

Press



Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cornell: New Class To Help Residents Learn How To Reduce Water Use Around Homes & Businesses

Conserving Water Key To Avoiding Costly New Drinking Water Treatment Plants

New City, NY (March 3, 2016) – Learn how to “water down” with a new class that will show participants how to save water around their homes and businesses.

The Rockland County Task Force on Water Resources Management, which is chaired by Rockland County Legislator Harriet Cornell, is teaming up with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland and Rockland BOCES to offer the course.

“Conserving water is paramount if we hope to avoid the need for costly new drinking water treatment plants,” Cornell said. “This class will provide participants with the information they need to contribute to that effort – starting with this spring’s growing season, a time when outdoor water usage traditionally starts to increase.”

An information session about the class will be offered Tuesday during a special joint meeting of the Task Force and the Rockland County Water Quality Committee at Rockland Community College.

Updates on both organizations’ efforts will be provided along with a presentation by the instructor of the new class, Yolanda Maldonado, Cornell Cooperative Extension’s new Environmental Educator.

“I strongly believe it is important to build a bridge between research and the application of research to conserve the environment,” Maldonado said.

Maldonado holds a Master’s Degree in Conservation Biology from the University of Kent’s Durrell School of Conservation and Ecology in England. She has researched biodiversity in Italy, worked to reduce wood consumption in Peru and developed educational programs for the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, among other efforts.

The new class will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Thursdays, from April 7 through May 26 on the BOCES campus in West Nyack. The cost is \$130. The March 8 information session is free of charge and will take place in the Technology Building of RCC at 6 p.m.

Projects to be studied include rain gardens, rain barrels, disconnected downspouts, pervious pavement, drip irrigation, and native plants. Students will also learn how to plan and maintain ecological landscapes which help conserve water, provide food and habitat for wildlife, and improve the aesthetic beauty of a property.

The course includes both a lecture and a field component and is the first in a series of courses that are expected to be offered.

The Rockland County Task Force on Water Resources Management resulted after United Water New York's effort to build a costly Hudson River desalination plant energized residents into opposing the facility in favor of additional studies of the existing supply and demand, and deeper exploration of alternatives.

In November 2014, the Public Service Commission determined that while Rockland may one day need more water, it doesn't need it until at least 2020. In the same decision, the PSC said opponents of the plant would now have the time they needed to implement conservation measures designed to delay or possibly prevent the project.

In the 18 months since its first meeting, the Task Force has experienced multiple successes, including submission of a report by national water conservation and efficiency expert Amy Vickers, *Water Losses and Customer Water Use in the United Water New York System*; and the creation of five committees to focus on details related to conservation, groundwater and stormwater, drought and flood control, systems management and community communications.

The Task Force is using Vickers' analysis, which provides baseline information about the status of Rockland's water supply system, to help identify possible conservation efforts.

Vickers has recommended that a combination of conservation, water reuse technologies, rainwater harvesting and green infrastructure options be tapped to help Rockland further drive down demand and increase water supply independence.

United Water New York is now known as Suez Water New York. It is a private utility that provides drinking water to about 90 percent of homes and businesses in Rockland. The Public Service Commission oversees most utilities in New York State.

In December, the PSC directed the company to formally abandon the plant. The company is now attempting to recoup \$54 million it spent in pursuit of the project by collecting a surcharge from ratepayers, in addition to requesting a rate hike.

For more information about the new class, including how to register, go here: <http://bit.ly/1nihLdi>

Get more information about the Rockland County Task Force on Water Resources Management here: <http://bit.ly/1FYf83J>

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