

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 newly created agency not only assumed responsibility for existing water quality programs, such as water treatment plants, but was in the forefront of creating programs to deal with emerging issues like air pollution and solid and hazardous waste. Important steps were taken in planning for, and acquiring, land to be protected. Relationships were formed among government agencies and between government and the private sector to cooperatively improve the environment. Important legislation was passed and long-term funding sources for environmental purposes were begun. Milestones include:

1970

- April 22, the first Earth Day, legislation is signed merging the duties of the Conservation Department with some programs of the departments of Health, Agriculture and Markets and some state commissions to create the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). DEC is one of the first state agencies specifically formed to oversee environmental concerns, and it precedes the formation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by more than six months.
- July 1, DEC opens its doors and immediately begins to wrestle with urgent problems of the day, like the health risks of using pesticides, mercury pollution, solid waste management and recycling, flood protection, and recreational access to wilderness areas.
- The federal Clean Air Act sets national, health-based standards for air pollutants and auto emissions, requiring states to submit air quality plans.
- The first New York State endangered species list is created.

1971

- New York State bans DDT. The widely used pesticide was found to cause cancer and accumulate in the food chain, posing a risk to public health and the environment. 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.
- EPA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development take their first steps in protecting children's health through lead-based paint prevention activities, including detection and treatment of lead-based paint poisoning, limiting lead use in certain consumer items, and banning the use of lead-based interior paints in residences built or renovated by the federal government.
- 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) from peace officer to police officer status, with authority to enforce all New York State laws. DEC's first 240-officer force is trained at the State Police Academy.

1972

- The federal government passes the Clean Water Act.
- To address raw sewage flowing into the nation's rivers, lakes and streams, EPA embarks on a major national commitment to build an advanced network of sewage treatment facilities. In New York State, the Construction Grants Program begins to allot the billions of dollars needed for construction of most the state's wastewater infrastructure.
- The U.S. and Canada sign the International Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to begin cleanup of the Great Lakes, which contain 95 percent of the nation's fresh water.
- The Environmental Quality Bond Act to fund land acquisition, solid waste aid, sewage treatment, air pollution control and resource recovery is approved by voters.
- Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar is dedicated.

1973

- New York State bans phosphorus in all cleaning products but dishwashing detergents in response to water pollution concerns. High levels of phosphates prior to the ban led to green water caused by excessive aquatic growth, especially in Great Lakes Erie and Ontario.
- Federal Endangered Species Act protects habitat for plants and wildlife.
- State controls established on use of tidal wetlands.
- EPA begins the ban that will phase out all 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 by helping to reduce blood lead levels by 75 percent.

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

- 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, protecting wetlands, in recognition of their important role in surface and ground water 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.
- The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) passes, requiring expanded environmental review of projects undertaken by state and local governments.
- Car makers begin installing catalytic converters in new motor vehicles to meet EPA emission standards designed to protect public health from harmful air pollution.

1976

- Bald eagle restoration begins.
- DEC moves to prevent General Electric Company from discharging PCBs into the Hudson River.
- The insecticide Mirex is discovered in Lake Ontario fish, leading to closure of lake fishery.
- 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.
- The federal Toxic Substances Control Act passes and EPA begins efforts to protect public health through controls on toxic chemicals.

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.
- Osprey restoration begins 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 is also given the authority to oversee inactive hazardous waste sites.
- The Division of Law Enforcement creates a K-9 Program with one officer and one German shepherd. By 2010, the program grows to eight K-9 teams stationed throughout the state.
- EPA and other federal agencies ban the use of CFCs as a propellant in most aerosol cans.

