

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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Chairperson

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Jennifer Greenfeld
Assistant Commissioner of Forestry, Horticulture
And Natural Resources at the New York City
Department of Parks and Recreation

Sarah Charlop-Powers
Executive Director of the Natural Areas
Conservancy

Lynn Kelley
Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks

Adriana Espinoza
Director of the New York City Program at the New
York League of Conservation Voters, NYLCV

Portia Dyrebforth
Administrator of Forest and Highland Park on
Behalf of the Forest Park Trust

Patti Rafferty
Chief of Resource Stewardship at Gateway National
Recreational Area

Richard Hallett
Research Ecologist with the US Forest Service on
Behalf of the USDA Forest Service and Research
Scientists at the New York City Urban Field
Station

Eric Sanderson
Senior Scientist at the Wildlife Conservation
Society, Board Member of the Natural Areas
Conservancy

Jason Smith
Director of Northern Manhattan Parks and for New
York Restoration Project

Lynda Tower
Vice President of Park Operations at Riverside
Conservancy

Christina Taylor
Executive Director for the Friends of Van
Cortlandt Park

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Margot Perron
President of Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy and
Van Cortlandt Park Administrator

Kathryn Heintz
Executive Director of the New York City Audubon

Mk Moore
Chairperson for the New York/New Jersey Trail
Conference, Metro Region

Amy Turner
Executive Director of the New York City Climate
Action Alliance

Todd Forrest
Arthur Ross Vice President for Horticulture and
Living Collections at the New York Botanical
Gardens

Natasia Sidarta
Volunteer Program Manager at Gowanus Canal
Conservancy

Donald Recklies
Vice President of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods

Adam Martinek
Resident of Inwood, Manhattan, Activist, Founder
Of Inwood Hill Park Conservancy

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good afternoon

everybody and welcome to this month's hearing for the Parks Committee for the New York City Council. I am happy to see that so many people care about our urban forest, that's really very, very thrilling to me and full disclosure I do live literally around the corner from the for... one of the forever wild sections of Cunningham Park and you can't get to my house pretty much without passing by that... from either direction so, it's really inspiring to see so many people here today but I really shouldn't be surprised because when the horticulture I guess conference was held at NYU earlier this year, we had about 300 people there and so as, as my mother might have said who knew... who knew that, you know... who knew. So, I'm going to read an opening statement and we have a lot of people that want to testify today. If you do wish to testify please sign in with the Sergeant at Arms, we will get to everybody. I will be here as long as it takes which will be a few hours I expect. We have been joined thus far by three of my colleagues in the order I believe they showed up; Councilman King, Andy King from the great borough of the Bronx where I was

born; also from the borough of the Bronx, also another great part of our city, Riverdale and that... those associated areas, Councilman Cohen and from the far western stretches of the great borough of Queens, Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer who I will be with tomorrow visiting in New York City Park, the new Hunters Point Park so I'm very excited about that. Alright, you know I'm Barry Grodenchik and you know I'm the Chair of the City Council's Committee on Parks and Recreation and I do welcome you to our hearing today on examining how we can protect and preserve the city's natural areas otherwise known as our urban forests. While many New Yorkers are aware of the approximately 30,000 acres of our expansive park system, I'm sure that many would be surprised to know that we have over 10,000 acres of natural areas specific, specifically forest and wetlands that are located in every borough of the supposed quote, unquote "concrete jungle". For example, less than one mile from one of the world's busiest airports, JFK International lies more than 300 species of birds and fish protected from development in the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. It's the only national wildlife refuge accessible by subway, I urge you to get there

1 if you haven't been there but like other natural
2 areas in the city it contains a vast amount of
3 biodiversity with all of the benefits that forest,
4 and wetlands have to offer our environment. From
5 places such as Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx to the
6 Fresh Creek Natural Preserve in Brooklyn to Inwill...
7 Inwood Hill Park in Manhattan to Alley Pond Park in
8 my part of Queens and the Evergreen Park Preserve in
9 Staten Island, it turns out that biodiversity is not
10 and never has been an alien concept to New York City.
11 So, we have to ensure that it remains a vibrant and
12 well cared for part of the fabric of our city. These
13 natural areas like any eco system face numerous
14 threats to their wellbeing including illegal
15 recreation, invasive species infestation and harm
16 resulting from the effects of climate change. Our
17 Parks Department has long recognized the importance
18 of preserving the vast acreage of the city eco system
19 and its natural resources group division is composed
20 of biologists, natural resource managers and
21 restoration ecologists who develop and implement
22 management programs for the protection, acquisition
23 and restoration of the city's natural resources.
24 Complimenting this division is the natural areas
25

