

**(Pending Committee Approval)**

**Bronx CB8 Environment & Sanitation Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date: Wednesday, November 19, 2025**

**Start Time: 7:00 PM**

**Location: Board Office – 5676 Riverdale Ave, Suite 100, Bronx, NY 10471**

**Meeting Recording**

**1. Welcome & Roll Call**

a. Committee:

- i. Present: L. Spalter, D. Rowen, E. Hausman, R. Spalter, M. Lewis
- ii. Zoom: K. Argenti and R. Fanuzzi
- iii. Absent: S. Froot

b. Public via Zoom: E. Ardizzone from NYCDEP, Z. Sesay-Harrell

**2. Chairperson's Report**

a. See attached news articles relating to environmental and sanitation issues that were passed around during the meeting:

- i. <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2025/09/18/nyc-homeowners-could-get-cash-back-for-their-trash-bins>
- ii. <https://gothamist.com/news/gov-hochul-angers-environmentalists-with-walk-back-of-climate-policies>
- iii. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2025/09/20/epa-scientists-research-publications/>
- iv. <https://gothamist.com/news/climate-change-could-make-algal-blooms-more-common-in-hudson-river-scientists-say>
- v. <https://www.riverdalepress.com/stories/bceq-panel-pushes-nature-based-climate-solutions-for-nyc,199370>

**3. Q&A With DEP**

a. W. 254th Street SWPPP questions for DEP

- i. Effie via phone reporting that they are awaiting DDC releasing the SWPPP, which will then get approved by DOT and DEP at that time. She felt

optimistic that they would have a good plan for upgraded stormwater and sewer capacity split between two new pipes.

- ii. Karen questioned about the drains at the bottom of the hill, which are not DEP's, but maybe MTA's, and if they are part of this project.

#### 4. Approval of Committee Minutes – September 17, 2025

- a. Unanimously approved by quorum, just adding Micole Lewis to committee members present.

#### 5. Unfinished Business

##### i. Broadway Corridor Walkthrough Follow-up

- 1. Laura reporting on agencies and people who participated in the Halloween walk-through. She said they found litter throughout, but mostly because it gets caught around the MTA construction materials and then blows all around. The worst mess, however, was found around NYCHA units in their fenced-in trash collecting areas, which are often overflowing, especially the one on Broadway. They spoke with many businesses, and their concerns were mostly security and impeded foot traffic due to the construction materials. Currently MTA is working on the elevated tracks at every intersection along the corridor, but that is at least temporary. MTA contractors should do a better job cleaning up after themselves each night, especially sweeping around their equipment that's left in the middle of the streets.

##### ii. W. 254<sup>th</sup> Project Further Discussion

- 1. Committee brings up S. Froot's concerns about narrowing of the roadway due to creating a sidewalk on each side, though DOT insists there will still be two 12' travel lanes, one in each direction. Because they are planning to place those sidewalks in land currently encroached by front yards. The committee is looking forward to reviewing the SWPPP, once it is finalized by DDC.
- 2. Bob is concerned about the strong flow of stormwater eroding the sides of the road, as is currently happening.
- 3. The new split sewers should increase stormwater sewer capacity and add green infrastructure to improve conditions.

iii. FY28 Budget Requests, Early Discussion

1. Awaiting departmental responses to our prior budget requests.

iv. Better Bottles Bill next steps (NY S237 & A6353)

1. Will have to follow-up and see if they have been re-introduced under new numbers yet. Committee also wonders where the new deposit fees will go, but approves of the plan to expand bottle deposits to more types of bottles. For more information, see this page: <https://www.bottlebill40.org/>

6. New Business

- a. Community member from Kingsbridge Heights via Zoom, Z. Sesay-Harrell, brings up issues with DSNY issuing multiple sanitation-related tickets, which she believes are retaliatory. She accuses developers in the area trying to intimidate and harass homeowners they want to buy homes from. She was told to bring the tickets to her city councilmember and pass the information along to the Community Board office for follow-up.