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 the streams, rivers, lakes and marine waters of New York State.
- DEC works with Vermont and Quebec to restore trout and salmon fisheries in Lake Champlain.
- Sport falconry is legalized.
- Fishers are reintroduced into the Catskills.
- Roughly, 134,000 acres of land are purchased by the state or otherwise protected, including the 12,500-acre Santanoni Preserve; 7,100 acres in Long Island Pine Barrens; 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 to improve urban areas.
- DEC begins a new era of Great Lakes fisheries management with 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

The 1980s begin with protecting the athletes and the environment during the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid. It continues with expanded attention focused on environmental areas hardly even considered in prior decades; for example, what to do about hazardous wastes and

the issue of acid rain. DEC continues its tradition of excellence in forestry, fish and wildlife programs. A new bond act is passed, which provides funding for DEC to continue its work in land acquisition and waste management. Several important pieces of legislation are passed building upon environmental progress made in the 1970s. Milestones include:

1980

- DEC-operated winter sports facilities at Lake Placid host the Winter Olympics. ECOs perform security details and other DEC personnel work to minimize the impact of the games on the environment.
- 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.

1981

- New York State Coastal Erosion Law provides protection for shoreline erosion-hazard areas.
- Enhanced oil and gas well programs are implemented to improve safety and protect surface and groundwater resources.

1982

- The Division of Law Enforcement creates the Bureau of Environmental Conservation Investigations to conduct investigations of inactive hazardous waste dump sites and transportation and disposal of hazardous waste. The bureau's name was later changed to the Bureau of Environmental Crimes Investigations.
- Return A Gift to Wildlife program begins, enabling New Yorkers to voluntarily contribute to DEC's Conservation Fund through personal income tax returns.
- The "Bottle Bill" is passed, requiring deposits on certain beverage containers in order 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 in site cleanups.
- Falcons nest in New York City after a 20-year absence.

1984

- New York passes the nation's first legislation to address the problem of "acid rain" from in-state sources of air pollution.
- 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 for 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. EPA begins efforts to prevent such contamination and require treatment of hazardous wastes prior to land disposal.
- DEC assumes responsibility for the oil and hazardous substance spill program from the Department of Transportation and sets up a statewide, toll-free information line for spill reporting.

1985

- 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.
- After British scientists report a giant hole in the Earth's protective atmospheric ozone layer, EPA joins an international convention in Vienna calling for worldwide cooperative efforts to eliminate use of substances that deplete the ozone layer.

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.
- Reinstein Woods is acquired by New York State; DEC later builds an environmental education center there.
- Public concern about explosions and leaks of toxic chemicals, such as occurred in Bhopal, India in 1984, 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.

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.
- The 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 and sets 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 production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), linked to destruction of the protective atmospheric ozone layer.
- From March until October, the Mobro 4000, which would come to be known as the infamous "garbage barge," began its odyssey from New York to ports in the U.S. and even as far as the Central American country of Belize without being allowed to unload its rotting cargo. The widely publicized incident led to significant improvements in solid waste management.
- 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, with 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.
- Virtually all U.S. cities have either built, or committed to build, sewage treatment plants, resulting in rivers and lakes safe for swimming and commercial and recreational fishing.
- The Solid Waste Management Act is passed, providing grants for municipal solid waste projects and recycling programs, and creating the Bureau of Waste Reduction, Reuse and Recycling at DEC. The bureau's name states the order of priority before waste is considered for incineration or being sent to a landfill.
- New York's solid waste regulations are revised and enhanced, including provisions for recycling, composting, solid waste transfer, beneficial uses of solid waste, waste-to-energy and landfills. As a result, New York's regulations become one of the nation's most comprehensive set of requirements for solid waste management facilities. Aerial surveys record the largest number of nesting ospreys in Long Island since restoration began in 1977.
- New York passes laws on infectious medical waste, which are later broadened to include all medical waste.

1989

- DEC and the Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) begin providing low-interest loans to local governments for projects to protect drinking water supplies and prevent water pollution through the New York State Revolving Fund (SRF).
- 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 bodies of the fish of those waters.
- New York State ends operation of 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 closure of landfills will take place in New York State.
- DEC requires 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 reaches its goal of 10 nesting pairs.
- The Exxon Valdez runs aground, spilling millions of gallons of crude oil from the Alaska Oil Pipeline into Prince William Sound causing the largest oil spill in American waters to that point.

