of PCBs that threaten public health and the environment, and demands additional sampling.
- DEC and the DOH address water contamination in Hoosick Falls from PFOA.
- Outdoorspeople will have improved access and additional recreational opportunities on the recently purchased 20,758-acre Boreas Ponds Tract, the state's largest land acquisition in 100 years.
- DEC is part of a joint effort resulting in the largest seizure of illegal ivory in NYS history—from over a dozen slaughtered elephants-- valued at more than \$4.5 million.
- New York receives \$127.7 million from the “Volkswagen settlement” to dramatically increase the number of electric and clean vehicles in the state, which will help reduce NOx and greenhouse gas emissions.
- New York State issues a Pollinator Protection Plan and will use \$500,000 in EPF funds to protect and promote the recovery of the state's declining pollinator population, which includes bees, butterflies, hummingbirds.
- The State establishes the DEC- and DOH-led Water Quality Rapid Response Team to evaluate threats to drinking water supplies statewide.

## 2017

- DEC and NYS State Parks launch the First-Time Camper Program to encourage families to go camping.
- DEC launches the “Look for the Zero” campaign to encourage homeowners to buy phosphorus-free lawn fertilizer to help reduce nutrient runoff and combat harmful algal blooms.
- DEC activates a fleet of 22 drones that will be operated by trained DEC pilots in search-and-rescue missions, fighting forest fires, promoting forest health, and monitoring state lands and waters.
- New York passes \$2.5 billion Clean Water Infrastructure Act, funds will be invested in drinking water infrastructure, clean water infrastructure, and water quality protection.
- DEC begins an engineering investigation of an underground contamination plume from the U.S. Navy/Northrop Grumman property in Nassau County.
- DEC observes a record-breaking number of nesting pairs of bald eagles (~323) since 1976.
- The state completes the capping of the Onondaga Lake bottom.
- DEC launches the I Bird NY challenge to encourage New Yorkers of all ages to take up bird watching.

- DEC releases first-ever, comprehensive Ocean Action Plan to improve the health of ocean ecosystems and their capacity to provide sustainable benefits to New Yorkers.
- DEC confirms first infestation of hemlock woolly adelgid in the Adirondacks.
- Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program volunteers document harmful algal blooms (HABs) on all 11 Finger Lakes.
- DEC launches the Pilot Pharmaceutical Take-Back Program to reduce the amount of medications making their way into waterways.
- On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NYS's first recycling laws, the State strengthens solid waste regulations for the first time in 20 years.
- DEC adopts first-in-the-nation regulations requiring manufacturers to disclose ingredients in household cleaning products.
- New York releases the Methane Reduction Plan, which features 25 actions to reduce methane emissions from the landfill, oil and gas, and agricultural sectors.
- New York acquires more than 6,000 acres in Oswego County, the largest additions to state lands in Central New York in 45 years.
- DEC opens new \$8.9 million Visitor Center at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center.
- Under the Buffalo River Remedial Action Plan, DEC and partners substantially complete environmental dredging and capping of nearly one million cubic yards of contaminated sediments from the Buffalo River, triggering an urban renaissance of economic development and recreational uses along the river corridor.
- New York launches the Adventure NY initiative, a multi-year outdoor recreation campaign designed to connect New Yorkers with the state's outdoor destinations.

## 2018

- New York State releases the *Clean Transportation NY* plan, a strategy to invest \$127.7 million received in the 2016 Volkswagen settlement. The funds will be used to expand the use of clean and electric vehicles to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector.
- DEC holds four summits to create action plans for 12 lakes to combat harmful algal blooms and protect drinking water quality.
- DEC oversees the shutdown of the Tonawanda Coke facility, which had been cited multiple times for harmful emissions that affected the local community, including benzene.
- DEC amends management plans for High Peaks Wilderness and Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, following the addition of 80,000+ acres.
- DEC releases a Lake Sturgeon Recovery Plan.
- DEC reports zero hunting fatalities in the 2018 seasons.
- DEC bans the commercial harvest of diamondback terrapins.
- New York undertakes the largest expansion of artificial reefs in state history to improve New York's diverse marine life and boost Long Island's fishing industries.
- New York files lawsuit against six companies that manufactured aqueous foam containing PFOA/PFOS to hold the companies accountable and recover state costs and natural resource damages.

