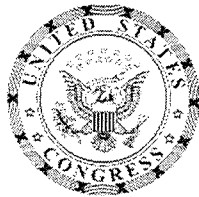
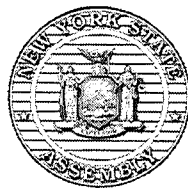


Council Member  
Andrew Cohen



Congressman  
Eliot Engel



Assemblyman  
Jeffrey Dinowitz



Congressman  
Adriano Espaillat



State Senator  
Alessandra Biaggi

December 11, 2019

Erik Kulleseid  
Commissioner  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
P.O Box 189  
Albany, NY 12238

Dear Commissioner Sapienza:

We write to you in shared concern about a recent Modified Negative Declaration (CEQR No.: 17DEP022X) that your agency issued regarding the historic Jerome Park Reservoir located in our community. As you may be aware, this location is currently undergoing a rehabilitation project (JRAQ-REH) and is a beloved neighborhood icon in the heart of the Northwest Bronx. Of significant concern is the DEP plan to leave the North Basin empty following the completion of this rehabilitation project.

The Modified Negative Declaration, issued on October 22, 2019, states that “DEP has determined that the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on the environment” and that “No significant adverse impacts are anticipated to occur with respect to ... open space, historic and archaeological resources, urban design and visual resources, ... [or] neighborhood character”. Respectfully, we adamantly disagree with this assessment and urge you to rescind this Modified Negative Declaration.

Furthermore, we urge you to ensure that the North Basin of Jerome Park Reservoir continues to be filled with water and that DEP takes tangible steps toward our ultimate goal of providing permanent community access at Jerome Park Reservoir for the surrounding neighborhoods.

We would like to bring to your attention the following concerns that our community has regarding statements made in your Modified Negative Declaration:

1. **Environment:** The Jerome Park Reservoir is a key spot for migratory and local birds in the Bronx. Birding websites and other observers have noted dozens of unique avian species taking advantage of the Reservoir including hawks, herons, egrets, ospreys, peregrine falcons, bald eagles, and more. Additionally, the presence of a full body of water has a cooling effect on the surrounding area which helps combat the challenges of urban heat islands.
2. **Open Space:** When DEP built the Croton Filtration Plant several decades ago, they took away public space from Van Cortlandt Park. In order to address concerns raised by the community at that time about the loss of public open space, DEP agreed to work with us to provide access to the Jerome Park Reservoir. In recent years, DEP has opened the Reservoir to community access once or twice annually. It seems to us that leaving the North Basin empty for the purposes of a failsafe measure for the Croton Filtration Plant defies this collaborative effort and does nothing to facilitate full access to the Reservoir that our community has been requesting for many years.

3. **Historic and Archaeological Resources:** As you know, the Jerome Park Reservoir is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (reference number #00001014, listed on September 7, 2000). Given that the Reservoir is historic in large part due to the presence of water for more than a century, we believe that it is essential that the North Basin remain full in order to preserve the historical aspects of this location. Furthermore, the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has indicated on numerous occasions that their opinion that the ongoing rehabilitation project will have no adverse impact upon historic resources is based on the understanding that the “cast-in-place concrete liner wall that under normal operating conditions will be at or below the basin water level.” (See attached letters from SHPO dated June 16, 2017 and October 11, 2016). Based on these previous correspondences, it appears to us that the most recent letter from SHPO (dated June 7, 2019) with their opinion “that the project continues to have No Adverse Effect on historic resources” was made in error and should be corrected.
4. **Urban Design and Visual Resources:** The Jerome Park Reservoir has long been a beloved feature of the surrounding neighborhoods in large part because of the filled reservoir. It baffles us that DEP could possibly state that leaving the North Basin empty would have no adverse impact on visual resources, and it is our sincere hope that this assertion was merely a mistake. Leaving the North Basin empty would be an astounding visual blight in our community and absolutely would have an adverse impact on visual resources.
5. **Neighborhood Character:** Similarly, the Jerome Park Reservoir is an essential component to the character of surrounding neighborhoods. Many local residents purchased apartments or have been longtime tenants in adjacent buildings precisely because of their proximity to the Reservoir. Leaving the North Basin empty would have a devastating impact on the pride which our community has long held about the Jerome Park Reservoir, and it defies logic to state that this change would have no adverse impact on neighborhood character.

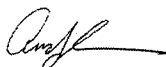
The Modified Negative Declaration issued by DEP on October 22, 2019 seems to ignore these realistic and near-certain adverse impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. Allowing the Reservoir to be “routinely exposed in the north basin instead of the original design intent to keep it below the water line” is unacceptable and, if allowed to proceed, would be a direct affront to our community. How is that after so many years, it suddenly dawned on DEP that the northern basin needs to be kept empty?

We hope that you will take a closer look at your plans for the historic Jerome Park Reservoir and rescind this Modified Negative Declaration. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please contact us with any further questions.