conservancy which was established in 2012 and operates citywide conducting research and preservation of the eco system all over the park system as its major focus. The recent focus of the conservancy and the Parks Department has been on developing a long-term plan to preserve the city's natural areas. I met with you earlier this year, I seem to run into the Assistant Commissioner just about everywhere, she's all over New York City. The plan known as the Forest Management Framework for New York City is essentially a 25-year roadmap for how the city can invest in and protect the approximately 7,300 acres of forested area. It was developed over the last six years as teams from the conservancy collected and analyzed data from all over the urban forest to inform the plan. The framework includes strategies to care for the city's natural areas such as site cleaning, invasive plant removal, revegetating sites, engagement and outreach events to educate the public on the importance of the city's natural areas and I have to say I've witnessed the work firsthand over time in Alley Pond Park in the northern part of the alley just immediately south of Northern Boulevard and it really is amazing, I mean

1
2 it's just absolutely... it's become a new urban forest
3 so I look forward to going back this winter so I can
4 walk maybe as opposed to... I don't have a machete so...
5 and I wouldn't... I, I would never machete the city
6 parkland I want to make that clear, the first Deputy
7 Commissioner is here so I want to make that clear.
8 The ultimate goal behind these efforts is to develop
9 more concrete metrics for deciding whether the urban...
10 an area of parkland is healthy or not and what
11 efforts should be taken to further it's preservation
12 and in addition to examining this plan there are
13 additional aspects of natural areas preservation that
14 I hope to address specifically today, whether we're
15 providing enough resources from a staff and funding
16 point of you to take care of these areas, we're not I
17 can tell you right now but I want to hear from all of
18 you and you're going to tell me what we need to do.
19 illegal recreation activity or other improper acts
20 sometimes occurs in these lands, it seems that park
21 rangers and PEP officers have a role to play here so
22 we, we're going to look at that and look at beefing
23 up their numbers to make sure that the rules and best
24 practices are enforced. Number two, how can we
25 improve public access to these areas while ensuring

1 that they remain preserved and unspoiled. Many New
2 Yorkers are simply unaware of the vast benefits that
3 natural areas have to offer even that they exist
4 within the city limits and it is possible for the two
5 to coincide, that recreation and prime example of
6 that is the mountain bike and track in Cunningham
7 Park just a few blocks from my district office where
8 on the weekends hundreds of people gather from the
9 tristate area. We should also look closely to examine
10 ways that turn... that to turn that perception around
11 and develop an infrastructure to accommodate greater
12 public enjoyment of our lands and three, how do we
13 continue the tradition of having the city at the
14 forefront of research and innovation. We will see
15 today that many efforts are being undertaken to care
16 for and understand our city's natural environments.
17 These research efforts should be encouraged as much
18 as possible with support from the public and private
19 sectors so that the health and wellbeing of our
20 natural areas remain a priority in the long term. I
21 look forward to finding answers to some of those
22 questions at today's hearings and examining whether
23 the possibilities are out there to help our ecosystem
24 thrive. I would like to start by welcoming the
25

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2 administration to protest, protest... present its
3 testimony, there's a Freudian slip, to present its
4 testimony on this issue. Again, I want to thank you
5 all for being here today. We have been joined by two
6 more of my colleagues Mark Gjonaj who has the largest
7 park in the city of New York, Pelham Bay Park in his
8 district and Peter... and I don't need to know about
9 that but we... you're going to get me in trouble here
10 Gjonaj and Peter Koo who represents downtown Flushing
11 and the surrounding communities and has the great
12 Kissena Park in his district among other parks. So,
13 with that the first people to testify today are
14 Assistant Commissioner Jennifer Greenfeld from New
15 York City Department of Parks and Recreation; Sarah
16 Charlop, I hope I'm pronouncing that right, Powers,
17 also with the Natural Areas Conservancy with New York
18 City Parks and as always... he's not sitting up there
19 though, huh, back seat Matt Drury. If you could
20 identify yourself though, we have another person
21 sitting there.

