



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 17, 2009

www.nyc.gov

**DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER, COMMISSIONERS LAWITTS, DOHERTY AND PARVIZI
BEGIN CLEAN-UP OF “SWAMP” AT ABANDONED RAILROAD TRACKS IN MOTT
HAVEN**

Deputy Mayor Edward Skyler was joined today by Department of Environmental Protection Acting Commissioner Steven W. Lawitts, Department of Sanitation Commissioner John J. Doherty, and Community Affairs Unit Commissioner Nazli Parvizi to begin the draining and clean-up of the flooded and abandoned railroad tracks that stretch from the Bruckner Expressway to St. Mary’s Park in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. The Department of Environmental Protection will today begin using hydraulic pumps to drain more than 150,000 gallons of stagnant water from the “swamp.” Once the draining is complete, the Department of Sanitation will clear the area of debris, allowing an assessment of the possible causes of the flooding. After the area is cleared it will be actively monitored to prevent conditions from reappearing. The coordinated City response comes after neighborhood residents raised concerns about odor, accumulation of garbage and refuse, and a presence of standing water that is conducive to the breeding of mosquitoes and other pests, and rats. The City will seek to hold the owners of the swamp, which sits on private property, responsible for the cost of the cleanup.

“We listened to the community’s concerns and we are implementing a coordinated, comprehensive response to address an important quality of life issue,” said Deputy Mayor Skyler. “By not maintaining this site, the private owners have created a neighborhood eyesore that is potentially dangerous, so the City is taking the unusual but necessary step of cleaning up the property.”

“This is a case where a private property owner has abandoned his responsibility to maintain his property and in so doing has imposed a tremendous burden on his neighbors, particularly since this location is atypical,” said DEP Acting Commissioner Lawitts. “We are hopeful that the work we are beginning today will provide some relief to nearby residents.”

“The combined efforts of city agencies to alleviate the potential hazards of the ‘Bronx Swamp’ tells citizens that government does listen and acts upon their concerns,” said Sanitation Commissioner Doherty. “Private property owners must know that it is their responsibility to maintain their property in a clean, healthy, and safe manner.”

“The Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit is pleased to have partnered with a number of City agencies to develop a long-term solution to the ‘Bronx Swamp’,” said Commissioner Nazli Parvizi.

“From the beginning, the site posed a number of complex challenges to implementing a clean-up strategy. Over the past few months, CAU has worked in close collaboration with local community groups and elected officials, as well as our partner agencies to ensure that a lasting solution is put in place.”

The City’s Law Department conducted an exhaustive review of property and tax records which resulted in the issuance of Nuisance Abatement Orders by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to all potential owners notifying them of their obligation to clean the site. All parties contacted disavowed ownership. Instead of delaying clean-up and waiting on resolution of litigation with potential owners of the essentially abandoned site, the City is moving forward with the clean-up itself. The Department of Finance will place a lien on the property, which will give the City the right to foreclose on the property and obtain compensation for its clean-up efforts.

- 30 -

Contact:	Stu Loeser/Jason Post	(212) 788-8125
	Mike Saucier (DEP)	(718) 595-6680
	Vito A. Turso (DSNY)	(646) 885-5020
	Kate Ahlers (Law)	(212) 788-0400