



The Environmental Justice Report

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Department of Environmental Conservation

UPDATES TO ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW REGULATIONS

The DEC is currently proposing amendments to the regulations that implement the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). SEQR requires state and local government agencies to consider the environmental impacts of all projects and actions that may be approved, funded, or undertaken. SEQR benefits the public in many ways and provides opportunities for the public to meaningfully participate in the state or local government decision-making process.

The proposed changes will streamline the environmental quality review process to make it more efficient without sacrificing environmental protection and community involvement. Potential changes include:

1. Making scoping (the identification of a project's impact) mandatory for Draft Environmental Impact Statements (DEIS).
2. Requiring all Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) to include discussions of measures to avoid or reduce environmental impacts that may contribute to climate change effects such as flooding.
3. Expanding the number of actions that will require an EIS.
4. Adding certain types of projects to the list of actions that do not require an environmental assessment or EIS.

For more information on SEQR, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/357.html>.

More information, including the draft generic EIS, can be found on DEC's website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/83389.html>

ALBANY SOUTH END NEIGHBORHOOD AIR QUALITY INITIATIVE

As part of its mission to protect New Yorkers from pollution, DEC invested \$500,000 from the State's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) for a comprehensive air monitoring program in Albany's South End Community in 2016. This program, the most thorough air monitoring effort taken anywhere in the state, was conceived in response to air quality concerns of residents living near the Port of Albany. The community was specifically alarmed about multiple potential sources of air pollutants associated with the transportation and storage of crude oil in the area, as well as the neighborhoods' proximity to an active port and diesel truck traffic.

The overall goal of this intensive year-long study is to provide a full picture of the levels of air pollutants of concern in this community, including: how traffic



Example of a fixed air monitoring shelter which will monitor and record levels of particulate matter, gaseous chemicals, and track wind direction and speed.

affects pollutant levels, how the concentration of traffic pollutants changes as you move farther away from roads, and how emission sources contribute to benzene concentrations. DEC and the community will use the results of the study to evaluate air quality concerns and identify possible steps to address those findings.

DEC will monitor the following pollutants:

- Particulate Matter (PM) - tiny particles and liquid droplets that get into the air. Once inhaled, these particles can affect the heart and lungs, and cause health effects such as chronic bronchitis and decreased lung function, particularly for people with asthma. PM comes from a variety of sources such as vehicles, factories and construction sites, and may vary in size.

- Gaseous Chemicals – nitrogen oxides (NOx) and benzene.

- NOx may be colorless and odorless, and is produced by the burning of coal, oil, and gas. NOx can cause respiratory problems and is an ingredient in ground level ozone and smog. Ground level ozone can make it harder to breathe for people with asthma or other breathing disorders.

- Benzene is a colorless liquid with a sweet odor. It gets into the air from natural and industrial sources, including forest fires, tobacco smoke, gasoline, and car exhaust. Breathing in air with high levels of benzene over a long period of time can lead to blood-related health problems.

DEC will install a state-of-the-art, fixed monitoring shelter to observe and record particulate matter, gaseous chemicals, and wind speed and direction. Smaller fixed monitors will be installed in two neighborhoods away from the port and highway to record background pollution levels, which will be compared to levels at the port. The study will also use a network of samplers for benzene. Additionally, DEC will roll out mobile particulate monitoring equipment

staff will use to conduct street-by-street sampling in the South End community.

Governor Cuomo recently championed a new \$2 million investment from the EPF for targeted air monitoring and mitigation activities in “hot spots” throughout the state. Working to complement Operation ECO-Quality, a DEC program that works with small businesses in EJ communities to improve compliance with all environmental regulations, these future efforts will help to develop appropriate measures to upgrade air quality and reduce public health risks.

For more information on the Albany South End Neighborhood Air Quality Initiative please visit: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/108978.html>.

DEC IN YOUR CORNER: FITZGERALD DRUMMOND

Fitzgerald Drummond, a senior lab equipment designer in DEC's Division of Air Resources (DAR) since 1999, operates and maintains air monitoring devices in downtown Albany. These devices

check for particulate matter 2.5 (PM_{2.5}) and gaseous criteria pollutants, i.e. ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and carbon monoxide. He also manually collects filter-based PM_{2.5}, lead and acid deposition samples for laboratory analysis and pollution monitoring.

“The numbers are there, the science is there,” said Fitzgerald, highlighting how important it is to understand the impacts air pollution has on people's health.