22 KAREN MURPHY: Sure, I'm Karen Murphy...

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, okay,
24 slide show Murphy. Okay, with that I'm going to ask
25 the Council to swear you in.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm to tell
3 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
4 in your testimony before this Committee today?

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I do.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

7 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: I do.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I don't know if
9 that will work...

10 [off mic dialogue]

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright,
12 Commissioner please begin.

13 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Alright, thank you.
14 You... maybe you saw my testimony already because
15 basically that testimony... you... what... you know sort of
16 your opening remarks... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I did not...
18 [cross-talk]

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...kind of covered...
20 [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I was a little
22 late... [cross-talk]

23 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...things though...
24 [cross-talk]

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...today because
3 the train, they were doing work, they were working on
4 the railroads, so, it was a little later than I
5 wanted to get here but...

6 JENNIFER GREENFELD: No... well... [cross-
7 talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I'm going to
9 listen to you whether you talk, okay... [cross-talk]

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: You did... you did an
11 excellent job so good morning Chair Grodenchik and
12 members of the Parks and Recreation Committee. I'm
13 Jennifer Greenfeld, the Assistant Commissioner for
14 Forestry, Horticulture, and Natural Resources in New
15 York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Thank
16 you for inviting me to testify today regarding
17 parks', Parks' Departments natural forests. At New
18 York City parks, our mission is to offer resilient
19 and sustainable parks, public spaces and recreational
20 amenities for present and future generations. New
21 York City parks is a steward of approximately 30,000
22 acres of land, 14 percent of New York City including
23 more than 5,000 individual properties ranging in size
24 and variety from Coney Island Beach and Central Park
25 to Pelham Bay Park, Alley Pond Park to community

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gardens and neighborhood pocket parks. The forestry horticulture and natural resources division builds on the park's mission by pledging to protect, restore, expand and manage New York City's greenspaces and natural areas to maximize their benefits for environmental and for community health and resilience. When I tell people that my job is caring for and protecting nature in the New York City one of the first responses I get is a question, nature in New York City, you mean Central Park? So, I have to remind them that there are many more opportunities to enjoy nature right here in New York City many more than some would realize. Roughly 10,000 acres, one third of our park's portfolio consists of natural areas spread over 50 parks including 2,000 acres of salt marshes and fresh water wetlands, 1,444 acres of grassland, 60 miles of streams and over six million trees. Of these trees, over 650,000 grow along the streets, 150,000 grow in the actively used areas of parks but the vast remainder are located in our 7,300 acres of natural area forest. In fact, forested natural areas alone cover one quarter of city parkland. So, it's much easier... it's much easier to show you the parks than just to talk about them so

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2 I'll take you on a brief tour from the north in the
3 Bronx. This is a, a beautiful photo of the... of Van
4 Cortlandt Park, one of our healthiest forests. Here's
5 Bronx River forest, when people think about the Bronx
6 River, they think about the river but one reason that
7 the river can be healthy is because it's buffered by
8 forest on the edge. Pelham Bay Park, we already
9 mentioned, the largest park in the city. Here's the...
10 more the northern area of Pelham Bay Park which
11 really looks like and is a part of the north... the New
12 England Rocky coastline. Inwood Hill Park of course,
13 you can get there on the eight train, a spring scene
14 in Cunningham Park. And then in Staten Island, Arden
15 Heights Woods, Blue Heron Park and the most southern
16 part of New York State in fact is Conference House
17 Park. Wills Pond Park and I think I missed... I didn't
18 mention Marine Park, but it was in there.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We saw it...

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: So, so it's hard to
21 be able to describe the beauty of the forest but
22 hopefully you got a little taste. So, while these
23 areas may not be as well-known or as crowded as
24 properties such as Central Park, natural areas still
25 play a vital role in providing recreation and

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wellness opportunities within our city. According to a study in 2014 by our partners at the natural area's conservancy and the US forest service that examine how people felt about and used nature in, in parks... in New York City Parks; 50 percent of people interviewed said that the only natural space that they visit is in city parks, this tells, tells us that people notice and care for these spaces, they seek refuge, they walk their dogs, they look for birds and get exercise or just wander in the woods to find a quiet corner. We also learned that while 53 people... percent of the people surveyed visiting a natural area are local living nearby that park the rest of them travel over a distance, a distance of over a mile to experience the unique attraction... attributes of each site. So, these forests offer exceptional recreational and educational opportunities; filter the air of our, our children breath, provide shade and temperature regulation, help protect homes from storm surges and offer respite from the noise and pace of New York City for all our residents and visitors. As climate change impacts our region and as the city's population grows, the benefits nature provides to our residents

