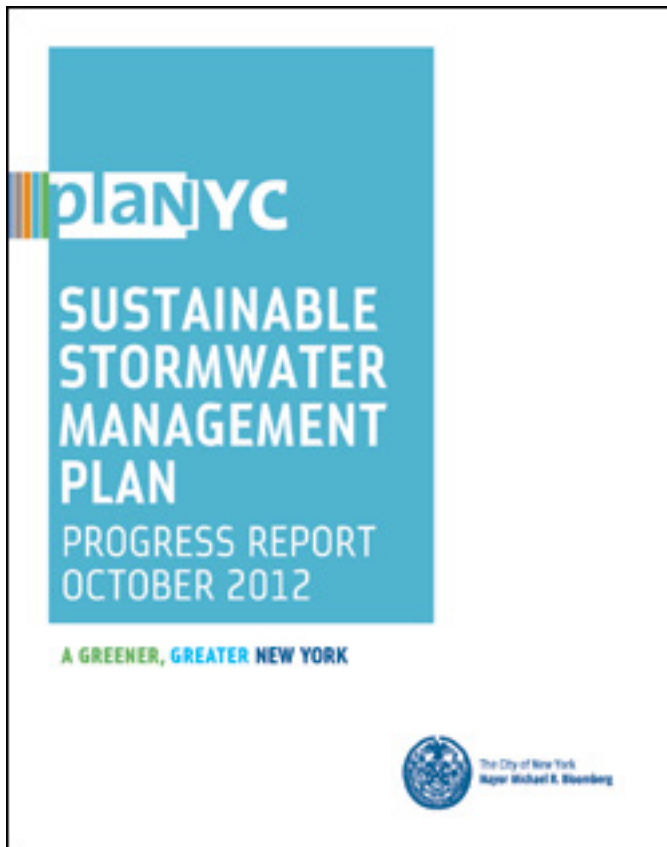


Little Known Stormwater Reporting Could Be Nixed

by {ga=screan1}

Monday, November 19, 2012 09:28 AM

NEW YORK — A proposal to eliminate the reporting requirement of the city's plan to sustainably manage the discharge of billions of gallons of [stormwater](#) that can contaminate rivers, bays and other water bodies is being criticized as a potential blow to accountability.



A city [commission](#) is expected to vote today on whether to eliminate more than a dozen reports and advisory committees that are no longer considered useful, including the little-known reporting requirement of the stormwater management plan.

Environmental groups say they are perplexed by the push to eliminate the reporting requirement of the stormwater management plan, especially in light of the strong possibility of more severe storms like Hurricane Sandy that can cause overflows.

"If we have that problem already, and we have potential storm surges and flooding, the concern is that they can overwhelm the storm sewage system," said Phillip Musegaas, program Director at Hudson Riverkeeper.

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He said that if the reporting requirement is eliminated, there will be "no overarching process" that looks at stormwater management city-wide.

Between one-half to two-thirds of the city relies on an overflow sewer system comprised of two sets of linked pipes. One set of pipes moves raw sewage toward treatment plants, while the other drains rainwater from the streets toward the city's waterways. In the event of sustained rainfall, rainwater from the streets eventually backs into the sewage pipes and the city must release both raw sewage and storm water into local waterways.

Stormwater is considered a possible public health hazard, with untreated discharge potentially carrying bacteria and other pollutants into the city's waterways. Developing a more sustainable stormwater system is seen as critical to advancing water quality.

Green infrastructure solutions — such as the restoration of wetlands and the use of water permeable pavement — tracked by the reporting requirement could assist in mitigating the impact of storm-related flooding and storm surges, the groups argue.

They also say eliminating the reporting requirement will remove public accountability for stormwater management planning in outlying sections of the city such as the Rockaways, Northern Staten Island, South Brooklyn, and large sections of Queens are left out of current reporting.

"Why is this happening? The city is saving tens of millions of dollars on the green infrastructure plan," said Rob Crauderueff, coordinator of the [Stormwater Infrastructure Matters](#) coalition. "Would it not make sense to continue reporting — to encourage creative thinking?"

He added, "Reporting is a way to make sure that there is a continued relationship between the policies that the city puts out and the public."

Councilman James Gennaro, D-Queens, the chair of the committee on environmental protection who sponsored [the legislation creating the stormwater management plan](#), said Friday a deal had been reached with the mayor's office to retain the requirements for the storm water

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management plan within other reports generated by the city.

"I don't have a problem with the Bloomberg administration cutting back — but we have to be careful," he said.

Details of the deal weren't made public ahead of the commission's meeting.

The mayor's office, which supports eliminating the reporting requirement, seemed to confirm Gennaro's claim.

A spokeswoman for Bloomberg's office, Lauren Passalacqua, said the stormwater management initiatives would instead be reported in the annual progress report of the city's sustainability blueprint, known as PlaNYC.

The commission will also weigh whether to eliminate some clearly [outdated](#) or unusual boards and reports, such as a committee to advise the Health Department on tattoo-related health issues and a report on horse-drawn cab stands.

Also flagged as unnecessary by the commission are a biannual report on [class size](#) , an annual report on housing needs and a commission on foster care of children.

Any vote by the commission to eliminate the reporting requirement for the stormwater management plan will require City Council approval.