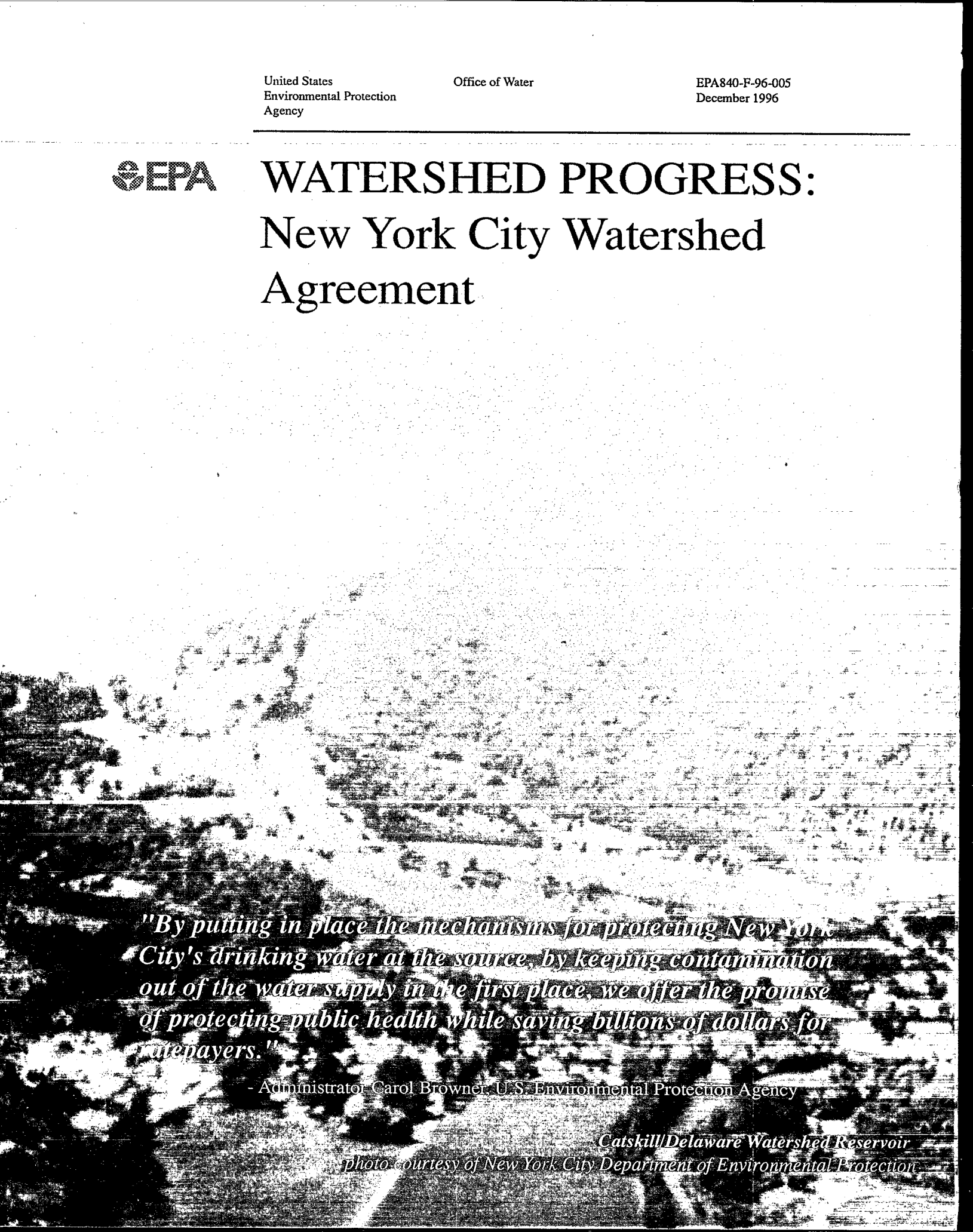




WATERSHED PROGRESS: New York City Watershed Agreement

A large, grainy, black and white aerial photograph of a vast, forested watershed area, likely the Catskill/Delaware Watershed Reservoir. The terrain is rugged with many small, dark patches of water or wetland interspersed among the trees. The overall tone is somber and emphasizes the natural environment.