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2 and visitors becomes even more important. We also
3 need to acknowledge the critical role our forests and
4 wetlands play in the regional ecosystem. Because of
5 the city's location at the confluence of salt and
6 freshwater bodies, spanning both New England's rocky
7 coast and the mid-Atlantic coastal plain, our natural
8 areas are home to over 400 species of wildlife
9 including these adorable black crowned night heron
10 chicks, chipmunks, salamanders, baby terrapin
11 turtles, and the newly discovered leopard frog. Over
12 a quarter of these species have a state, federal or
13 global designation as rare, threatened or endangered
14 and of the 1,420 species of native plants found in
15 our natural areas, including globe flats edge and
16 golden aster, one fifth of these plants are similarly
17 protected. I have the privilege of overseeing the
18 division of New York City Parks that carefully plans
19 for these resources, selects appropriate species and
20 manages over 281 million dollars' worth of expense
21 and capital contracts. We play a vital role as
22 technical experts to review plans to ensure that new
23 projects don't further fragment our remaining natural
24 areas, so we can maintain their ecological integrity
25 and best... benefits for future generations. We manage

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2 to nurseries, one of which is internationally known
3 for its plant conservation work in Staten Island,
4 collecting seeds region wide to grow native plants
5 for restoration projects throughout the city. Through
6 the Urban Field Station, we partner with the U.S.
7 Forest Service to attract researchers from around the
8 country to study New York City's natures, improving
9 the quality and impact of our work. Forests play a
10 vital role in connecting New Yorkers of all ages to
11 the natural world and we are working to connect New
12 Yorkers to their city by marking and mapping nature
13 trails and leading volunteer stewardship activities
14 throughout the year. In fact, the Council... several
15 Council Members including Chair Grodenchik provided
16 some of our first capital funding to improve trails
17 in three different parks around the city. Our
18 stewardship team held 140 volunteer events in natural
19 areas last fiscal year, engaging over 3,500 New
20 Yorkers. While helping us to maintain these valuable
21 resources, these events are also critical to provide
22 a chance for local residents to actively engage in
23 the care of their city and to have fun and get a
24 workout while doing it. in addition, New York City's
25 public programs division houses the much beloved

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2 rangers, who provide New Yorkers of all ages with
3 educational tours and recreational experiences in our
4 natural areas, ranging from bird walks to canoe trips
5 to night hikes. This programming provides a fantastic
6 way for the public to connect or reconnect with the
7 great outdoors right here in New York City. For over
8 30 years, parks have actively managed our forests and
9 wetlands. The Natural Resources Group is one of the
10 oldest municipal conservancy organizations in the
11 country, founded in 1984. We built a national
12 reputation with our salt marsh restoration in the
13 1990's in response to the Exxon oil spill in the
14 Arthur Kill. Also, in the 1990s we contributed to the
15 nascent field of urban natural forest restoration
16 through our work with early, private investment in
17 urban forests. Through Plan NYC and Million Trees
18 NYC, the city made a major commitment to forest
19 restoration, which allowed us to contribute our
20 knowledge and expertise and make a significant impact
21 citywide, and the De Blasio administration has
22 continued this commitment through the Cool
23 Neighborhoods program, reflecting a two-year
24 investment of 7.3 million dollars. Our knowledgeable
25 and tireless staff spend every day in all conditions;

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rain, snow, wind and heat, remember them outside, removing invasive species, planting native species in forest gaps and monitoring for new infestations, sites... signs of dumping, fires and other negative uses. They know these forests well and think very carefully about matching the most appropriate interventions whether physical, chemical or biological to the specific situation and properly manage our finite resources. For larger restoration projects in our natural areas, we use capitally funded contractors after which our staff then implements long term management strategies to make sure that the area doesn't revert to its damaged past. To demonstrate our approach in a little bit more detail, I hope you'll allow me to, I want to explain how we're managing one relatively new invasive species, and this is of mile a minute vine. Mile a minute was first discovered in New York City in 2010 in Pelham Bay Park, appearing after we removed a completely different invasive plant that we were actually targeting. It's an annual herbaceous vine that climbs vegetation to reach the sun, produces prolific and persistent seeds and is known to grow in excess of six inches per day, so maybe not

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2 mile a minute but six inches per day, pretty much...

