

SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

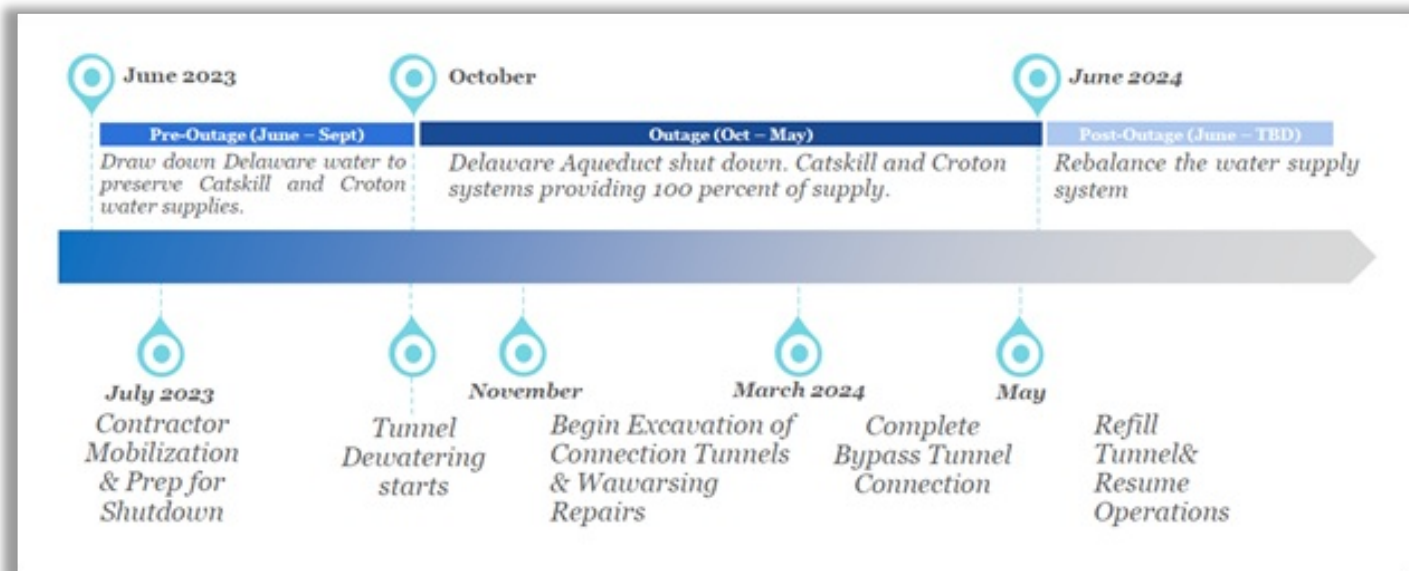
Rondout West Branch Tunnel Shutdown



Effective October 1, 2023, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is scheduled to temporarily shut down the Rondout West Branch Tunnel (RWBT) to allow contractors to make necessary repairs. In the early 1990s, DEP identified two significant leaks in the aqueduct, one near Newburgh and one in Ulster County in the Town of Wawarsing. Combined, the two leaks in the tunnel lose roughly 30 million gallons of water daily. In 2021, DEP finished building a 2.5-mile bypass tunnel under the Hudson River to replace the portion of the tunnel with the most significant leaks. DEP will also need to repair the smaller leak in Wawarsing. Accomplishing these repairs will require DEP to shut down the Delaware Aqueduct and drain it before connecting it to the new bypass tunnel.

Starting in June 2023, DEP will prepare the water supply system for heavier reliance on the Catskill System to the north and Croton System to the east. This preparation involves allowing some of the City's nineteen water supply reservoirs to fill while lowering others. This process will account for anticipated seasonal water cycle fluctuations while ensuring enough water is in the right reservoirs to meet water user demands while preventing other reservoirs from exceeding capacity.

Before and during the shutdown, many reservoirs will experience changes to their water levels that are different than seasonal averages. While most fluctuations will stay within normal operating ranges, several reservoirs located East of the Hudson River may experience significant drops in capacity for a few months during the shutdown period.



DEP expects to shut down the tunnel in October 2023 while work continues through May 2024. By June 2024, the system will move into its post-outage phase, re-balancing the water supply system across the three water supplies (Delaware, Catskill, and Croton systems).

