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NYS DEC Ruling Clears Way for Environmental Review of Proposed Water Filtration Plant

'Lead agency' Westchester Joint Water Works launches website to educate public about proposed filtration plant for its Rye Lake water source

MAMARONECK, N.Y. (March 25, 2021) — The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has designated Westchester Joint Water Works (WJWW), a nonprofit public benefit corporation, as “lead agency.” This designation under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) will allow WJWW to proceed with the scoping process for the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed water filtration plant for its Rye Lake water source in Harrison.

“This designation of WJWW to serve as lead agency is based on my findings that WJWW, as project sponsor, has broader jurisdiction than the [Harrison] Planning Board to investigate the environmental impacts,” DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos wrote in his decision, dated March 10, 2021.

Traces of haloacetic acids (HAA5) have been detected in WJWW’s water supply system. HAA5 compounds are a common by-product of the water disinfection process, as they form when chlorine reacts with naturally occurring organic matter in untreated surface water from WJWW’s Rye Lake source. Chlorine is the most commonly used disinfectant among public water suppliers to kill bacteria and viruses that could cause serious illnesses. Filtering the water is a proven treatment to remove organic matter and thereby reduce the formation of HAA5 compounds. Long-term exposure to high levels of HAA5 has been linked to an increased risk for cancer.

Both the New York State Department of Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have ordered WJWW to provide filtration for its raw water source at Rye Lake to comply with surface water treatment requirements and control harmful levels of disinfection by-products, including HAA5.

“Westchester Joint Water Works understands the urgency to construct a water filtration plant to protect the health and safety of the approximately 120,000 Westchester County residents that we serve,” said Paul Kutzy, WJWW Manager. “We will ensure that a thorough environmental review is completed for the filtration plant in collaboration with

an expert team of environmental engineers, scientists, planners, architects, government agencies and legal specialists.”

In an effort to educate the public about the water filtration plant, WJWW has launched a website – wjwwfiltration.org – that includes information about the project and the SEQRA process.

If approved, the proposed filtration plant would be located on land that is presently part of Westchester County Airport. The approximate cost of the facility is \$100 million.

“This is the most effective method of protection for WJWW to provide safe, clean drinking water,” Kutzy said. “The plant will not only provide a current solution, but will ensure WJWW’s water supply is well-positioned to meet future demands.”

ABOUT WJWW

Westchester Joint Water Works (WJWW) is a nonprofit public benefit corporation formed in 1927 by its three member municipalities: the Village of Mamaroneck, the Town of Mamaroneck, and the Town/Village of Harrison pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 654, Laws of 1927, State of New York to acquire, construct and provide a joint water works. WJWW supplies water to its member municipalities and to portions of the cities of Rye and New Rochelle, serving 59,629 consumers through 14,682 service connections. WJWW also supplies water on a wholesale basis to the Village of Larchmont and Suez Water Westchester, which supplies water to the City of Rye, Village of Rye Brook and Village of Port Chester, which collectively represent approximately another 60,000 consumers.