3 [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's a lot...

5 [cross-talk]

6 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...a lot. This
7 invasive species is extremely damaging to newly
8 restored forests as it loves the open, sunny spaces
9 and takes advantages of... advantage of the gaps in
10 tree canopy to quickly overcome young seedlings and
11 new shrubs. So, since the initial discovery in 2010,
12 we've actively managed the species across over 200
13 acres of forest utilizing over 100,000 dollars in
14 grant funding to specifically target mile a minute
15 and release the mile a minute weevil, a biological
16 control for the mile a minute vine. Our team now
17 closely monitors edges and newly restored open areas
18 for the emergence of this species and has been
19 successful in combating its presence in newly
20 restored areas. So, what have we accomplished to date
21 in forests across the five boroughs: we've planted
22 686,000 native trees since... and shrubs since 2007;
23 we've held 562 volunteer events engaging nearly
24 17,000 volunteers; we've restored 520 acres; we've
25 made 30 miles of trails more accessible by

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2 formalizing them and the tremendous volume of work
3 has led to a point in time to today at which we want
4 to reflect and carefully assess our management
5 strategy for natural areas. The successful management
6 of natural forests starts with gaining a full
7 understanding of what we seek to manage. As you'll
8 more about shortly, our colleagues at the Natural
9 Areas Conservancy have helped fill in a major
10 knowledge gap. With two years of field work, they
11 compiled, compiled an unprecedented amount of
12 information, not arcane data, but useful information
13 which profiles our city's forest, quantifying their
14 health and the threats they face. We at NYC Parks
15 have already started shifting our approach and
16 prioritizing our work based on this information. And
17 the resulting forest management framework, which has
18 provided our agency with an invaluable roadmap to
19 guide our strategic decisions and better marshal our
20 resources. I'd now like to introduce my colleagues
21 there are Charlop-Powers, the Executive Director of
22 our nonprofit partner, at the Natural Areas
23 Conservancy to provide more details about these
24 important joint efforts. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
3 Commissioner.

4 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Alright. Thank you
5 everyone. As Jennifer mentioned my name is Sarah
6 Charlop-Powers, I'm the Executive Director of the
7 Natural Areas Conservancy and I want to start by
8 thanking Chair Grodenchik and the members of the
9 Committee for giving us the opportunity to testify
10 about this important topic today. As Assistant
11 Commissioner Greenfeld mentioned, the Natural Areas
12 Conservancy is a nonprofit organization, Karen... that
13 was formed in 2012 with the goal of increasing the
14 capacity of New York City Parks and its partners to
15 restore and manage 10,000 acres of forest, grasslands
16 and wetlands under the agency's, agency's
17 jurisdiction. Following in the footsteps of other
18 successful park conservancies including the Central
19 Park Conservancy, the Prospect Park Alliance and the
20 Bronx River Alliance, the Natural Areas Conservancy
21 does not exist to replicate or replace the of New
22 York City Parks, but rather we raise private funds,
23 hire expert staff and work to compliment and amplify
24 the work of the agency. We commend... sorry, I... yes,
25 that's great, that'd be perfect. We commend the

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efforts of the agency and the hard-working team of professionals in the Division of Forestry, Horticulture and Natural Resources to manage this large and complex resource. However, realize, realizing the full potential of our city's natural forests for public recreation and environmental benefits will require marshaling the appropriate additional resources. To address this, we worked in partnership with New York City Parks colleagues to develop and release the Forest Management Framework for New York City, which I believe you all have a copy of in front of you. This plan includes a comprehensive look at the condition of our city's natural forests and outlines the investment needed to manage them over the next 25 years and we hope that the Parks Committee and the Council will support this plan and help to ensure its success. Increased investment in our natural forests will allow us to achieve the following: first our natural forests, comprising one quarter of the city's total public parkland, require a comprehensive strategic management and the appropriate resources both for New York City Parks and for its partners; second we fill that developing a citywide trail system will allow

