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NEWS from the CWC

CWC cancels Phoenicia wastewater contract

MARGARETVILLE, NY, June 7, 2012 –The Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) has terminated its agreement with the Town of Shandaken to coordinate the development of a wastewater treatment system for the Ulster County hamlet.

The move followed the NYC Department of Environmental Protection’s cancellation of its agreement to provide \$17.2 million to construct a treatment system. Both the CWC and the DEP cited the Town’s inability or unwillingness to meet specific time frames to get a project off the ground as reasons for ending the contracts.

The money for the project was allocated under the New Infrastructure Program spelled out in the 1997 NYC Watershed Memorandum of Agreement. Six other communities received wastewater treatment systems under this program.

However, after years of discussions and engineering studies, the Town and the DEP failed to come to terms on a project and the CWC was called in to work directly with the town to facilitate a project. A contract between the CWC and the Town of Shandaken was formalized in July 2010.

The CWC notified the Shandaken Town Board in a June 5, 2012 letter that it was withdrawing its assistance as outlined in that contract.

Just four months ago, the CWC Board of Directors authorized the expenditure of nearly \$2 million to begin design of a bio-membrane reactor treatment system which had been approved by the DEP in October, 2011. The Shandaken Town Board on February 6 had voted to proceed with the project and needed to establish a sewer district by August 6 in order to meet milestones for release of the NYC funds.

When the Shandaken Board failed to schedule a public hearing on the sewer district it became clear the milestones could not be met, and both the DEP and the CWC moved to end their respective agreements.

In the years that the project has been under discussion, 12 on-site septic systems in the hamlet had failed and were being pumped out and monitored under the CWC’s Managed Repair Program for areas within prospective municipal system boundaries. CWC Director Alan Rosa said the corporation would now replace those systems, but owners of systems that fail in the future cannot depend on CWC reimbursement for repairs or replacement.

The CWC, under its Community Wastewater Management Program (CWMP), has completed wastewater projects in Bovina, Bloomville, Hamden, Delancey and Boiceville. A sixth, in Ashland, is nearing completion. Three others – in Lexington, South Kortright and Trout Creek -- are in the planning and design stages.

The hamlets of Shandaken, West Conesville, Halcottsville, New Kingston and Claryville are the remaining communities that were identified in the 1997 NYC Watershed Memorandum of Agreement as needing wastewater solutions. The funds that had been intended for Phoenicia will now be directed to one of these communities.

The CWC is a non-profit Local Development Corporation based in Margaretville. It is committed to protecting water resources, encouraging environmentally friendly economic development and supporting watershed education in the New York City Watershed West of the Hudson River, a region encompassing parts of five counties – Delaware, Greene, Schoharie, Sullivan and Ulster.

To learn more about other CWC programs to assist residents and businesses in the New York City Watershed West of the Hudson River, visit www.cwconline.org.