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; receipt of Reinstein Woods in Western NY as a gift; Sloop Hill in Orange County; 14,400 acres of land and 40,000 acres of easements on Diamond International lands in 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 and efforts 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. Milestones include:

1990

- New York City signs an agreement with the state to clean up, improve operations, and submit an application to operate Fresh Kills Landfill; at this time, the largest landfill in the country.
- EPA develops and implements new Clean Air Act amendments under which 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 State 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, so more post-consumer materials can be recycled without health and safety concerns.

1991

- Significant amendments to the Mined Land Reclamation Law are enacted to reduce litigation. The amendments also establish annual regulatory fees and encourage more effective reclamation.
- The use of lead shot is prohibited for waterfowl hunting in New York State.
- DEC estimates the coyote population in New York State at 18,000.
- Governor Mario Cuomo issues an executive order directing all state agencies to reduce the amount of solid waste they generate, to recycle recoverable material from solid waste, and to buy recycled products as much as possible.

1992

- The first NYS Open Space Plan is signed, forming the blueprint for acquisition of unique and environmentally sensitive lands for protection.
- New York City signs an agreement with the state to design and build Combined Sewer Overflow abatement facilities.
- New York State adopts California's stringent vehicle emissions standards. In addition, federal Clean Air Act Amendments require DEC to bring air quality for the entire state up to EPA standards, and to control urban smog, acid rain, toxics and stack emission pollution.
- DEC, in a cooperative effort with the 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

- The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) is created. EPF generates millions of dollars in support of state and local programs to preserve open spaces, farmland, coastlines and

municipal parks. Funds are also provided for closing landfills and improving recycling programs.

- Zebra mussels are discovered in Lake Champlain and DEC releases a comprehensive aquatic invasive species management plan the same year.
- DEC and the Lake George Park Commission reach an agreement on oversight of Lake George water levels.
- DEC, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Adirondack Council sue EPA over an amendment that would weaken the Clean Air Act.

1994

- Active landfills in New York State drop from more than 500 in 1984 to about 50.
- DEC presents its first annual Governor's Pollution Prevention Awards.
- 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 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, ranking it as one of the largest natural resource damages settlements in the nation at that time.

1995

- Special migratory bird commemoratives are issued to mark 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 the five years of the project, 270 North American river otters will be released in Central and Western New York, where they had been absent for more than 100 years due to loss of habitat, water pollution, and unregulated hunting and trapping.
- Governor Pataki 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 the major Long Island Central Pine Barrens wildfire called the Sunrise Fire because it burned on both sides of the Sunrise Highway. No lives were lost and the fire was successfully controlled after burning more than 3,000 acres.
- A series of severe thunderstorms blow down thousands of trees in and around the Five Ponds Wilderness area in the Adirondacks. DEC decides not to allow timber salvage over concern about the additional damage salvage operations would cause. The incident 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.
- 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 for various environmental projects including land acquisition, clean water and air, dam safety and flood control projects, historic preservation and brownfields redevelopment.
- Poisonous invasive plant, giant hogweed, is discovered growing near Buffalo.
- The state enacts the Pesticide Reporting Law requiring that commercial businesses licensed to apply these potentially hazardous substances report which ones they are using and post signs 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 which forms the basis for protecting the watershed the city relies on for clean water.
- The Mined Land Reclamation Award Program is created to recognize reclamation efforts above and beyond regulatory requirements.
- The New York State Bird Conservation Area (BCA) Program is created 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.
- Lyme disease pathogen is found to be endemic in the southern counties of the Adirondacks.