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people, many in low and moderate income neighborhoods, new forms of valuable recreation and opportunities for physical wellbeing. Improved opportunities for the enjoyment of nature contribute to our collective mental and emotional wellbeing. Next, in the next 25 years, we will be living in a hotter and drier city with higher sea levels. New York City's forests are critical to mitigating the local effects of climate change; including extreme heat, capturing stormwater to reduce flooding and absorbing greenhouse gases and they should be considered an important part of our city's climate solutions. And lastly, New York City's forests are at a tipping point, they need sustained strategic investment, or they will decline in quality. This will ensure that we do not find our forests in a crisis that creates costly and generational backlogs of work. Our forests are at risk of losing biodiversity that once lost, can never be regained. The participation of many groups in this hearing and the increasing number of volunteers and users of natural areas indicate a growing and vocal constituency for this vital New York City resource. So, when we were formed back in 2012, the first thing

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that we endeavored was to better understand where and in what condition our city's natural areas were. So, in order for this plan to be successful, we first needed an in depth... in depth information about our city's natural resources. As a first step, we hired a team of 25 expert researchers and conducted a comprehensive ecological assessment of all 10,000 acres of forests and wetlands. This created a baseline of information about the condition of nature in New York City. We also partnered with our colleagues at the US Forest Service, who are with us today to conduct a companion social assessment to understand how our city's natural areas are perceived and used by residents of our city. This extensive research is the basis for the Forest Management Framework and other data driven management tools that we have created. Following the successful Million Trees campaign, the NAC identified the need to plan what came next and to address a much larger area of New York City's forests. As Jennifer mentioned, the Million Trees campaign touched about 500 of our 7,000 acres. We conducted an in-depth study of the condition of forests and the surprising... the findings were very surprising. First, our forests are very

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2 diverse and dominated by native trees and our big
3 intact mature forests were very similar in their
4 composition to places like the Catskills, but our
5 next generation is much less healthy. Our understory
6 is only about 45 percent native and our young forests
7 are threatened by fast growing invasive vines
8 including mile a minute, dumping and unauthorized
9 trails. Most of the trees occurring in our natural
10 areas are actually not planted which is sort of a fun
11 fact and kind of flips a little bit upside down the
12 idea of tree planting as the primary goal of managing
13 forests. In fact, the majority of these trees are
14 naturally occurring, they grow from seeds and that is
15 the sign of great health, it's much less expensive
16 than planting but it's not a complete self-sustaining
17 system, it does require some management in order for
18 those forest systems to continue to thrive. Our
19 research also found that natural forests are an
20 important resource for New Yorkers. Spending time in
21 nature provides significant cognitive and emotional
22 benefits. Our city's natural areas offer an
23 opportunity for New Yorkers to have a wilderness
24 experience that includes access to beauty,
25 inspiration and quiet that is unique from the other

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experiences in our parks. However, interviews with more than 1,600 park users showed that people are more likely to recreate in natural areas that are well maintained. This includes well marked trails, regular patrolling by rangers and enforcement officers, clear signage and healthy forests. In addition to being an important resource for New York City residents for recreation, our natural forests are increasingly important in the face of climate change. This is a stat that came out last year and really surprised me and I think it's been getting a lot of traction nationally, across the U.S. extreme heat kills more people each year than hurricanes, flooding and storms combined. Our natural forests are one of the most effective methods for reducing local temperatures and they also absorb carbon providing a double benefit as a local climate solution. The framework includes a citywide model that maps the condition of forests in more than 50 parks. It also allows us to understand the full range of conditions that exist across New York City and to estimate the investment needed in order to restore and manage all 7,300 acres over the long term. I'm just going to take a moment actually on that last slide to say,

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this is really significant, we... until this data set existed never had the ability to plan for the entire forest across the whole city at the same time to really think about the range of conditions across all five boroughs and then to estimate the total investment needed to do this work, that cost calculator which we developed also works at a park scale or even the scale of an individual project so it's a real game changer to be able to use science to understand what the condition is of the place and then to have a financial model lets us know what the investment is needed in order to restore those places. The NAC led the development and promotion of the framework and New York City Parks has adopted the recommendations and is using the framework to prioritize and track their work. The framework calls for a significant, significant investment over the long-term period, an estimated 385 million dollars over 25 years but we believe these costs are relatively modest considering the critical impact that this investment will make. We need to invest now... we can move to the next one... the framework is both a financial planning tool and a new approach to prioritizing where and how to work. NYC Parks is