7. Adjournment at 9pm

Minutes submitted by D. Rowen, Chair, Environment & Sanitation Committee

# BCEQ Panel Pushes Nature-Based Climate Solutions for NYC

Posted October 4, 2025



MICHELLE MULLEN PHOTOS



**Michelle Mullen**

As extreme weather events become increasingly relentless, the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, BCEQ, marked Climate Week NYC 2025 with a panel focused on reshaping how the city prepares for the future.

On Sept 26., officials from the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, as well as the Department of Environmental Protection, DEP, led a forum in Van Cortlandt Park. At the heart of the discussion was an urgent need to combat growing threats of climate change with low-cost, nature-based solutions.

Expanding tree canopies and restoring wetlands, panelists argued, can be lifelines for areas hardest hit by severe heat and flooding. In New York City, heat-related deaths disproportionately affect predominantly Black and low-income communities, with parts of the South Bronx being particularly at risk.

Angela Licata, DEP's deputy commissioner of sustainability, said the mounting unpredictability of climate events is why the agency's old weather planning models are no longer reliable.

"In the past, DEP engineers would look at the historical record," she said. "They would look back 50, 100 years, take averages, look at the most extreme events and believe that would represent what we would see in the future. [Now,] we have to weigh the more recent events much more heavily."

In 2024, the city issued its first drought warning in two decades. This year followed the trend as rainfall plunged 40 percent below average during the driest summer in 25 years.

Weeks later, flash floods in August and September brought the second-wettest hour of rainfall in half a century.

"This variability is something that has us very concerned and has us really paying very close attention," Licata said.

Former Parks First Deputy Commissioner Liam Kavanagh noted that natural defenses are efficient in mitigating the severity of weather events and must be treated as essential infrastructure. New York City's street trees, he noted, intercept 1.3 billion gallons of stormwater a year.

It's all part of a push for more green infrastructure — systems that capture stormwater that concrete and other impermeable surfaces cannot.

"Unlike roads or bridges, green infrastructure does not have a permanent funding stream," Kavanagh said. "So while we spend billions of dollars on bridges and tunnels, we don't have a similar system to support trees or wetlands. But the benefits are very real."

Wetlands, often overlooked, offer immense protection. By slowing water, their roots and soils filter pollutants and create habitats that cool neighborhoods and stabilize ecosystems.

At Van Cortlandt Lake, this philosophy has already been put into practice in a pilot living shoreline project. Using a solar-powered pump that diverts incoming water, such as that from the Major Deegan Expressway just up the hill, into a 160-foot channel that is planted with cattails and sedges.

Among those spearheading the project is environmental engineer Paul Mankiewicz.

"If anybody wants to know how to clean the water on the planet, there's already a 450-million-year-old mechanism," he said. "The soil root system will pull out all the bacteria, all nitrogen, all the phosphorus and keep it on land instead of .. in the water."

After the panel, Mankiewicz and DEP's Director of Ecological Services, John McLaughlin, led attendees on a tour of the living shoreline located near the Van Cortlandt Golf Lake House.

"Paul envisioned taking lake water, putting it through a wetland system [and] treating it," McLaughlin said. "It's all about scale. We're not saying this little wetland system is going to clean the entire lake, but the principle is putting it through a wetland system."

The project is less about cleaning one lake and more about proving that wetlands can be engineered to perform the work of costly infrastructure while adding ecological benefits.

Dozens of similar systems, Mankiewicz and McLaughlin added, could be placed across the city's 500 miles of shoreline to reduce flooding, filter stormwater and temper heat.

Green infrastructure can lower surface temperatures by more than 10 degrees on the hottest days, providing relief in neighborhoods most vulnerable to heat waves.

That need for cooling power is becoming increasingly urgent. Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa said extreme heat already kills more than 500 New Yorkers each year, a toll expected to rise sharply as summers grow hotter and longer.

