



S.W.I.M. Coalition

Stormwater Infrastructure Matters: utilizing stormwater as a resource, not a waste!

Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek Raw Sewage Overflows

ACTION ALERT!

Recently approved water quality plans ensure Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek will continue to be unhealthy for recreation for decades to come.

Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek are connected waterbodies in the middle of Northern Queens. Flushing Creek originates in Flushing Meadow Corona Park and meets Flushing Bay just east of CitiField. Flushing Bay is an active waterbody for human-powered boaters, and has a wild growing oyster population.

Nearly every time it rains, raw sewage and polluted stormwater overflow from New York City’s antiquated sewers. In a typical year, 2.3 billion gallons of this “combined sewer overflow” (CSO) are dumped into Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek.



After years of planning, the City has been revealing long term plans for waterbodies throughout NYC to reduce CSOs (called Long Term Control Plans, or LTCPs). However, there is a major issue with the plans: they don’t go far enough to reduce CSOs! The State has quietly decided to approve some of the LTCPs, which allow massive amounts of raw sewage overflows to continue for decades. The state approved the Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek plans in March 2017. The table below shows what was proposed and approved for the two waterbodies, the volume of CSO reduced (zero for Flushing Creek), how many times a year there will be a CSO event, how much it will cost and when it will be complete.

| LTCP Waterbody | Proposal | Annual CSO Volume (in millions of gallons per year) | | | Number of overflows/year (after LTCP) | Cost | Anticipated Construction Completion |
|-----------------------|--|---|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| | | Baseline* | Reduced in the LTCP | Volume w/ LTCP Implemented | | | |
| Flushing Creek | Seasonal chlorination at existing CSO tank | 1,196 | 0 | 1,196 | 14 | \$7 M | 2025 |
| Flushing Bay | New CSO storage tunnel | 1,405 | 746 | 659 | 14 | \$670 M | 2035 |

*The baseline does not necessarily reflect present-day conditions. It assumes implementation of grey infrastructure from previous plans as well as green infrastructure that will manage stormwater from 10% of the impervious surfaces of the combined sewer area.

To see official documents about the LTCPs, visit the State Department of Environmental Conservation’s website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/77733.html>.



Here are some of the reasons you should be concerned about the approval of these plans:

- **Public health not protected:** The plans fail to meet federal health standards for safe contact with the water.
- **Chlorination instead of CSO reduction:** For Flushing Creek, the LTCP proposed using chlorine disinfection to kill bacteria, and will still allow over a billion gallons of CSO to enter the Creek.
 - o DEP has not tested the technology to chlorinate at a CSO outfall – we don't know how much chlorine will end up in the waterways.
 - o Chlorine disinfection removes some, but not all, pathogens and creates chemical byproducts that could be harmful to human and ecological health.
- **Decades of delay:** For Flushing Bay, the construction of a CSO storage tunnel (one of the largest CSO reductions proposed in the city) will take nearly 20 years to complete, and will only reduce CSOs by half, still allowing 650 million gallons of CSO into the Bay every year. CSOs will still occur 14 times a year.
- **Short-changing green infrastructure:** The plans ignore cost-effective opportunities to reduce CSOs with green infrastructure on public and private property.
- **Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek analyzed separately.** The LTCPs analyzed Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek as separate waterbodies, even though they are connected; poor water quality in Flushing Creek is damaging to water quality in Flushing Bay, and vice versa.
- **Flawed public process:** The public process is not reaching much of the community or allowing for meaningful input.
 - o Both the City and the State have failed to communicate ongoing pollution to the community. (How did you hear about CSOs and the development of LTCPs?)
 - o The State neglected comment letters written by environmental advocates and scientists questioning the public process and the proposed technology (chlorination).
 - o The approval of these plans was not publicly announced, but rather quietly posted on the City and State's websites.

Help Protect this Waterway!



GET INVOLVED!

- **Contact your local elected officials,** starting with your City Council Member:

Councilman Peter Koo

*(Downtown Flushing, Murray Hill,
and Queensboro Hill)*

718-888-8747

pkoo@council.nyc.gov

135-27 38 Ave, Suite 388

Flushing, NY 11354

Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras-Copeland

*(East Elmhurst, Elmhurst,
Jackson Heights, and Corona)*

718-651-1917

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East Elmhurst, NY 11369

Visit www.mygovnyc.org for a list of all your elected officials and their contact information.

- **Keep up to date!** Join the [SWIM email list](#) for citywide updates, and email these local organizations and ask what you can do to help their efforts:

Friends of Flushing Creek:

friendsofflushingcreek@gmail.com

Guardians of Flushing Bay:

guardiansofflushingbay@gmail.com

Stay updated on this issue! SWIM will send alerts and updates on actions you can take. Join our [email list](#), follow us on Twitter [@SWIMcoalition](#) and on the web at www.swimmablenyc.info regularly. For more information contact us at swimmablenyc@gmail.com.



Stormwater Infrastructure Matters (SWIM) is a coalition of 70 member organizations dedicated to ensuring swimmable and fishable waters around New York City through natural, sustainable stormwater management practices.