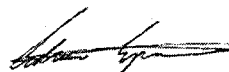
Sincerely,



Jeffrey Dinowitz  
Member of Assembly



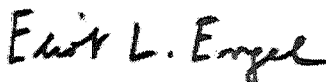
Andrew Cohen  
Council Member



Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Alessandra Biaggi  
State Senator



Eliot Engel  
Member of Congress

cc:

Angela Licata, Deputy Commissioner of Sustainability, DEP  
 Mark Page, Jr., Managing Director, DEP – Environmental Impact Analysis & Technical Review  
 David Lee, Project Manager, DEP – Office of Water Supply Infrastructure and Watershed Assessment, Bureau of Environmental Planning and Analysis  
 Olivia Brazee, Historic Site Restoration Coordinator, NYS Parks – Division for Historic Preservation  
 Erik Kulleseid, Commissioner, NYS Parks



# Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner

October 11, 2016

Mr. Donald Lord  
NYC Department of Environmental Protection  
59-17 Junction Blvd., 11th Floor  
Flushing, NY 11373

Re: EPA  
Jerome Park Reservoir and Aqueduct Rehabilitation Project (JRAQ-REH)  
The Jerome Park Reservoir Site  
15PR05283

Dear Mr. Lord:

Thank you for continuing to consult with the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). We have reviewed the provided documentation in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in place for the Jerome Park Reservoir. These comments are those of the SHPO and relate only to Historic/Cultural resources.

As stated in your October 5, 2016 letter, this project has modified its plans from our initial review in October of 2015 and at this time warrants a new review. We have reviewed the provided plans and project summary as recently provided. Based upon this review, it is ORPHP's opinion the proposed project will continue to have No Adverse Effect upon historic resources provided the following conditions are met:

1. The cast-in-place concrete buttress wall proposed to be constructed against the existing east reservoir wall shall, under normal operations, be below the water line.
2. For any of the proposed work where a 'new capstone' is proposed; the new capstone shall match the historic.
3. The Old Croton Aqueduct (OCA) and the East Basin Outlet will be recorder prior to being filled with flowable fill. The report shall include written documentation of the OCA and East Basin accompanied by photographs illustrating the construction details and materials. The OCA and East Basin are significant for this engineering and the report and photographs should focus on the significant period construction and engineering methodologies and techniques.

Overall, we understand that the proposed work will ensure the longevity of Jerome Park Reservoir in its primary function of providing clean water to New York City. If you have any questions, I can be reached at (518) 268-2181.

Sincerely,

Beth A. Cumming  
Senior Historic Site Restoration Coordinator  
e-mail: [beth.cumming@parks.ny.gov](mailto:beth.cumming@parks.ny.gov)

via e-mail only

cc: A. McClean - DEP

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Division for Historic Preservation

P.O. Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189 • (518) 237-8643 • [www.nysparks.com](http://www.nysparks.com)



# Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner

June 16, 2017

Mr. Donald Lord  
NYC Department of Environmental Protection  
59-17 Junction Blvd., 11th Floor  
Flushing, NY 11373

Re: EPA  
Jerome Park Reservoir and Aqueduct Rehabilitation Project (JRAQ-REH)  
The Jerome Park Reservoir Site  
15PR05283

Dear Mr. Lord:

Thank you for continuing to consult with the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). We have reviewed the provided documentation in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in place for the Jerome Park Reservoir. These comments are those of the SHPO and relate only to Historic/Cultural resources.

We have reviewed the provided "Alternatives Analysis for the Jerome Park Reservoir and Aqueduct Rehabilitation" dated January 2017 and the "Documentation Report, Jerome Park Reservoir and Aqueduct Rehabilitation, Old Croton Aqueduct and East Basin Outlet Conduits in the East Basin Wall" Dated March 17, 2017.

At this time we understand that the project has been modified from our initial reviews. At this time, the project includes Repairs to the Reservoir Interior East Wall, Securing and abandonment of the below ground portions of the Old Croton Aqueduct within the Reservoir East Wall, Wingwall and archway repair [within the Reservoir basin] at Gate House No. 7, and Repair retaining wall adjacent to Lehman College Parking lot. Additionally we have received and accept the documentation (recordation) of the Old Croton Aqueduct sections proposed to be filled with a controlled low strength material.

Based upon our review and the preferred alternatives presented, the SHPO's opinion remains unchanged; that the proposed project will have No adverse Effect upon historic resources. This opinion includes the understanding that:

1. The repairs to the Reservoir Interior East Wall will be a cast-in-place concrete liner wall that under normal operating conditions will be at or below the basin water level.
2. The securing and abandonment of the below ground portions of the Old Croton Aqueduct within the Reservoir East Wall will use a controlled low strength material. No further recordation of the existing conditions is needed.
3. Any required new capstones will match the historic capstones during work repairing the wall adjacent to the Lehman College Parking Lot.

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**Division for Historic Preservation**

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Overall, we understand that the proposed work will ensure the longevity of Jerome Park Reservoir in its primary function of providing clean water to New York City. If you have any questions, I can be reached at (518) 268-2181.

Sincerely,



Beth A. Cumming  
Senior Historic Site Restoration Coordinator  
e-mail: [beth.cumming@parks.ny.gov](mailto:beth.cumming@parks.ny.gov)

via e-mail only

cc: S. Iyer- DEP

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