1999

- A special SPDES permit category is created for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) to ensure proper management of agricultural waste from large livestock facilities.
- The Office of Environmental Justice is established to address environmental concerns in underserved areas and ensure equality in community participation in the state's environmental permitting process.
- High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan is approved after 21 years of study.
- Governor Pataki directs DEC to mandate that utilities cut sulfur- and nitrogen-oxide emissions by 50 percent. These two chemical compounds are major components of acid rain, smog and ozone.

- New York's Natural Heritage Program develops a list of the state's rare plants.
- 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.
- The Division of Lands and Forests develops a Geographic Information System (GIS) as a powerful planning and data-gathering tool.
- DEC works with citizen task forces to set deer population objectives for deer management units.
- DEC establishes the Natural Resources Damages Unit to recover damages caused by polluters and invest in natural resource restoration projects.
- New York takes over stormwater discharge control programs from EPA. With the cleanup of big sources of water pollution by sewage treatment plants, many remaining water quality problems can be attributed to more widespread discharges.
- DEC starts the Voluntary Cleanup Program to encourage private parties to voluntarily 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 with 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. Milestones include:

2000

- The Deer Management Assistance Program is created to help landowners control deer populations.
- To foster greater protection of rare native plants, New York State adopts a revised rare plant list.
- New York State enacts the Pesticide Neighbor Notification Law.
- DEC destroys 175,000 rainbow trout infected with whirling disease.
- For the first time, a state forest ranger is assigned to patrol the New York City metropolitan area.
- Public meetings are held to explore the feasibility of establishing swimming beaches along the Hudson River.

- DEC releases a revised management plan for historic Camp Santanoni in the Adirondacks.
- 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.
- Governor George Pataki issues Executive Order 111 directing 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), a public-private partnership that invests in New York land trusts. Through grants from the Environmental Protection Fund to land trusts, this pioneering initiative leverages conservation funding and helps communities conserve environmentally significant land across New York.

2003

- Passage and signing of the State Superfund/Brownfields Act helps DEC establish a new Brownfields Cleanup Program, making \$120 million available annually to help clean up unused or abandoned former industrial areas, returning them to productive use.
- The State Waste Tire Management and Recycling Act is passed. By 2009, 26.5 million waste tires are 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, as well as protecting public health from 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 ground water sources.

- The Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites becomes available online as a searchable database.
- The Environmental Excellence Awards (EEA) program begins, recognizing businesses, organizations, local governments and individuals that excel in innovative and sustainable environmental practices and partnerships.
- All but one New York State sewage treatment plant achieves the secondary treatment requirements of the Clean Water Act.
- DEC adopts regulations to help carry out the goals of the governor's Acid Deposition Reduction Program (ADRP), requiring selected electric power generators to reduce sulfur dioxide levels to 50 percent below federal standards by 2007, and extending controls on nitrogen oxides.
- New York State adopts a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) with the goal of increasing the amount of electricity from renewable sources delivered to New York consumers to 25 percent by 2013.
- 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, prohibiting the sale of many additional mercury-containing products.

2005

- Two cases of chronic wasting disease (CWD), fatal to deer, elk and moose, are discovered in a captive deer herd in Oneida County. DEC immediately imposes emergency regulations and begins taking samples to determine if the disease has spread to wild deer.
- 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.
- Legislation is passed to promote pollution prevention as a means for achieving broad environmental objectives.
- New York and six other northeastern states join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to create the nation's first market-based, cap-and-trade system for reducing 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 about 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 in November to stop the spread of the disease.
- Floods ravage many communities in New York State. In the Upper Susquehanna River Basin, cooperative maintenance of the levee system by DEC and the Army Corps of Engineers prevent an estimated \$360 million in damage.
- Water quality in the lower Oswego River and harbor at the Lake Ontario outlet improves. It is the first of 43 places in the Great Lakes watershed delisted as an "area of concern" for meeting the water-quality improvement goals established by the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and federal Clean Water Act.
- DEC and the 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 of increasing amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere from human-caused sources.
- New York State reaches and surpasses the goal, established in 1995 by then-Governor George Pataki, 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 acts to keep people from unintentionally spreading the disease, working 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 Pollution Prevention Institute is launched.
- Belleayre Mountain Ski Center hosts a record 182,000 skiers during the 2007-2008 season.
- 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.
- DEC's use of renewable energy at its facilities exceeds 35 percent.
- The Great Lakes 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 invasive species.
- State Forests managed by DEC are audited and found to 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 longhorned beetle.
- Governor David Paterson signs the Junior Hunter Mentoring Program law, 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; the previous minimum age was 16.
- 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 more 30 years ago in 1979.
- Governor David Paterson issues an executive order requiring agencies and authorities to reduce energy consumption and solid waste generation; prevent air and water pollution; and make buying decisions that minimize impacts to the environment. The order also requires agencies to implement programs to reduce the health and environmental impacts of state operations.