“Our new strategy ensures that every neighborhood in the city will be scheduled for reliable and regular improvements,” she said.

## Keywords

Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, NYC climate adaptation, nature-based climate solutions, Van Cortlandt Park wetlands, green infrastructure NYC, DEP climate strategy, urban heat island Bronx, tree canopy expansion NYC

**NEWS**

## Climate change could make algal blooms more common in Hudson River, scientists say



Riverkeeper

**G**By Rosemary Misdary  
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A thick layer of pea soup-colored scum has plagued a roughly 60-mile stretch of the Hudson River from Beacon to just north of Germantown this fall.

Algal blooms, which are usually found in stagnant waters such as ponds and lakes, are uncommon for a deep river that flows in two directions and mixes with ocean water several times per day. But warmer waters, drought and sewer overflow have contributed to what scientists call the Hudson's worst outbreak of cyanobacteria in the last 40 years. While recent cooler temperatures are helping to dissipate the bacteria, experts predict these blooms will worsen as the weather gets hotter and drier.

"It is unusual for rivers in general," said Stuart Findlay, senior scientist at the research nonprofit Cary Institute. "One year out of five you may get any evidence at all, much less of this extent."

The region had its warmest September on record since 2018, with an average temperature of nearly 71 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the National Weather Service. The [federal drought monitor](#) indicated New York state experienced drought-like conditions during the summer, when the city got only 8.7 inches of rain — around 60% of the average precipitation — making it the driest summer since 1999. Findlay said this contributed to less robust flow on the river, where rain can act as a flushing agent.

"As climate change progresses, this is something we expect in the future because we know that drought can make a harmful algal bloom more likely, and we know that the hotter temperatures make the water more habitable for the bacteria," Shannon Roback, science director at the nonprofit Riverkeeper, said.

Algal blooms often appear in late summer, when there tends to be less rain and water temperatures are around 77 degrees or higher. Once the bacteria spreads on the water's surface, there's no method to remove it except to wait for cooler temperatures.

"Part of our challenge is this did not happen last year, did not happen the year before," Findlay said. "The sort of trigger or catalyst that led this to such a significant bloom this year, but not in previous years, is a small difference in temperature, small difference in flow rate."

Sewage containing nitrogen and phosphorus entering the Hudson River is also contributing to the bloom.

There are no algal blooms in New York City because of the salt content in that portion of the river. Findlay and Roback said much of the sewage comes from upstate municipalities along the Hudson. Even communities that have modernized waste water treatment don't remove nitrogen and phosphorus in their facilities because the process is very costly, according to Findlay. Agricultural and urban runoff also contributes to the problem.

"Especially during rain events, sewage likely enters the river without any treatment if there's a combined sewer system, which there are many [of] along the river," Roback said.

The New York state Department of Environmental Conservation investigated the 60-mile stretch of the Hudson River at the end of last month. The preliminary findings were lower concentrations of cyanobacteria, which indicates the algal bloom is dying out.

Over the past decade, the agency has observed increased frequency of algal blooms across the state in flowing waterways such as the Hudson. The initial monitoring data indicates the bacteria concentrations are a low risk to public health, but the department still advises people to avoid areas showing signs of algal bloom.

Findlay said the concentrations may be low for a stagnant pond, but for a tidally mixed river like the Hudson, they are high and certainly contain toxins. In late September, Dutchess County and Saugerties issued health advisories concerning the algal blooms.



Officials say the public should avoid areas of the river with algae.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

The largest patch is centered around Kingston, located near major drinking sources for towns like Poughkeepsie. Findlay said this hasn't affected drinking water in towns that depend on the Hudson River, because pollutants like phosphorus and nitrogen — main contributors to algal blooms — are filtered out before they hit faucets.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, physical contact, inhalation and ingestion of cyanobacteria is hazardous to animals and humans, especially children. The risks include minor symptoms, such as skin irritation and gastroenteritis, as well as more severe outcomes, like liver and nerve damage. In some cases, exposure can cause death, particularly in pets. Consuming contaminated fish is also dangerous, and the algal blooms can cause the sudden mass death of fish in the area.