To learn more about the shutdown, its impact on reservoir levels, and get the latest on impacts to recreation, visit the DEP website: [Delaware Aqueduct Shutdown Upstate Impacts](#)

Help Stop the Spread of Zebra Mussel



DEP is asking for help from our local fishing community to combat the spread of invasive mussels that are now found in Amawalk, Muscoot, and New Croton Reservoirs.

DEP scientists have detected zebra mussels in Amawalk, Muscoot, and New Croton Reservoirs. The invasive mussels were washed into Amawalk Reservoir from Lake Mahopac during several extreme precipitation events we experienced in 2021. Zebra mussels were known to be in Lake Mahopac, which is connected to Amawalk Reservoir by the Muscoot River. Muscoot Reservoir is downstream of Amawalk, and New Croton is downstream of Muscoot, which is the path by which the zebra mussels spread.

It is important to note that there are no zebra mussels in other Croton System reservoirs – and DEP needs your help to keep it that way. We are asking local fishermen to take the following three steps to prevent the spread of zebra mussels to other local waterbodies:

- Do not dump live bait in any reservoir!
- Do not transport live bait between reservoirs!
- Clean, Drain, Dry! Disinfect gear or allow it to fully dry before using it in another reservoir!

[Invasive Species - DEP \(nyc.gov\)](#)

The above link will provide further information)

Zebra mussels are small clams, about the size of a thumbnail, that arrived in North America from Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. DEP has maintained a robust zebra mussel monitoring program since they were detected in the Hudson River in the early 1990s. They were first found in Lake Mahopac in 2015. Authorities believe they spread to the lake on infested boats from a regional fishing tournament. Lake Mahopac is one of the sources of the Muscoot River, which flows about 7 miles before reaching the Amawalk Reservoir. Extreme rainfall across the region this summer pushed the zebra mussels from Lake Mahopac into Amawalk Reservoir, and from there, they spread downstream by gravity.

Adult zebra mussels can form dense colonies that include thousands of mussels per square foot. They are incredibly effective filter feeders who eat plankton and other particles in the water. This reduces the food sources for small fish, altering the food web and having negative impacts on fishing. Zebra mussels outcompete native mussels in infested waters, attaching to their shells and causing death. The waste

they produce accumulates and degrades the environment, using up oxygen, altering the pH of water, and producing other byproducts. In addition to their ecological impacts, zebra mussel colonies can also disrupt water supply operations by clogging pipes, intakes, and other infrastructure. It is difficult and costly to remove the colonies from water supply infrastructure once they become established.

While DEP monitors the population of zebra mussels in the impacted reservoirs, we are asking for your vigilance and cooperation to help prevent their spread to other Croton System reservoirs. For further information, call:

Michael Spada: (845) 340-7743

Gear Up for the 2023 Recreational Boating Season



Canoeing on the Pepacton Reservoir

On May 1, the recreational boating season kicked off for its 10th year at Cannonsville, Neversink, Pepacton, and Schoharie Reservoirs. Visitors are invited to bring their own boat and have it steam cleaned at one of the approved [steam cleaning vendors](#) and receive either a temporary or seasonal tag. Steam cleaning is required to prevent the spread of invasive species into the drinking water supply for more than 9 million New Yorkers.

Rental kayaks and canoes are available for visitors who want the convenience of using a boat that is already steam-cleaned and stored alongside the reservoirs. Local businesses in the Catskills rent boats that are stored on racks at many of the boat launch sites on the Neversink, Pepacton, and Schoharie reservoirs. Since the program began, over 13,000 paddlers have taken advantage of this program. To learn more about the rental boat program, visit the [Catskill Watershed Corporation website](#).

Fantastic Fishing on DEP Waters



The New York City Department of Environmental Protection encourages anglers to enjoy world-class fishing on its upstate reservoirs, their headwaters and tailwaters, and public lands that include frontage along creeks and streams throughout the watershed. The City's reservoirs and lakes in the Catskills and Hudson Valley include nearly 36,000 acres of water open for fishing from shore or approved boats.