2009

- One of the biggest environmental dredging projects ever undertaken in the United States, removal of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from the Hudson River, begins.
- The ban on open burning of trash and debris is expanded to all areas of the state to improve air quality and reduce one of the major causes of wildfires in New York.
- The inaugural members of the New York Environmental Leaders (NYEL) program are named to recognize and provide incentives to organizations that demonstrate leadership in the use of pollution prevention practices.
- 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 Randolph, Cattaraugus County. DEC and the Department of Agriculture and Markets impose a quarantine restricting the movement of ash trees, ash products and firewood of all tree species to reduce the likelihood of spreading the pest.
- Governor David Paterson issues Executive Order No. 24, setting 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, resulting from concerns about proper maintenance of aging privately owned dams.
- The Bottle Bill is amended to include a deposit on water bottles, as bottled waters are now a significant share of the beverage market.
- Twelve brownfield sites are returned to productive use after DEC completes cleanups, increasing the number of cleaned-up sites to 68 since the Brownfield Cleanup Program began in 2003.
- A record 72 territorial pairs of endangered peregrine falcons are reported in New York State, attesting to the success of restoration efforts that began in the mid-1970s.

The Second Decade of the 21st Century

DEC tackles urgent issues like preparing for the effects of climate change and controlling invasive species as the agency celebrates 40 years of dedication to protecting the environment. Major successes like preserving the last two undeveloped Finger Lakes are tempered by the loss of two environmental education centers due to austerity measures. New York continues to lead in reducing CO₂ emissions from power plants and programs like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) serve as an example of how collaboration with other states, agencies and non-profit groups will be increasingly necessary for DEC to fulfill its mission as future environmental challenges unfold during uncertain economic times.

2010

- In celebration of DEC's 40th anniversary, the agency's commissioner tours the state, highlighting the many environmental accomplishments DEC has helped make possible since its creation in 1970.
- New York's Invasive Species Council implements the first state classification system of non-native plants and animals to help prevent the spread of invasive species.
- Nine waterbodies in three regions are delisted from the state's Impaired Waterbodies List after DEC finds significant improvements in their water quality.
- After nearly five years and more than 30,000 deer samples with no additional cases of chronic wasting disease (CWD) detected in New York, it appears the disease was successfully prevented from becoming established in the wild.
- 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.
- Austerity measures caused by a large state budget deficit lead to the closing of Stony Kill Farm and Rogers environmental education centers. Only two centers, Five Rivers and Reinstein Woods, remain. Some wilderness trails and campgrounds are also closed to save on staffing and maintenance costs.
- DEC adopts a policy requiring some power and industrial plants to use closed-loop cooling systems, reducing incidental fish kills by more than 90 percent.
- RGGI member states hold their 10th auction of "carbon credits." Since 2008, proceeds from the 10 auctions have totaled about \$777 million. New York's share is approximately \$282 million for investment in programs to save consumers money, benefit the environment and build a clean-energy economy.
- EPA issues more stringent vehicle emission standards following the lead of 14 states, including New York.
- Rechargeable Battery Recycling Act becomes law, requiring manufacturers of some rechargeable batteries to collect and recycle the batteries statewide in a manufacturer-funded program at no cost to consumers.
- 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