“People shouldn't be swimming in it, their dogs shouldn't be swimming in it,” Findlay said. “It would pretty significantly impede the use of the river for contact recreation, which is everything from swimming to kayaking.”

The blue-green algae is a known public health hazard. In a region that has seen a resurgence in nature and recreational activities such as swimming and kayaking, public health officials are warning residents to stay out of the water.

"What we are seeing right now is definitely not normal," Roback said. "This is much more widespread and severe than what we've seen in the past on the Hudson."

The environmental department updated its water-quality standards for all waterways around New York City this week. The update reclassifies the Hudson River along Manhattan for designated swimming, which establishes a legal mandate to reduce pollution.

Riverkeeper, Cary Institute and state environmental and health officials continue to monitor and collect samples of the algal bloom. Scientists are waiting to analyze satellite images to measure the extent of the bloom, but the closure of the U.S. Geological Survey amid the ongoing federal government shutdown has delayed the process.

Scientists expect to release a detailed report before the end of the year. Residents can report any sightings of algal blooms to the [environmental department](#). The agency maintains a [map](#) of current statewide blooms.

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#### Rosemary Misdary

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# EPA tells some scientists to stop publishing studies, employees say

Staff from the EPA's Office of Water were summoned to a town hall meeting this week and told to pause the publication of most research, pending a review.

Updated September 20, 2025

By [Amudalat Ajasa](#) and [Hannah Natanson](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency has ordered scientists in at least one of its research offices to immediately pause almost all efforts to publish research, according to two agency employees familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Staff from the EPA's Office of Water were summoned to a town hall meeting this week and instructed to halt work on most ongoing research papers, the two employees said. The researchers were told that unless scientific journals had already returned proofs — the final step in the academic publication process — the studies would be subject to a new review process, the employees said.

The decision to reevaluate all manuscripts was made by political appointees, the two employees said.

EPA press secretary Brigit Hirsch denied that political appointees had ordered a review of research papers. After this article was published, she called it “false information that has been credibly refuted.”

Hirsch said in an earlier statement that the agency will continue its work to protect human health and the environment. “Great scientific work is continuing at EPA like never before,” she said. “We are confident EPA has the resources needed to accomplish the agency’s core mission of protecting human health and the environment, fulfill all statutory obligations, and make the best-informed decisions based on the gold standard of science.”

Staff within the Office of Water have asked for an explanation they can send to scientific journals that ask why their papers are on pause, but staff have so far not received a response from higher-ups, one of the employees said.

Both employees said that the imposition of this type of review is unprecedented and warned that it

could stymie the release of scientific findings important to preserving public health.



The Office of Water works to ensure the safety of the nation's drinking water and the health of coastal and other aquatic environments. Scientists in the office conduct and publish research assessing how to keep water safe for drinking and for recreational use, as well as analyzing environmental concerns related to water quality.

In recent months, EPA scientists have contributed to studies in scientific journals on subjects such as PFAS and microplastics in urban sewer overflows, comparisons of different methods for testing drinking water for lead, and groundwater pollution by naturally occurring arsenic.

Details about the review process remain unclear. "This represents millions of dollars of research, potentially, that's now being stopped," one of the employees said, adding that Americans "aren't going to benefit from the release of this science."

In July, the EPA announced plans to dismantle its scientific research branch, the Office of Research and Development, which had been tasked with conducting independent research to assess impacts on human health and the environment. The agency did not confirm how many staff members from the office were reassigned or terminated.

In an earlier email, Hirsch said there are ongoing conversations with staff about their new responsibilities and how they align with the agency's core mission.

