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Updated January 16, 2014, 1:17 p.m. ET

State, 6 communities agree on sewage cleanup plan

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ALBANY, N.Y. — Sewage pollution in the Hudson River at Albany will be reduced under a \$136 million long-term plan announced Thursday by state environmental regulators, the city of Albany and five surrounding communities.

The projects will bring the communities into compliance with the federal Clean Water Act and state water quality standards.

Under an agreement with the state, the six communities will upgrade sewer systems, disinfect water discharged from combined sewage and storm water overflows, build green infrastructure such as porous pavement to reduce runoff and take other steps to reduce sewage pollution in the river.

Most of the work will be completed within 10 years and many of the projects to reduce bacteria will be completed within five years, according to the Department of Environmental Conservation.

The plan is a step toward the goal of making the river healthier for fishing, kayaking, swimming and other recreation, Environmental Commissioner Joe Martens said.

"These local communities understand the need to take decisive action to prevent pollution from entering the Hudson River after storms and have worked closely with the state to develop an effective solution," Martens said in a prepared statement announcing the plan.

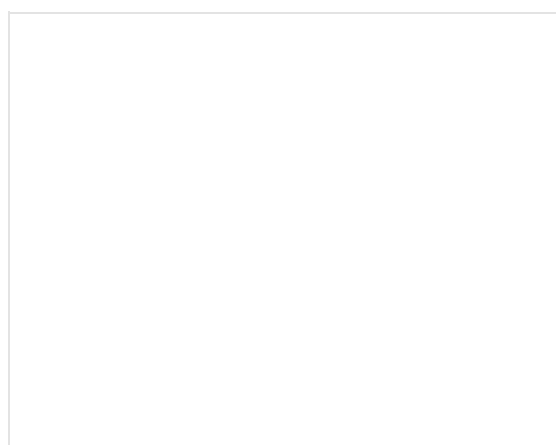
Among the planned upgrades are new bacterial disinfection systems, several projects to separate sewage lines from storm water lines and facilities to keep "floatable waste" from washing into the river.

The environmental group Riverkeeper, which has been testing and keeping records on Hudson River water quality since 2008 along the 155 miles from Troy to New York City, has found the Albany area the worst sewage polluter on the river.

"When these waters are fishable and swimmable again, we will look back on this agreement as the turning point," said Riverkeeper President Paul Gally.

The communities included in the plan are Albany, Troy, Rensselaer, Cohoes, Watervliet and Green Island. They will implement the plan along with the Albany and Rensselaer county sewer districts.

Tracy Brown, water quality advocate for Riverkeeper, said the plan announced



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Thursday had several significant improvements over an earlier version, including construction of new disinfection systems and green infrastructure.

"Another important addition, which we had asked for, was to start public notification of sewage overflows at the beginning of the plan rather than down the road," Brown said.

As required by a law that took effect May 1, the state is working on new regulations outlining how sewage plant operators will notify the public of overflows. That notification will likely use the NY-Alert system, to which New Yorkers can already subscribe to get text messages on traffic, weather and other emergencies.

Riverkeeper is pushing to have public alerts begin with the start of the water recreation season on Memorial Day.

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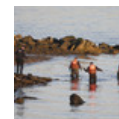
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Police Investigate Whether Human Remains Belong to Missing Autistic Teen

New York City Police recovered human remains Thursday night along a cove in the East River in Queens, several miles from where an autistic boy walked out of school and disappeared last October.



More Than Half of Voters Give de Blasio High Marks: Poll

Mayor Bill de Blasio has barely begun his tenure at New York City Hall, but a majority of voters already approve of the job he is doing, a poll released Thursday showed.



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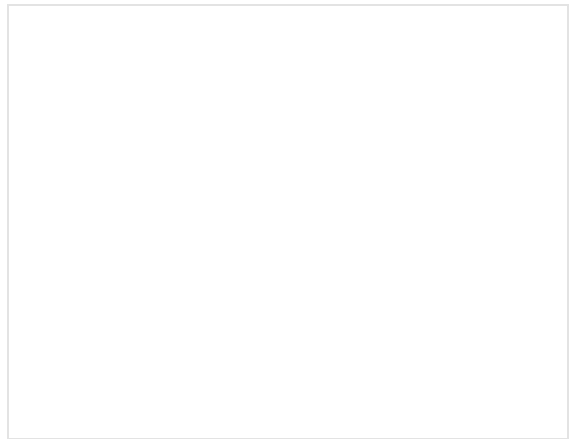
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