**Biographies**

**Jerry Willis, Director NYC/Metro Field Office**
**National Park Service**

**Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program**

Jerry’s background is in Environmental/Community/Natural Resource Planning and he has over twenty-five years experience working with urban communities on natural resource, open space and conservation issues.  He has worked with hundreds of community-based organizations and government agencies in diverse communities across the New York/Metropolitan region.

Jerry currently directs the New York City/Metropolitan Field Office of the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program for the Northeast Region of the National Park Service.  Projects he has worked on for the Park Service include the Bronx River Restoration & Greenway; the 150 mile Liberty-Water Gap Trail across northern NJ; the Highbridge Restoration Greenway Link; the 160 + mile NYC Water Trail, the Harlem River Greenway; Walk E Harlem; the Newark Waterfront Trail; the Passaic River Blueway; the Rutherford Bicycle Ring; and the Hackensack River Canoe & Kayak Trail.

**Karen Argenti, Board Member**

**Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ)**

Karen has an extensive background in administration, municipal governance, politics and community action. She serves on the steering committee of the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality Brownfields Opportunity Area Project along the Harlem River, and is in charge of developing the public outreach program. Working with the Gaia Institute, she assisted in designing public participation for the proposal to turn the Henry Hudson Parkway into the first Scenic Byway in NYC. She also prepared the census and other data for the Head Start Programs as consultant preparing federally required Community Assessments.

Since December 2000, she is a member of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SPPP) Advisory Committee set up as an agreement in the NYS DOT 120 EIS – this committee has been able to create a state of the art stormwater practice protecting the Kensico Reservoir. (The project ran out of money after the design was completed). She commented on various Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), including the Croton Water Treatment Plant (was a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee), and the Route 120/684/22 NYS Department of Transportation EIS. For more than twenty years, she worked for city and state elected officials gaining a diverse experience working with the NYC Council President, NY City Council, the NY State Senate, and the Bronx Democratic County Committee.

Community Memberships include: Current -- Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Association (FIPNA) Vice President; Friends of Jerome Park Reservoir, Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ) Board Member, Communications Committee Chair and Co-Chair of the Water Committee. Former community associations include:  founding member of the Jerome Park Reservoir Citizens Advisory Committee and the, Jerome Park Conservancy, Member and Chairperson of Bronx Community Board 7, and Board Member of the Mosholu Preservation Corporation.

**Dart Westphall, Board Member**

**Bronx Council for Environmental Quality**

Dart Westphal received his BSFS from Georgetown University in 1975. He worked in a middle school for emotionally disturbed children, taught at the Academy of Notre Dame and the Garland school, while doing graduate work in education at George Washington University. He received his MA in anthropology from Catholic University while working for the Municipal Reference Service of the National League of Cities.

Mr. Westphal worked for the South Bronx Open Space Task Force, building community designed playgrounds and gardens, before serving as Director of the West Tremont/Kingsbridge Neighborhood Preservation Office of the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development. He managed and coordinated department operations for an area encompassing 25% of Bronx County (250,000 population) underwriting $8 - $12 million in loans annually and coordinated the full spectrum of housing development activities. He simultaneously served as Director of a Federally sponsored Apartment Improvement Program (NHS) involving city officials, building owners, tenants and lenders, developing resources from private sources.

In 1987 Mr. Westphal began as COO of Mosholu Preservation Corp. (MPC), becoming President in 1996. MPC is a non-profit housing, community and economic development organization; a support corporation of the Montefiore Medical Center.

Mr. Westphal coordinated acquisition and rehabilitation, cooperative conversion, condominium construction and technical assistance to landlords and small businesses. He developed the nation’s first Safe House for Lead Poisoning Prevention. He spearheaded adaptive re-use of disused properties, turning a former office building into a kindergarten and two former synagogues into a nursery school and a child abuse prevention center. He led the historic preservation of a 19th century reservoir building, including listing on the Registers of Historic Places and New York City Landmark status. He implemented economic development projects including the creation and management of a Business Improvement District. He founded the **Norwood News**, a bi-weekly community newspaper, and led the development of the Bronx News Network, with two additional newspapers both in print and online.

Throughout his career Mr. Westphal has led efforts to improve public services and facilities and enhance community organizations' ability to be self-sufficient. These include co-founding the Norwood Street Fair, several parks friends groups, the Bronx Parks Speak Up, The Tour de Bronx bike tour, The Bronx River Alliance, spearheading both the 1993 and 2007 Bronx Greenway Plans and Lutheran Cooperating in Ministry.

He provided organizational sponsorship for the Norwood Food Co-op, a grandparent support center, New York Coalition to End Lead Poisoning, and incubated Effective Alternative Reconciliation Services and the Norwood Blooms collaboration. He consulted on the founding and initial projects of New Directions Inc., a project of Bronx Lebanon Hospital Center.

He has been a task supervisor for graduate students at the Columbia School of Social Work, taught Community Development and Conflict Resolution at Manhattan College and City Government at Lehman College (CUNY). He ran multiple internship programs with both high school and college students in journalism, real estate development, economic development and parks partnerships.

He has served as a Board Member of the Bronx Council on the Arts, Bronx Center Advisory Council, Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (President), NYC Clean Water CAC, Croton CAC, Bronx Tourism Council, Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, Long Range Planning Committee Metro New York Synod (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), Epiphany Lutheran Church Council (President), Bronx River Alliance (Chair), Harlem River Working Group.

 **Chauncy Young, Coordinator**

**Harlem River Working Group**

Chauncy has been a community and labor organizer for over fifteen years throughout the New England and New York City Area. He has worked as an organizer with the New York City Coalition for Educational Justice, organizing parents and community members to improve their schools. Through his work with the NYCEJ and its local parent organization the United Parents of Highbridge, Chauncy was able to help design the first Green School for the Highbridge Neighborhood of the Bronx, a middle school which will be focused on environmental sciences and will be equipped with a greenroof laboratory equipped with solar panels and wind turbines to augment the students’ studies.

He has served as the Chairperson of the High Bridge Coalition, which successfully raised sixty-five million dollars to reopen the High Bridge, New York City’s oldest standing bridge and a main access point in the New York City Greenway plan; the Bridge is scheduled to open in 2014. He also serves on the board of the Highbridge Library Council and coordinates monthly meetings of a local school coalition and clergy council.