Hirsch said that some employees who had been reassigned from the Office of Research and Development are now discussing with their supervisors whether they will continue with their previous work.

"As scientists from the Office of Research and Development transition to new roles across the agency, they will be having active conversations with management about their new roles and responsibilities within their revitalized organization," she said. "As part of these conversations, decisions will be made about how to move forward with projects based on the agency's mission and priorities and new roles."

The move to halt the agency's scientific research has prompted concern from scientists and environmental groups that findings could be altered to conform to the Trump administration's political agenda.



"Science is not supposed to be political," said Kyla Bennett, director of science policy at Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. "Science is supposed to transcend politics and inform decision-making at the EPA."

Nicole Cantello, president of AFGE Local 704, which represents 1,000 EPA workers in Chicago, said that delaying or otherwise impeding the release of scientific findings violates the agency's scientific integrity policy.

"It results in the further erosion of the public's trust in EPA and its ability to protect human health and the environment," Cantello said.

## **CORRECTION**

A previous version of this article said that the order to reevaluate manuscripts came from political appointees. The decision was made by political appointees, but conveyed to rank-and-file by career staff, according to two EPA employees directly familiar with the situation. In addition, the headline has been revised to clarify that only some scientists at the EPA received this message. The article also has been revised to add a quote from EPA spokeswoman Brigit Hirsch.

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## **What readers are saying**

The comments express significant concern and criticism over the EPA's decision to pause research and stop publishing studies from its Office of Water. Many commenters view this as a move by the Trump administration to suppress scientific findings that could challenge political... [Show more](#)

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# Gov. Hochul angers environmentalists with walk-back of climate policies



G

By Rosemary Misdary

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66 comments

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New York Gov. Kathy Hochul is catching the ire of climate activists and lawmakers after a hat trick of fossil fuel-friendly moves, including reaching a deal to delay a law aimed at electrifying new building construction that was set to take effect in January.

The state agreed on Wednesday to halt the All-Electric Building Act until an appellate court rules on a lawsuit brought by a coalition of building and fossil fuel companies and organizations, including the New York State Builders Association and National Propane Gas Association.

Last week, Hochul's administration approved a key water-quality permit for a proposed natural gas pipeline off the coast of New York City, reversing prior denials. The state's environmental regulators also struck a new agreement with a controversial Bitcoin mining operation that will allow it to continue operating its fossil fuel plant in the Finger Lakes.

Environmental groups, advocates and some lawmakers are viewing the actions as a sign that Hochul is changing her views on renewable energy and climate change mitigation.

"I am disgusted to learn about Governor Hochul's indefinite delay of the All-Electric Buildings Act," Assemblymember Emily Gallagher, who represents the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint and Williamsburg neighborhoods, wrote in a statement. "It is enraging, but not surprising. Given this governor reversed course on a toxic gas pipeline, cryptocurrency mining and now the All-Electric Buildings Act – in the last week alone."

The all-electric law passed in 2023 as part of the state budget and was set to ban new gas hookups in new buildings under seven stories in January. The law is expected to expand to all other new buildings in 2029. The groups suing to overturn the law say it is preempted by the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act, which calls for increasing energy supplies while also decreasing energy demand. The law prompted the creation of fuel economy standards for cars.

Hochul continues to support the law despite the agreement to delay it, said Ken Lovett, the governor's adviser on energy and environment.

"The governor remains committed to the all-electric-buildings law and believes this action will help the state defend it, as well as reduce regulatory uncertainty for developers during this period of litigation," Lovett said in an email. "Governor Hochul remains resolved to providing more affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for New Yorkers."

Earlier this month, a group of 19 Democratic assemblymembers sent a letter to the governor asking her to delay the law because of affordability concerns.

The deal “bolsters the argument I’ve been making alongside a growing coalition of colleagues: The grid isn’t ready. This is not the time to add to its load,” said Assemblymember William Conrad, who represents parts of Western New York and who spearheaded the letter, on social media.

