



July 27, 2009

National Park Service
River Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
1849 C St NW Code 2220
Washington, DC 20240

To Whom It May Concern:

Highbridge Community Life Center (HCLC) is an independent, not-for-profit 501c (3) , community-based organization located in the southwest Bronx between the Grand Concourse and the Harlem River. We provide a wide range of educational and social service programs to families living in the Highbridge neighborhood of the South Bronx. Throughout our 30 years of existence, our basic mission has remained the same: **to enable the residents of the Highbridge Community to take more complete charge of their own lives and to empower them to use their new found strength to improve the lives of their families and neighbors.** We nurture the growth of long-term self-sufficiency in individuals, families, and the community by working with youth and families to help them build their personal and social assets through economic opportunities, positive social networks, and high quality services and supports.

HCLC supports the application of the Harlem River Working Group (HRWG) to organize activities for the entire Bronx and to restore the river. In the initial stages, HCLC has supported the HRWG by lending its community organizing program and its program staff. Highbridge is among the most isolated neighborhoods in the Bronx, situated on a ridge and surrounded by the Yankee Stadium Complex, the Deegan Express Way, the Harlem River, and the Cross Bronx Expressway. It is a neighborhood with more step streets exiting the neighborhood than streets. Creating a more accessible waterfront is utmost importance for our community. In addition, both the High Bridge and the Depot Place access to the waterfront are found in the Highbridge Neighborhood and our Agency has served on coalitions and committees to see that these spaces are open and accessible for community recreation.

The need for a person like Jerry Willis, the New York Director of River, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, as well as someone dedicated to working on Harlem River issues is essential, especially given the wide range of projects that are ready to be implemented.

HCLC is eager to work with RTCA staff to help connect our working group to essential resources and contacts that will help make our vision of a clean and vibrant Harlem River a reality.

We have asked to be placed on the mailing list of the group so we may participate in any activities to open up the waterfront to our constituency. Please call me at (718) 681-2222 or email me at purcaroe@highbridgelife.org if you should have any questions.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Ellenrita Purcaro".

Sr Ellenrita Purcaro
Executive Director