- DEC releases a study showing General Electric's cleanup of PCB contamination in the upper Hudson River is incomplete and not protective of public health and the environment. New York urges EPA to compel GE to complete a full cleanup.
- DEC adopts the first major update to the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) regulations in more than two decades, streamlining the environmental review process.
- New York petitions EPA under the federal Clean Air Act for its failure to address the movement of ozone from upwind states, and asks EPA to require power plants and large industrial sources in nine upwind states to reduce their emissions that impact New York.
- DEC denies Finger Lakes LPG Storage, LLC'S applications to construct and operate an underground liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) storage facility in Schuyler County on the grounds the facility would have a significant adverse impact on community character.
- DEC creates an Ocean Acidification Task Force to assess impacts of acidification on the ecological, economic, and recreational health of New York's coastal waters; identify contributing factors; and recommend actions to reduce negative impacts.

## 2019

- New York bans the sale of single-use plastic bags in New York, starting in March 2020, a significant step to reduce pollution and protect fish and wildlife.
- The State launches the NYHABs online map and reporting system to inform public about the location of harmful algal blooms and encourage reporting.
- DEC hosts the WomenHuntFish photo contests to encourage more females to become anglers and hunters.
- DEC opens Frontier Town Campground, a gateway to the Adirondacks.
- DEC ECO's announce the largest seizure of illegal reptiles in state history (292 animals).
- New York enacts legislation banning offshore drilling in New York State waters, barring the state from granting permits for drilling, or oil or gas exploration in offshore areas controlled by the state.
- DEC adopts regulations requiring all power plants in New York to meet new emissions limits for carbon dioxide. This first-in-the-nation approach to regulating carbon emissions will end the use of coal in New York State power plants by the end of 2020.
- New York settles one of the state's largest environmental enforcement actions in state history, requiring the FMC Corporation to clean up arsenic and other hazardous contamination in and around its facility in Middleport, Niagara County, and pay \$2.4 million in penalties and \$1 million for an environmental benefit project.
- New York executes the nation's largest offshore wind agreement and the single largest renewable energy procurement by any state in U.S. history—nearly 1,700 megawatts—which will create enough energy to power more than 1 million homes.
- Following a state-of-the-art air quality study in Albany's South End community, DEC announces new, state-led actions to help address air pollution in the area, an Environmental Justice community.
- DEC files a lawsuit against the International Joint Commission for its mismanagement of Lake Ontario water levels, which caused significant flood damage to shoreline communities.

- New York enacts the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, codifying the State's Green New Deal nation-leading clean energy target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent from 1990 levels by 2050.
- New York helps to establish the U.S. Climate Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of states committed to uphold the Paris Agreement goals and reduce greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent by 2025 (compared to 2005 levels).
- DEC denies a Water Quality Certification for the proposed Northeast Supply Enhancement pipeline project, finding that the project failed to meet water quality standards.
- In response to historic flooding on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, New York undertakes the Resilience and Economic Development Initiative, committing over \$300 million to flood and erosion mitigation, economic recovery, and resilience of shoreline properties.
- DEC charges Cattaraugus County man with more than 300 counts in connection with the illegal possession and sale of wildlife, resulting in the largest seizure of illegal reptiles in state history.
- DEC confirms the discovery of a self-sustaining brook trout population in Lake Colden, an Adirondack lake that had been deemed "fishless" for decades due to acid rain. The discovery is attributed to improved water quality as a result of the state's rigorous standards to prevent the pollution that causes acid rain.
- DEC launches DECinfo Locator, an interactive map that provides easy public access to DEC documents and data about New York's environment and outdoor recreation resources, including water and air permits, enforcement actions, recreational assets, environmental education facilities, and sites in the State Superfund and Brownfield Cleanup programs.