Hochul said last week in announcing the pipeline permit that she has to “govern in reality,” noting the Trump administration’s view on renewable energy. Hochul has also repeatedly cited affordability concerns for climate-friendly measures.

“We are facing war against clean energy from Washington Republicans, including our New York delegation, which is why we have adopted an all-of-the-above approach that includes a continued commitment to renewables and nuclear power to ensure grid reliability and affordability,” she said last week.

Environmental groups deny claims that the All-Electric Buildings Act is not affordable. According to a report by Switchbox released last month, new all-electric homes can save households more than \$1,000 annually. That savings more than doubles for homes in rural parts of the state. An analysis by Switchbox also showed that the state’s grid can handle implementation of the law.

“After following the science and signing the All-Electric Buildings Law to save families money and fight climate change, Governor Hochul is taking a machete to state law,” Lisa Marshall, director at New Yorkers for Clean Power, wrote in a statement. “In record timing, she’s dashed all her progress on New York’s climate and energy affordability goals.”

Aside from the financial benefits, advocates said that the law cuts climate emissions and provides public health benefits. According to a 2023 study, about 19% of childhood asthma cases can be linked to having a gas stove at home.

ALL BOROUGHS (CHANGE) &gt; | SEPTEMBER 19, 2025



*New Yorkers who own one- or two-family homes and get the Basic or Enhanced School Tax Relief credit or exemption qualify for a rebate check to cover the cost of an NYC Bin. (Ed Reed/Mayoral Photography Office)*

CITYWIDE

## NYC homeowners could get cash back for their trash bins

BY ERICA BROSNAN | NEW YORK CITY

PUBLISHED 12:22 PM ET SEP. 18, 2025

New York City homeowners could soon receive a check to cover the cost of one of the city's official trash bins, Mayor Eric Adams said Thursday.

New Yorkers who own one- or two-family homes and get the Basic or Enhanced School Tax Relief (STAR or E-STAR) credit or exemption qualify for a rebate check for \$59.30 to cover the cost of an NYC Bin, Adams said in a news release.

ALL BOROUGHS (CHANGE) &gt; | SEPTEMBER 19, 2025

## What You Need To Know

- New Yorkers who own one- or two-family homes and get the Basic or Enhanced School Tax Relief (STAR or E-STAR) credit or exemption qualify for a rebate check for \$59.30 to cover the cost of an NYC Bin
- Eligible homeowners who already purchased a bin online or by phone will get a refund check in the mail automatically
- Homeowners who haven't purchased one yet will get a letter explaining how to buy one online or by phone and receive a check within 30 days of purchase
- Homeowners who have bought or plan to buy one at Home Depot will get a voucher code to request reimbursement online

Homeowners who have bought or plan to buy one at Home Depot, meanwhile, will get a voucher code to request reimbursement online, the release said.

Checks will start arriving in the mail in the coming weeks, the release noted.

"STAR and E-STAR credits and exemptions are generally for property owners whose total household income is less than \$500,000," the release said. "The [Department of Finance] will mail checks to homeowners who have applied for this credit in 2024 or 2025."

As of November 2024, all properties with one to nine residential units **must use secure-lidded bins of 55 gallons or less**. Existing compliant bins can be used only until June 2026, when the official NYC Bin becomes mandatory.

"There's no reason to wait — cleaning up our city starts at home," Adams said in a statement. "To encourage everyone to do their part and to help put more money back into the pockets of working-class New Yorkers, we'll be covering the cost of the NYC Bin for most one- and two-family homeowners."

"While NYC Bins were already the most affordable containers of their quality on the market, this rebate makes it even easier for homeowners to purchase their NYC Bins," Department of Sanitation Acting Commissioner Javier Lojan said in his own statement.

The rat-resistant bins also work with DSNY's mechanical trucks, making trash collection safer and cleaner, according to the release.