DEP has also compiled a fishing brochure to help anglers learn what fish species are in each reservoir. The brochure also contains other useful information for anglers and can be found [here](#)

Over the past couple of years, there have been some changes to New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) fishing regulations, with one of the most prominent ones being the introduction of yearlong trout fishing. Effective 2021, a catch-and-release season is permitted on trout streams.

statewide from October 16 through March 31. During this period, anglers are limited to artificial lures only.

Previously, the statewide trout season was closed during this period, although many stream reaches were open to fishing under special regulations. DEC will assess any impact of the new season on wild trout populations and angling pressure. Additionally, the young-of-year trout abundance will be estimated on a statewide sample of 19 wild trout stream reaches from 2021 through 2024.

Furthermore, if you were fishing last year, you might have also noticed additional DEC signs placed along the Esopus Creek during the peak of the summer when water temperatures were climbing. The signs asked anglers to avoid catch-and-release fishing for heat-stressed trout. High temperatures weaken trout, and even minor handling by anglers can increase the risk of their death. While we hope to avoid a similar situation this year, we remind all anglers to assist with protecting the incredible fisheries we have in the watershed.

Reminders for Fishing Boat Permit Holders



With more than 31,000 acres of open water on NYC Reservoirs, fishing by boat has become one of the most popular recreational opportunities provided by DEP. With more than 13,000 boats moored along the shorelines of City reservoirs, managing this program is an important task for DEP. By ensuring your boat is stored properly, in the right location, and permits and tags are kept up to date, you can ensure your access to boating on DEP reservoirs and help keep our waters safe and clean. Below are some tips for all boat owners:

Boat Storage:

All rowboats should be stored hull-up to prevent accumulation of standing water. We also suggest boats not be propped against trees on a windy day as they can blow over and fill with water. If they are leaned against a tree, please ensure that they are secured so that they can't tip over but also loose enough that they can't damage the tree.

After you hook a few fish and row to the shore of a New York City reservoir, don't leave your boat at the water's edge. Instead, anglers are reminded to drag their boats above the high water mark and secure them. This will prevent boats from floating away and reduce the number of false alarms DEP Police have to investigate. Reservoir levels can fluctuate drastically during the year, sometimes rising feet in hours or days. As a result, unsecured vessels at the water's edge can float away as the water rises.

A floating boat with no visible angler – whether right-side up or upside down – requires DEP Police to investigate whether someone has fallen into the water and needs help. Police must mobilize officers, launch their own boats, and try to contact the floating boat's owner. Officers scan the water for debris, such as fishing tackle or flotation devices, and check nearby cars for access permit tags.

Moving your boat back from the water ensures it will be there for your next outing, keeps the shoreline uncluttered for your fellow anglers, and prevents DEP Police from making unnecessary investigations.

Boat Storage Reminders:

- Boats must be stored on their assigned reservoir and in the assigned location determined during the registration process.
- All boats must be stored hull up (upside down) at all times.
- Boats should be stored at least 10 feet back from the high water mark.
- Boat owners are encouraged to secure their boats to manufactured hitches provided by DEP, where available.
- If Boats are secured to living trees, they must be at least 11" in diameter and secured so they won't blow over. Use cable or covered chains wrapped once loosely around trees to secure your boat. Tightly wrapped chains kill trees.



Boat Confiscation:

DEP may confiscate any boat that is not stored in accordance with the DEP Recreation Rules. For example, boats can be removed if left in the water unattended, found outside of the boat's assigned Boat Storage Area, abandoned, or found in a restricted area. DEP can also confiscate boats that do not have a valid fishing or recreational boat tag or with illegible boat numbers. The boat owner is responsible for ensuring that their boat tag is renewed on time and that the boat is properly stored in its correct mooring area.

Boat Tags:

In 2020, all boat owners started to receive a 4-year boat tag when renewed. While this change is a time-saver for boat owners, the increased time between renewals can also make it easy to overlook the expiration date of your boat tag. DEP sends out renewal notices for all expiring boats, but if you move or change your contact information and you don't notify DEP, you may not receive your renewal application.

The boat owner is responsible for keeping their boat tag and contact information valid and up-to-date. If you do not receive your renewal form by September of the year that it is scheduled to expire, it is your responsibility to contact DEP. You can update your information on the [DEP Recreation website](#) or by contacting the Access Permit Office at 1-800-575-LAND or emailing Recreation@DEP.NYC.gov.

