



Bronx River Alliance Comments on DEP's Long Term Control Plan for the Bronx River

March 3, 2015

The strong turnout at the kickoff meeting on February 12 clearly demonstrated that the Bronx community cares about the river and depends on it for recreation. Residents want to be able to safely swim, fish, kayak, canoe, and enjoy the entire river, as well as use it year-round as an outdoor classroom for education.

To increase opportunities for public participation at the next meeting, DEP should allow more time for questions and provide clear instructions on how to submit meaningful input in a timely manner. That includes defining the type of input needed and setting a deadline for consideration of this input. Ensuring that the information being presented is in a format that the public can understand is the first step in engaging them in a meaningful dialog about the issue.

To achieve meaningful water quality improvements, NYC needs to control CSOs in the Bronx portion of the river and seek ways of getting upstream issues addressed. A coordinated approach should include an analysis of inputs and actions to address sources of pollution in NYC and Westchester County. It will take more than eliminating CSO discharges to meet Clean Water Act goals for Bronx River. DEP needs to insure that all water quality programs are implemented in a coordinated fashion, to maximize resources and achieve the greatest outcomes. This requires coordination among units of government responsible for CSO abatement, stormwater management via the MS4 permit, Long Term Control Plan, and green infrastructure.

A river safe for primary contact (i.e., fishable and swimmable) is our long term goal for the Bronx River, to protect the health of the community that depends on this river for recreation, education and enjoyment. DEP should consider alternatives that make the river safe for primary contact throughout the entire year and as soon as possible after a rain event.

The draft plan should include feasibility studies and impacts for alternatives presented, to ensure that these options are viable. It would be helpful to provide information for the public to assess alternatives in a citywide context, in terms of resource allocation. How will DEP determine how much to prioritize alternatives on each water body and how will rate payers share the cost of these improvements?

The Bronx River has enjoyed steady improvements and has an active constituency of users, making water quality a priority for this waterbody.