- Responding to ever-increasing use of the Internet, DEC launches an online version of its Turn In Poachers and Polluters (TIPP) hotline, previously available only by phone
- DEC issues a statewide ban on the feeding of black bears in response to increasing conflicts between bears and people.
- The United Nations declares the International Year of Forests, highlighting and encouraging efforts to sustainably manage global forest resources.
- Meltwater from a snowy winter combines with relentless spring rains to bring severe flooding to several counties in northern and central New York. DEC provides assistance to both prevent damage during and help with repairs after flooding.
- Improved water quality allows DEC to reopen more than 3,000 acres of marine waters closed to shellfishing for decades on Long Island.
- Based on the number of hunting-related shooting incidents reported, the 2011 season tied with 2009 for New York State's safest year of hunting, thanks in part to DEC's free Sportsman Education courses.

2012

- Regulations for chronic wasting disease (CWD) are amended to prohibit the importation of certain parts of white-tailed deer taken in the state of Maryland, where the disease was first reported in 2011. Emergency regulations prohibit importing certain parts of white-tailed deer and American elk from Pennsylvania.
- Acquisition of 69,000 acres of the former Finch Paper lands and other Nature Conservancy lands throughout the Adirondacks announced.
- New York acquired 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 following modification of a Forest Conservation Easement allowing continued leasing of up to 220 camps.
- Under an agreement between NYSDEC and NYCDEP to improve the quality of New York harbor waters, New York City is investing approximately \$187 million for the next three years and an estimated \$2.4 billion in public and private funding during the next 18 years to install green infrastructure technologies to manage stormwater before it enters the city's combined sewer system.
- The 2012 Winter Bat Survey offers encouraging observations from the five hibernation caves in the greater Albany area, where numbers of little brown bats are stabilizing and, in three caves, increasing.
- Larvae of the emerald ash borer (EAB), an invasive insect, is found in 13 counties in New York State.
- To reduce the quantity of phosphorus entering the state's waters, a new state law limits the percentage of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers and restricts the time of year and locations where fertilizers can be used.

- Spring wildfires are down 60 percent from the previous 10-year average prior to the 2010 burn ban.
- 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 New Yorkers.
- Regulations to analyze possible environmental impacts and limit CO2 emissions from power plants near at-risk communities are the first in the country required for siting new major electric-generating facilities or expanding existing facilities.
- Two female lake sturgeon are discovered carrying eggs downstream of Oneida Lake; they are the first mature females found since state restoration work began nearly 20 years ago.
- The presence of the invasive spiny water flea—which feeds on tiny crustaceans and other zooplankton that are foods for fish and other native aquatic organisms—is confirmed in Lake George.
- New, special youth firearms deer season established for junior hunters ages 14 and 15 with a big game hunting license.
- Due to catastrophic damage caused by Hurricane Sandy, the state implements a Breach Contingency Plan for Long Island's barrier beaches. Resources and emergency permits are provided to affected communities across the state.
- A collaborative recovery effort returns the endangered gilt darter to the Allegheny River—the first time this fish has been in state waters in 75 years.
- After nearly a 30-year absence, deepwater ciscoes—or “bloaters” fish—are reintroduced into Lake Ontario to improve food web stability and mitigate the negative impacts of invasive species.

