



December 21, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We are members of the NY-NJ Harbor Coalition, a new alliance of diverse non-profit and community groups that have joined together in support of a clean, green, widely accessible, environmentally just and economically vibrant urban waterfront in and around the New York and New Jersey Harbor. We are writing to ask for your support of our 2012 agenda, which includes promoting a number of shovel-ready and green projects for our region, and our longer-term goal of advancing federal legislation to authorize comprehensive oversight of such work.

The New York and New Jersey Harbor – America’s Harbor – is a national treasure, from the diverse ecology of the Hackensack Meadowlands, Arthur Kill tributary wetlands and Jamaica Bay to its busy shipping channels, from its bustling waterfront businesses to its iconic landmarks and parks, such as the Statue of Liberty and Gateway National Recreation Area. Despite the value of this extraordinary urban waterfront, our Harbor lacks the level of federal investments in its environmental and waterfront resources that have rightfully been dedicated to other Great Waters, such as the Great Lakes, the Chesapeake Bay and the Everglades. As a result, despite enormous municipal, state and private sector support for projects that would revitalize this urban waterfront resource, our Harbor has yet to reach its full ecological and economic potential.

Our Coalition specifically asks that your Administration focus its support on a number of shovel-ready, job-creating infrastructure projects and land acquisition efforts around our Harbor. This list includes, but is not limited to, the restoration of Jamaica Bay; the expansion of Liberty State Park and other park sites in Newark, NJ, and Sunset Park, Brooklyn; and efforts to create more sustainable operations at port facilities in New Jersey and New York. While we recognize that you are finalizing your budget priorities for the 2013 fiscal year, we respectfully request your support of our efforts to secure funding for the following key projects:

- **Restoration of Jamaica Bay** through an interagency collaboration outlined in the US Army Corps of Engineers’ regional Comprehensive Restoration Plan that includes rebuilding marsh islands, restoring wetlands and stream corridors and enhancing other target ecosystems within the 25,000-acre tidal inlet off Brooklyn and Queens.
- **Completion of the Passaic River waterfront parks in Newark, NJ**, through City and County projects that will restore the riverbank, create wetlands and provide rare waterfront access for hundreds of thousands residents in an underserved and highly polluted neighborhood.
- **Support for regional Clean Ports projects**, including electric truck holsters in New Jersey, shore-power connections for cruise ships in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island, plug-ins for refrigerated containers in the Bronx, better rail connections, wind turbines and other regional green port initiatives.

- **Completion of the Sunset Park Waterfront Park in Brooklyn**, a State and City-funded project that will restore wetlands, provide new, safe waterfront access, and help revive this underserved industrial area with a mix of sustainable businesses, local jobs, improved access to rail and marine cargo transportation, and greener neighborhoods that are better linked to existing public spaces.

We believe that transforming the New York and New Jersey Harbor into a 21st Century Harbor, one that is fishable, swimmable and provides greater and more equitable opportunity for public access, is our region's answer to your call to rebuild America. Initiatives that reduce habitat loss, coastal degradation and sediment contamination, protect and restore magnificent estuarine resources, rebuild and reopen urban waterfront parks, and improve water quality will not just revive the Harbor's ecosystem, they will increase economic opportunities, such as commercial fishing, recreation and waterfront development.

In addition, the recent impact of Hurricane Irene – which flooded thousands of communities and cost billions of dollars – underscores the need to restore and preserve the Harbor's shoreline in order to protect our urban centers from coastal storms and sea level rise. These natural areas enhance the waterfront experience for the public, while also serving as cost-effective and lasting storm buffers.

We ask for your support in 2012 as we channel your vision for improved infrastructure in America toward creating a world-class urban waterfront experience in and around the New York and New Jersey Harbor that can better serve the region's 22 million residents. State, local and non-government organizations are committed to improving our Harbor, but increased federal support and investment is needed to truly meet our goals. The Harbor provides incredible local and national value and with the proper long-term planning, support and investment, this precious resource can finally reach its full potential.

Sincerely,

Environmental Defense Fund
 Hudson River Foundation
 Ironbound Community Corporation
 Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
 National Parks Conservation Association
 New Jersey Audubon

NY/NJ Baykeeper
 NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
 Regional Plan Association
 The Trust for Public Land
 WE ACT for Environmental Justice

 & 

Alexander Brash & Roland Lewis
 NY-NJ Harbor Coalition Co-Chairs

cc: Jacob Lew, Director of the Office of Management and Budget
 Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality
 Members of the New York and New Jersey Delegations, U.S. Congress
 The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior
 The Honorable Lisa Jackson, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
 The Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York
 The Honorable Chris Christie, Governor of the State of New Jersey
 The Honorable Michael Bloomberg, Mayor New York City
 The Honorable Cory A. Booker, Mayor of the City of Newark
 The Honorable Judith Enck, Regional Administrator of Region 2, U.S. EPA
 Robert K. Steel, New York City Deputy Mayor for Economic Development
 Stephan Pryor, Newark Deputy Mayor for Economic Development
 Damon Rich, Urban Designer for the City of Newark