



**Post Office Box 265
The Bronx, New York
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January 14, 2015

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 Fifteenth St. NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Letter of Support for the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park: 2015 Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program for their “Wetland Stewardship for a Healthier Bronx” project. Bronx, NY

To Whom It May Concern:

As an ongoing partner and collaborator with the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ) is pleased to express our enthusiastic support of their grant application.

Formed in 1971, BCEQ has sought to establish — as an Inherent Human Right — a sound, forward-looking environmental policy regarding an aesthetic, unpolluted, environment protecting a natural and historic heritage. Since 2001, we focused on developing connections to and along the Harlem River and created on-water access and activities in an effort to improve water quality. We formed the Harlem River Working Group and received technical assistance from National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program. In 2011, the **Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP)** announced efforts on seven pilot locations -- the Bronx & Harlem River Watersheds (New York) were chosen because both “locations had a strong restoration effort underway, spearheaded by local governments and community organizations.”

Recently, we have collaborated with the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park on projects, including the Wilderness Inquiry Canoe Mobile in the Van Cortlandt Lake, and the BCEQ Harlem River NYS Brownfields Opportunity Area community consensus building internship project. We are proud to recommend them as diligent, effective partners in advancing the social and environmental agendas of creating healthier communities and more productive and sustainable environments.

The Wetland Stewardship for a Healthier Bronx project will work toward capturing the amount of water that flows from Van Cortlandt Lake and Tibbetts Brook into the sewer as a method to reduce sewer overflow into local rivers during heavy storm water events. A combination of classroom study, hands-on participatory group work, and outdoor service projects will stimulate eager students to become involved in planting, invasive removal, and other activities that will benefit Tibbetts Wetland and therefore the Harlem River and East River watersheds.

Thank you for considering funding this project. It will help our communities and will provide valuable environmental, social and ecological improvements along with critical flood protection, water quality enhancements, and newly found recreational and educational opportunities. If you have any questions, we can be reached at 646-529-1990 (Karen) or 917-805-9566 (Dart).

Sincerely,

Karen Argenti

Karen Argenti

Dart Westphal

Dart Westphal

Co-Chairs, Water Committee, BCEQ