2013

- The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program—founded by The Nature Conservancy's Adirondack Chapter, the state Departments of Environmental Conservation and Transportation, and the Adirondack Park Agency—receives the 2013 National Invasive Species Awareness Week Award in the category of Outstanding Achievement in Invasive Species Leadership.
- New trout fishing opportunities on waters of former Finch Pruyn Paper lands are now open to anglers.
- The first phase of the Sewage Pollution Right to Know Act, a system for collecting discharge reports of untreated and partially treated sewage from public wastewater systems, becomes effective on May 1.
- New state record for brook trout: 6-pound, 22.5-inch brook trout in Silver Lake (Hamilton County) on May 16.
- DEC permanently adopts recreational fishing rules for summer flounder (fluke), scup (porgy) and black sea bass, which are less restrictive and specify changes to minimum size and possession limits, and to open season for all three species.
- Researchers from Cornell University and the USGS capture two wild juvenile sturgeon in two different locations, signifying another milestone in the state's lake sturgeon restoration efforts.

- Amended regulations applicable throughout the state now ban the importation, possession, and sale of live bighead carp—an invasive species that threatens aquatic communities in New York.
- The Hudson River Estuary Program and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission award hundreds of thousands in grants for projects to enhance watershed resiliency in the face of climate change, improve the environmental health of the Hudson estuary, support research into effective shoreline protection strategies in New York City, and help mitigate the impacts of flooding.
- A new policy makes it easier for companies to protect the environment and will reward those who perform environmental audits, voluntarily report violations and prevent pollution.
- To ensure a balanced ecosystem and maintain a healthy deer population for sportsmen and sportswomen who contribute to the state’s economy, regulations issued to prohibit the importation of deer into the state that are susceptible to the always fatal 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.
- Type E botulism again struck the eastern basin of Lake Ontario this fall resulting in significant mortality of migrating waterbirds, including at least 200-300 common loons, as well as long-tailed ducks, grebes and gulls.
- Effective July 2014, a new law will require 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.
- More than 3500 acres of public land is purchased by DEC in the Catskill and Adirondack Forest Preserves, Columbia County, Lake George area, and Oneida County.

2014

- DEC’s new computerized system for purchasing sporting licenses, registering for recreational marine fishing and reporting game harvests is fully operational.
- The 2013 New York hunting season had the lowest number of hunting-related shooting incidents on record, thanks in large part to DEC’s Sportsman Education program.
- DEC issues a General Permit for the demolition of Sandy-impacted homes adjacent to state-regulated freshwater wetlands; open space will be created to serve as buffers against future flooding.
- State and federal agencies partner to update emergency response plans to better protect New Yorkers from potential disasters.
- Hunting or trapping of wild boars in NYS is prohibited due to a new DEC regulation designed to eradicate them statewide.
- New York adopts updated fluke rules to expand opportunities for state saltwater anglers, which should result in a 50 percent harvest increase.
- DEC adopts a black bear management plan following public comment period.
- DEC and the USGS begin a three-year cooperative study of Mohawk River fish species to better understand how changes in the river may have impacted them, and to identify

management practices that could lessen anticipated effects of factors like invasive species and climate change.

- New state regulations require boaters to clean and drain boats prior to launching at or leaving DEC lands, to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.
- DEC finalizes rule changes to implement a new crossbow hunting law to ensure that the crossbow is a legal implement for fall 2014 hunting seasons.
- DEC and Agriculture and Markets issue final regulations to prevent the spread of invasive species in NYS and to address the damage they cause.
- DEC breaks ground on the Maurice D. Hinchey Catskill Interpretive Center, which is funded by state and federal sources.
- DEC receives an award from the NY Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association for improvements to the environmental review process which make it easier for applicants and reviewers to complete the forms required for the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process.
- The presence of the destructive southern pine beetle is confirmed in three locations along the southern shore of Long Island—its first known appearance in New York State.
- The invasive emerald ash borer is confirmed in Broome and Westchester counties through DEC's 2014 trapping program.
- DEC amends the state's chronic wasting disease regulations in response to the discovery of CWD in Ohio and urges New York hunters to review CWD information before hunting deer out of state.
- DEC issues final unit management plans for fire tower historic areas.
- DEC announces a new toll-free hotline for reporting poachers and polluters to 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.
- The State Department of Health completes a review of high-volume hydraulic fracturing, recommending the activity should not move forward.
- DEC announces revisions to the state's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, which will help target conservation efforts to improve habitat and maintain healthy ecosystems.
- DEC established a Capital Region task force to battle the invasive emerald ash borer.