"By putting in place the mechanisms for protecting New York City's drinking water at the source, by keeping contamination out of the water supply in the first place, we offer the promise of protecting public health while saving billions of dollars for ratepayers."

- Administrator Carol Browner, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

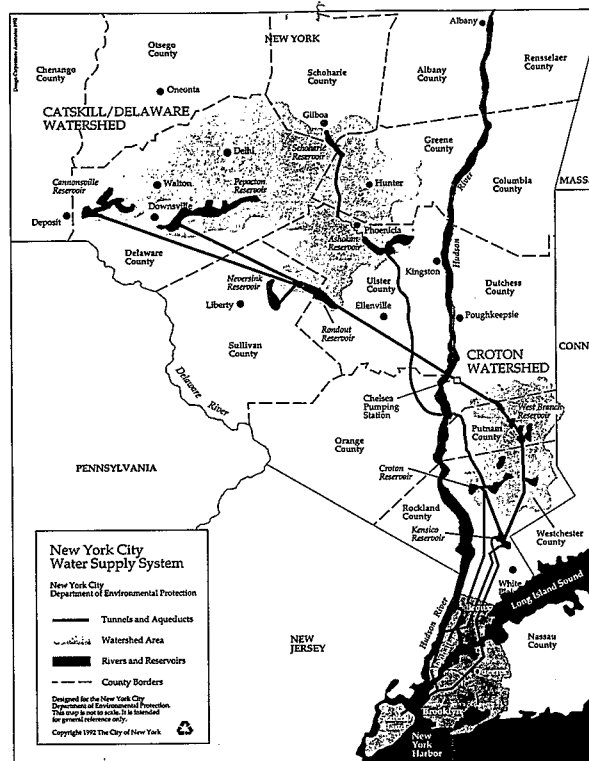
*Catskill/Delaware Watershed Reservoir
photo courtesy of New York City Department of Environmental Protection*

Since 1991, the U.S. EPA has been promoting the watershed approach as a mechanism to achieve the next generation of water protection. In each watershed, or drainage area, different "drivers" for action -- legal requirements and/or State or local concerns -- guide residents and other stakeholders to identify and assemble solutions. Below is a description of the New York City Watershed agreement where the Safe Drinking Water Act served as the "driver" for using a watershed approach. It has made a difference.

The system:

Nine million residents of New York City and surrounding suburbs rely for the source of their drinking water on a series of reservoirs located many miles away in the Catskill and Delaware watersheds in upstate New York. New York City owns less than 10 percent of the watershed, which covers roughly 1,900 square miles. The Catskill/Delaware watershed has a year-round population of around 77,000, as well as a significant number of summer residents. Dairy farms comprise a majority of the 350 farms there.

For many decades, relations between New York City and the watershed areas have been marked by controversy and conflict, focusing on the City's past acquisitions of reservoir lands and the use of regulatory and management authority in the watershed. In 1989, EPA's Surface Water Treatment Rule (SWTR), issued under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, required filtration of all surface water supplies (rivers and lakes) to protect against microbial contamination of drinking water. This requirement can be waived if a water system's treatment processes and natural conditions provide safe water and if the watershed is actively protected to ensure that safety in the future. Under the SWTR's authority, EPA has worked with New York City, New York State, and local communities on a program to implement this watershed protection requirement in the Catskill/Delaware watersheds.