Fitzgerald actively serves in the U.S. National Guard as a First Sergeant of a helicopter unit in Ronkonkoma, New York. In the aftermath of September 11th, he was a responder with the National Guard and was later mobilized with the rest of DAR staff to monitor what was in the air around the towers. His military experience complements his professional work since they both revolve around serving people and protecting the environment we live in.



Do you want to learn more about Fitzgerald and our dedicated staff? Check out “On the Front Lines,” a new series of video profiles celebrating the stories of DEC staff throughout the state and the important work they do to protect the environment, conserve New York's vast natural resources and serve the public. Catch “On the Front Lines” monthly on DEC's website, Facebook and Twitter pages

GREENING THE SOUTH BRONX

Green infrastructure is an approach to mitigate severe weather impacts caused by climate change. In urban settings, green infrastructure can ease the effects of catastrophic storm events, frequent floods, and drier, hotter weather by conserving water, reducing CO2 emissions, and lowering energy costs. One of the more popular green infrastructure models, a green roof system, achieves all these goals. Green roof systems consist of layers of earth that either partially or completely cover a building or residential rooftop and provide a growing environment for plant life.

Also known as roof-top gardens, green roofs provide shade and

remove heat from the air. Creating a green roof at an industrial facility can reduce the negative impacts of such a large scale building on urban ecosystems.

Green roofs also act as insulators for buildings, absorbing heat and reducing the need to provide heating and cooling. Vegetation from these roofs can also reduce greenhouse gas emissions through dry deposition and carbon sequestration. Green roof vegetation filters pollutants from rainfall and reduces stormwater runoff in cities. They improve human health and comfort, and are great tools for education and research.

Considering all these benefits, it is no wonder green roofs are becoming more and more popular in cities across New York State. In the South Bronx, several organiza-

tions successfully installed these beneficial roof systems using funds from DEC's Environmental Justice Community Grants program. Sustainable South Bronx (SSBx) received a \$25,000 grant to construct a green roof atop the Alfred E. Smith Vocational and Technical High School in 2010. This was the first green roof built on a public school, and it serves as a valuable tool for educating and inspiring students, as well as for future green jobs training.

"Sustainable South Bronx, now a division of The HOPE Program, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to empowering New Yorkers living in poverty to achieve economic self-sufficiency through employment and advancement, was thrilled to partner on this project, providing our trainees an opportunity to build new job skills while diverting rainwater from the wastewater treatment system and mitigating the urban heat island effect," said Jennifer Mitchell, Executive Director of the HOPE Program and SSBx. "The staff and students at The Bronx Design & Construction Academy have done amazing work maintaining this green roof."



Alfred E. Smith Vocational and Technical High School Green Roof



Installation of THE POINT Green Roof



THE POINT Green Roof

In 2012, THE POINT Community Development Corporation, a non-profit organization dedicated to youth development and the cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx, was awarded a \$50,000 grant to construct a green roof on top of its main facility in Hunts Point. The green roof currently catches stormwater runoff to mitigate frequent flooding of the building's courtyard, and provides benefits to the nearby Bronx River. The green roof at THE POINT reduces an estimated 150,000 gallons of stormwater runoff annually and is also used as an outdoor classroom for environmental education.

For more information on green roofs and their benefits, please visit: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/58930.html> #Green or

<https://www.epa.gov/heat-islands/using-green-roofs-reduce-heat-islands>

APPLY FOR FUNDING

Are you a community-based organization looking to fund a project? DEC's Office of Environmental Justice offers Environmental Justice Impact Grants to not-for-profit organizations to address environmental harms in low-income and environmental justice communities. For additional information on OEJ grants and a complete list of previous project awardees, please visit our website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/31226.html>.

WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

Do you have concerns about the environment where you live? Do you want to make your voice heard? Do you want to stay informed about the different environmental issues affecting the state of New York?

Sign up for Environmental Justice Email Notices through DEC Delivers

Go to <http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/333.html> and sign up to receive regular updates from the Office of Environmental Justice. Stay current on the issues that are important to you.

As always, you can contact the Office of Environmental Justice with any concerns by sending an e-mail to: justice@dec.ny.gov. Please include:

- Your Location/Address
 - o City, town, village or borough
- The environmental concerns you wish to address
 - o List the potential source if you know
- How or whether you wish to be contacted

Help Us Serve You



Contact us:

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