



**Post Office Box 265
The Bronx, New York
10464-0265
www.bceq.org**

December 14, 2015

Re: Letter of Support for the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park: NYS DEC 2015 Hudson River Estuary Grants for Local Stewardship Planning program for their “Van Cortlandt Wetland Green Infrastructure Plan” project in Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx, NY.

To Whom It May Concern:

As an ongoing partner and collaborator with the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park (FVCP), 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 (HRWG) 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 FVCP on projects we initiated, such as Wilderness Inquiry Canoe Mobile in the Van Cortlandt Lake, and the BCEQ Harlem River NYS Brownfields Opportunity Area community consensus building internship project. We also collaborated on their projects in the park, including their Wetland Stewardship for a Healthier Bronx project. Our HRWG VISTA Volunteer has been identifying by GIS areas of high flow in the park and its environs during storm events, as part of that 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.

Van Cortlandt Wetland is a 56 acre Class I Freshwater Wetland as determined by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. As there are only 98 acres of wetland left in the Bronx, it is vital that we protect these remaining acres. The wetlands’ overflow discharges directly into a NYC sewer system rather than the Harlem River as in previous years. We support the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park’s efforts to do so by the creation of a Van Cortlandt Wetland Green Infrastructure Plan. The purpose of said plan is to ensure the design, implementation, management and maintenance of Best Management Practices in order to reduce the amount of sediment and other pollutants in both point and non-point storm water discharges into a fragile wetland system, and to reduce the amount of water entering the combined sewer. A Van Cortlandt Park GI plan is non-existent; but is timely to incorporate in the newly adopted Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan.

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. 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