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.
- Found alongside a road in Henrietta, Monroe County, a deceased bald eagle wears a leg band whose number indicates the bird was 38 years old-five years older than the oldest banded bald eagle previously encountered to date nationwide.

- The state's Coastal Green Infrastructure Plan for New York City outlines how to use natural features to protect the city and increase resiliency along coastal areas and the Hudson River estuary shoreline.
- DEC adopts the most stringent liquefied natural gas regulations in the nation.
- Due to deterioration and a greatly expanded crack in the historic Balmville Tree—a particularly large eastern cottonwood that began growing since before 1699—DEC determines that it is a threat to public safety and must be removed.
- New regulations are adopted to address deer populations in portions of the state with too many or too few deer, and several modifications are made to DEC's Deer Management Assistance Program to ease the application process for landowners and provide greater flexibility for DEC to administer the program.
- The \$1.3 million Maurice D. Hinchey Catskill Interpretive Center officially opens.
- A new solid waste management initiative will assist local governments in achieving efficiencies by sharing experiences and, when possible, coordinating operations.
- DEC announces approval of the final 158 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST), which routes the NST through the Adirondack Park and incorporates the National Scenic Trail into the state's Adirondack trail system as part of a projected 4,600-mile trail extending to North Dakota.
- In support of the state's post-Sandy strategy, approximately \$2.2 million in new competitive grant funding is available to help communities in the Hudson River estuary improve recreational access and estuary education, design projects to increase resiliency to flooding, protect water quality and enhance natural resources.
- DEC foresters and the Northeast Compact Education Team join forces to combat the southern pine beetle on Long Island, and \$1 million federal grant to support replanting of trees destroyed on Long Island by Asian long-horned beetle.
- DEC announces zero hunting fatalities reported in the 2015 season, marking a growing trend of improved hunter safety.

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.

As part of its deer management efforts, DEC encourages hunters to voluntarily pass up shooting younger bucks to increase the availability of older and larger bucks in the future.

DEC announces \$1.8 million in Conservation Partnership Program grants to land trusts to boost tourism, protect farmland and increase public access for recreation.

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.

DEC announces that green practices at state agencies, especially OPRHP and the Jacob K. Javits Center, led to \$15.6 million in cost savings and protecting the environment.

The presence of the emerald ash borer in Waterford and Ballston Lake, Saratoga County, is confirmed.

The NYS Senate confirms Basil Seggos as DEC's 15th commissioner.

New legislation allows pharmacies to take back unused, unwanted and expired drugs for proper disposal.

NYS completes a bald eagle conservation plan.

Regulations are adopted for the Atlantic Ocean surfclam fishery to ensure consistency with harvest management measures of the state's Atlantic Ocean Surfclam Fishery Management Plan.

Amendments to the Brownfield Cleanup Program define the terms "affordable housing project" and "underutilized" as part of the eligibility requirements for tangible property tax credits for brownfields in New York City, and amend the existing definition of a "brownfield site" to comply with changes enacted to the Brownfield Cleanup Program law in 2015.

The deadly oak tree disease, oak wilt, is detected in the Canandaigua, Ontario County; the borough of Brooklyn, Kings County; and in the Towns of Babylon, Islip, Riverhead, and Southold in Suffolk County.

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 USEPA'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.

Court upholds DEC's continuing construction of snowmobile trails in the Forest Preserve.

DEC calls on USEPA to improve national air emission and fuel standards to protect public health and the environment.

The largest seizure of illegal ivory in NYS history—from over a dozen slaughtered elephants—is valued at more than \$4.5 million.