



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

November 17, 2015

Re: Letter of Support for the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park: EPA's Urban Waters Small Grants program for their "Van Cortlandt Park Wetland Greening & Green Infrastructure Plan (G&GI 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 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. 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. These wetlands also directly discharge into the NYC sewer system instead of into the Harlem River as they did years ago. We support the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park's efforts to do so by the creation of a Greening & Green Infrastructure Plan. The purpose of G&GI 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.

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