Safe Boating Tips

Thousands of people enjoy fishing from boats and recreational boating on NYC reservoirs each year. Unfortunately, severe weather, equipment malfunctions, and other factors can lead to unexpected hazards when boaters are out on the water. Below are some tips for all anglers, kayakers, and other boaters to stay safe on the water.

Wear your Personal Flotation Device (PFD)

The best way to stay safe on the water is to always wear your PFD. DEP requires all boaters to have an approved PFD with them in the boat and encourages them to be worn. All boaters under 12 must wear them at all times. Most accidents happen unexpectedly, and wearing your flotation device whenever you're on the water will help you stay safe if you unexpectedly capsize or fall overboard.

Boat at night, bring the light.

Fishing by boat at night is allowed on the City's reservoirs. In the summertime, many anglers head for the water long before dawn to beat the heat. But we'd like to ask that you take a few precautions to be extra safe.

- Please have a visible light or lantern while on the water at night. It's the law. A battery-powered light that clamps to the stern of your boat is inexpensive if you don't want to use a lantern.
- While not required, placing reflective tape on both sides of the boat and the stern above the waterline helps make you more visible in the dark.
- Don't forget a whistle or horn. State law requires boaters to carry a sound-producing device.
- More information about the state's navigation laws can be found on the state parks website at www.parks.ny.gov.

Darkness can make that familiar reservoir you've fished every year seem larger, and shoreline landmarks can seem nonexistent. Don't forget to carry a personal flotation device for all onboard. In addition, DEP encourages all anglers to wear a life vest while fishing at night.

Avoid Restricted areas

Boaters are required to be aware of where they can and cannot boat. DEP updated its angler maps several years ago with these restrictions clearly marked. Descriptions are also provided to help boaters understand what areas are off-limits. These maps can also be found on the DEP RecMapper (www.nyc.gov/dep/recmap), so boaters with a smartphone can access this tool in the field to see precisely where restricted areas are located.

These areas are located near hazardous features, like dams and spillways, and around sensitive infrastructure. Angler maps can also be found on the DEP website by visiting www.nyc.gov/dep/recreation.

A Lesson on the Importance of Boat Safety



In 2022, The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) rescued three fishermen from the Croton Falls Reservoir in Carmel following the capsizing of their rowboat. The three individuals, who live in Queens and Long Island, were rescued following the quick actions of a DEP Watershed employee who noticed a capsized rowboat in the reservoir shortly after noon while traveling over a reservoir causeway. That DEP watershed land management employee, Kevin Degnan, equipped with binoculars, noticed three people in the water next to the boat, immediately contacted 911, opened gates to enable emergency vehicle access to the reservoir, and ultimately assisted as local emergency crews pulled the men and their gear from the water.

“It was a matter of being in the right place at the right time,” said Degnan, who is based in Mahopac and has been employed at DEP for 27 years. “I was driving by when something white caught my eye out of the corner of my eye. DEP encourages all boaters to use personal flotation devices at all times when on the City’s reservoirs.”

The New York State Police, Carmel Police Department, and the Mahopac and Mahopac Falls Fire Departments were first on the scene and joined by the Putnam County Sheriff’s Office and DEP Police, including its aviation unit. Using boats from the shore, emergency responders were able to rescue the three individuals.

The three individuals rescued all had DEP permits allowing fishing on the reservoir, and life preservers were in the boat though none of the three men was wearing them, forcing them to cling to the boat until they were rescued. Under New York State law, personal flotation devices must be worn and securely fastened by every passenger of a boat less than 16 feet in length from Nov. 1 through May 1, and DEP highly recommends that every recreational boater always wear one. The three rescued boaters were interviewed by DEP Police, who indicated that a sudden movement caused the boat to overturn while fishing.

Don’t let this happen to you. These anglers were lucky that someone saw them and called for help. While this could have easily been tragic, it’s an important reminder to always wear your PFD and practice safe boating.

[DEP Website](#) | [Watershed Protection](#) | [Watershed Recreation](#) | [Email Us](#)

For recreation questions call 1-800-575-LAND (5263)

email: recreation@dep.nyc.gov