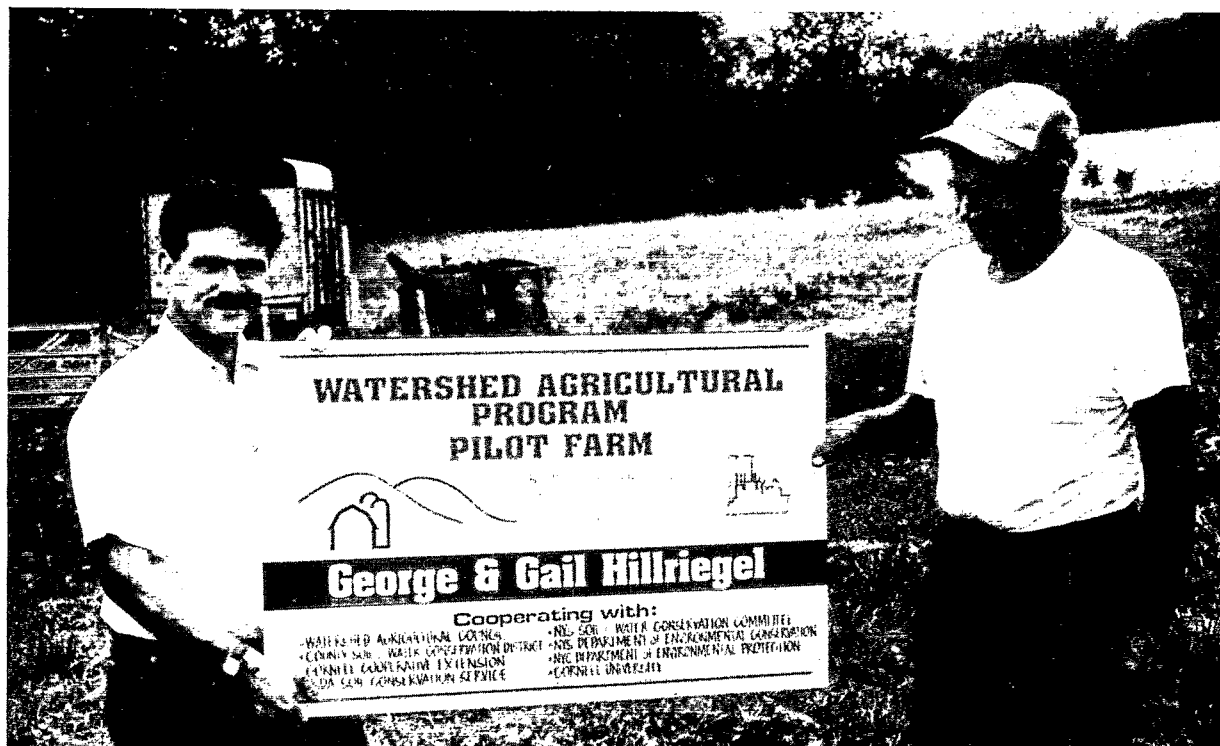
The stresses:

Although New York City residents have enjoyed superior drinking water for 150 years because of its high quality upland supplies, the potential for microbial contamination has become an increasing concern as evidenced by a series of boil water alerts since 1993. Wastewater discharges from treatment plants (some operated by New York City) and runoff from urban and agricultural sources, which contribute both microbial pathogens as well as phosphorus, are the primary pollution sources.

The strategy:

In 1993, EPA issued New York City a waiver of the filtration requirement on condition that the City would take numerous steps to maintain and protect the Catskill/Delaware's drinking water quality. EPA then urged the Governor to convene a group representing New York City, New York State, watershed communities, the U.S. EPA, and environmental groups to negotiate an effective and equitable watershed program. It was hoped that such a program would enable the City to meet the waiver conditions, protect the City's water supply while avoiding the multi-billion dollar cost of a filtration plant for Catskill/Delaware water supplies, and address the concerns and goals of residents in the upstate counties.

