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## ***PVSC Adopts 2009 Operating Budget; Average Residential Sewer Rates Remain Lowest in State***

**NEWARK** -- The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners (PVSC) adopted its operating budget for 2009, which maintains the State's lowest average residential sewer rates. The average homeowner will pay less than \$110 for the year in sewer charges.

"We are extremely proud to adopt a budget that increases our user charges by far less than the rate of inflation – an increase of less than 1.7% for 2009," said PVSC Chairman Thomas Powell. "The Commissioners and staff have, once again, shown tremendous fiscal responsibility and innovation in crafting a budget that continues to hold the line on residential rates in these difficult economic times.

"Through sound management, successful efficiency measures and the hard work of all the men and women who help run this facility, we can continue to provide wastewater treatment services to more than 1.3 million New Jerseyans, who enjoy the lowest sewer rates in all of New Jersey," Powell added.

PVSC's total budget for 2009 will be \$156,584,482. The bulk of the spending increase is attributable to the termination of PVSC's agreement with EnCap Holdings to ship its biosolids to the Meadowlands for use as daily landfill cover. A steady decline in industrial users, payments to the State pension system, debt service and declines in new connection fees due to the slow-down of the construction industry were other factors impacting the budget.

"The Commissioner's are constantly looking for ways to minimize the affect of our operating budget on member municipalities and their residents," said PVSC Executive Director Bryan Christiansen. "The termination of our agreement with EnCap to ship our biosolids to the Meadowlands means we now have to pay to truck it to a facility in Virginia, an increase in that line item of more than \$4 million annually.

"Despite the overall spending increase, we have been able to offset our sewer rate increase through increases in revenue to our Liquid Waste Acceptance Unit and by applying monies from our Rate Stabilization Fund," Christiansen said. "We also implemented a hiring freeze in October of 2005, lowering employee salaries by more than \$7 million to date."

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“We have continued to institute cost-saving measures wherever possible,” added Christiansen. “But, unlike other industrial operations, PVSC simply cannot shut down our operations, cut back on staff hours and save on utilities. Our mandate is to protect water quality in the Passaic Valley, and that is a 24-hour a week, 365-day a year job.”

Despite rising costs, PVSC has pledged not to cut back on the programs it provides to member municipalities, which include the Passaic River/Newark Bay Restoration Program and Education Outreach Program.

Since PVSC started its Passaic River/Newark Bay Restoration Program in 1998, it has organized over 375 shoreline clean-ups that have resulted in the removal of over 6,000 tons of debris. For its clean-up efforts, PVSC has been awarded an ***Environmental Excellence Award*** from the New Jersey Association of Environmental Authorities.

PVSC’s Education Outreach Program was delivered to over 25,000 Passaic Valley students last year. The program is designed to make children more aware of the affects their everyday life has on the region’s water quality, and last year was awarded the ***Governor’s Environmental Excellence Award***.

“The Commissioners will continue to operate PVSC with a keen eye on efficiency so we can continue to offer our residential users the lowest rates in New Jersey,” said Christiansen.