



FACT SHEET: Cleaner Waters Through Better Stormwater Management

NYC Intros. No. 628, 629 and 630 to Implement PLANYC Water Quality Initiatives

The Challenge

- Water quality in the rivers, creeks, and bays surrounding New York City has improved in significant respects since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. But, 30 years later, **we still dump approximately 27 billion gallons of untreated sewage mixed with stormwater runoff into the City's waterways.**
- The sewer system in most of NYC carries both rainwater and raw sewage through the same network of pipes and sewage treatment plants. The system is big enough to handle all of the City's sewage but, when it rains as little as one-tenth of an inch, the combined volume of sewage and rain water exceeds the capacity and the City diverts untreated sewage directly into our waterways.
- These combined sewer overflows ("CSOs") release pathogens and other pollutants into the water, posing a danger to the public health, damaging the ecology, and frequently making our waters unsuitable for many recreational activities.
- In portions of the City where separate sewers convey sanitary sewage and stormwater, untreated stormwater discharge— even without raw sewage – also carries significant amounts of bacteria and other pollutants.

The Solution: Stormwater as a Resource, Not a Waste

- Mayor Bloomberg's **PLANYC 2030** calls for keeping sewage out of our waters by re-making the urban landscape to mimic more closely the way natural systems handle rainwater – using it to green our city before it ever has a chance to enter the sewer system and cause CSOs.
- A package of three bills, introduced by New York City Council Member James Gennaro and endorsed by **S.W.I.M (Storm Water Infrastructure Matters)** – a coalition of nearly 50 NYC organizations, including community and environmental groups, architects, water engineers, and community development corporations – would ensure that the City follows through, over the long term, on PLANYC's ambitions. The bills are set for a **City Council hearing on November 8th.**
- **Intro. No. 630:** Requires the City to develop and implement a ***Sustainable Stormwater Management Plan***, in conjunction with a citizens' advisory committee to include members from the environmental, land use, and development communities. This plan would reduce stormwater runoff into the City's sewers through the use of "**better site design**" or "**low-impact development**" techniques endorsed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies – and already in wide use in cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, Portland, Seattle, Toronto – such as **green roofs**, enhanced planting of **street trees**, **permeable pavement**, **rain gardens and swales**, **wetlands restoration**, and many others.
- **Intro. No. 629:** Requires that new City-funded capital projects be designed to minimize the post-construction runoff of stormwater into the City's sewer system, using the same menu of techniques.
- **Intro. No. 628:** Requires that new plantings of trees and other vegetation along our streets and sidewalks – especially the million trees to be planted as part of PLANYC 2030 – are installed in such a way as to maximize their capacity to absorb stormwater.

For more information on CSOs, the full text of the bills, and details on the Nov. 8th hearing, go to www.swimmablenyc.org.