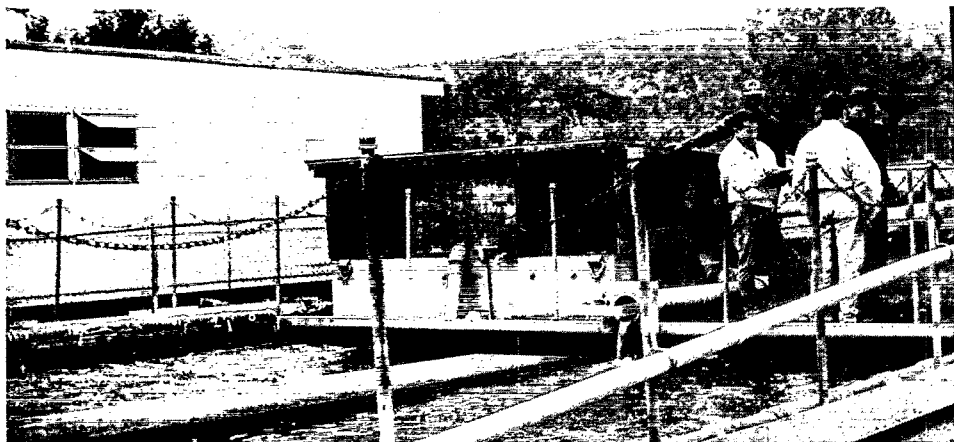
The negotiations produced a landmark agreement which successfully resolves long-standing controversies and sets forth responsibilities and benefits for all major parties. The City will finalize its regulations for watershed land uses, acquire sensitive lands to protect key reservoirs and waterways, conduct more extensive water quality testing in the watershed, and support upstate/downstate partnership programs (including major investments in wastewater treatment facility upgrades, a fund for compatible economic development in the watershed, and a regional watershed partnership council). New York State will adopt the City's watershed regulations and land acquisition permits consistent with implementation of the overall agreement and establish a new Watershed Inspector General's Office to ensure that the City's regulations are implemented to protect public health. EPA will continue to oversee New York City's filtration waiver and the City and State's action to implement the agreement. Finally, watershed residents can develop property to the extent the regulations allow, or sell it to the City if they choose. In addition, upstate community representatives will participate in the regional watershed partnership council, which will include representatives of the State, City, and downstate consumers.



Watershed Agricultural Program Pilot Farm

Measures of Progress:

The agreement represents historic progress by moving New York City and the Catskill/Delaware watersheds past many decades of controversy towards a commitment to complementary, mutually-beneficial goals and solutions. New York City has an opportunity to save its ratepayers billions of dollars by avoiding filtration while protecting drinking water quality through targeted land acquisition and other water quality investments and regulations requiring that watershed development be environmentally sustainable. Watershed residents can build a future with improved water quality, a better-protected, amenity-rich landscape, and compatible economic development. *For further information about the New York City Watershed Protection Program, please call 718-595-5371.*



Sewage Treatment

"...we have put aside the suspicions that have existed far too long between the downstate communities and their upstate neighbors. This agreement does what many thought impossible: it protects the 1,900 square mile watershed from degradation while allowing upstate communities the ability to grow and develop in an environmentally responsible manner."

- Governor Pataki, State of New York

EPA's Role

EPA Region 2 was a key player in the negotiations among the New York City watershed interests. EPA agreed to extend New York City's filtration avoidance determination, allowing time to help design and implement a comprehensive watershed protection program while insuring compliance with the Federal drinking water regulations. For more information, contact EPA Region 2 at (212) 637-3725 or on the world wide web at www.epa.gov/Region2.

Nationally, EPA has been reorienting its programs and developing tools to facilitate the watershed approach since 1991. With regard to drinking water, EPA has been working to build capabilities for source water protection. The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act provide new programs, tools and resources for such protection. For more information on the watershed approach, please contact the EPA at 401 M Street, S.W., Mailcode 4601 (for drinking water issues) or 4501F (for watershed issues), Washington, DC 20460 or visit us on the world-wide web at URL:<http://www.epa.gov/OW/>.