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using the framework today, it's also allowing us to evaluate the effectiveness of our restoration efforts and to inform what species to plant. The NAC is working to continue research and expanding public access and creating alignment between the work of nonprofit partners and park conservancies all with the goal of restoring and protecting nature through sound science. So, we're very much interested in expanding overall support but we're not waiting to sort of hit the ground running. That was that last slide... so, make, making nature accessible... we're striving to ensure that every New Yorker has access not just to a park but to a place where they can connect with wild nature. New York City's population is on the rise and this is leading to crowding in many of our flagship parks including Central Park. Congestion in parks can be relieved by the restoration and improvement of the city's natural forests which occupy one quarter of the city's parkland. I want to also describe, it might be a little bit hard to see but this is a before and after of the trail system in Marine Park in Brooklyn. The agency has mapped over 350 miles of trails and if you

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2 see the image on the top, this is what the... [cross-

3 talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's three...

5 [cross-talk]

6 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...trail... [cross-

7 talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Is that 350

9 citywide or just in Marine... [cross-talk]

10 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: 350... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's a big park...

12 [cross-talk]

13 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...citywide...

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, alright...

15 [cross-talk]

16 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: But you can see

17 it's a very convoluted sort of hard to navigate kind

18 of squiggle of trails across that landscape, no

19 signage at the trailheads, no marking on the trails

20 once you're out in the woods to know where to go and

21 no accurate trail map to allow visitors to navigate

22 so although residents of this neighborhood live

23 adjacent to a large forest, it's very inaccessible

24 and hard to navigate. The approach that we've been

25 piloting is closing off a lot of the excess redundant

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trails through planting and seeding leaving communities with a better-quality trail system, working with local youth to provide job training opportunities and simultaneously restoring the forests themselves which we view as a real win, win for everyone. pursuing the goal of effective and uniform forest management citywide, the NAC provides support to nonprofit conservancy partners including helping them to prioritize their natural resource projects and allow them to align their efforts with those of the agency. In 2018, we provided pro bono consulting to the Prospect Park Alliance and the Forest Park Trust to develop five-year management goals for each park. This included creating a list of priority projects and cost estimates for those projects. These organizations are using those recommendations to prioritize where to deploy their existing resources but also to fundraise for new investment in their forests. And we are seeking support to expand this approach to more than a dozen additional partners. So, protecting and promoting New York City's nature cannot be done alone. New York City Parks, despite its size and reach, just can't do it all and the NAC also cannot work alone, and our

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partner conservancies and local groups also benefit from working together. So, New York City Nature Goals 2050 is an initiative that was initially spearheaded by the NAC to develop shared goals and targets for New York City's many environmental groups both large and small to increase our coordination and advocacy for New York City nature. This coalition brings a powerful voice to plan and advocate for the future of New York City's nature and if we go to the next slide, it's hard to read clear, happy to distribute it after, more than 60 agencies, nonprofit organizations and academic institutions have participated in the network to date and it's now being co-led by a team of partners that are working together and I just want to say I think part of the reason this room is so full today is the sort of foundation that that process has laid for all of us to work together so thank you to all of the partners who have joined today. Investing in our natural areas is an idea of whose time has come. This administration has the opportunity to continue to be a leader in this emerging topic. Together, we can make New York City more resilient, protect our natural history and incredible biodiversity and

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2 provide our children and each other with access to
3 inspiration and to beauty right here in our own
4 backyards.

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: As we hope today's
6 testimony has demonstrated the Forestry, Horticulture
7 and Natural Resources Division at New York City
8 Parks, in partnership with the Natural Areas
9 Conservancy is committed to protecting, restoring,
10 expanding and managing the New York City's natural
11 areas and the Council's support and leadership is
12 vital to our efforts. And just to note, while these
13 photos are breathtaking, nothing can substitute a
14 walk in the woods when you experience the fresh
15 smells of the trees and the quiet in the air. You
16 have a standing offer to join me and my expert staff
17 at any time of the year to visit these beautiful
18 spaces. Thank you for this opportunity to share our
19 work with you, which is a vital part of park's
20 mission and a service to New Yorkers, as well as for
21 your continued advocacy for our city parks. We will
22 both now be happy to answer any questions that you
23 might have. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
25 much Commissioner, thank you... it's nice to see a

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2 large crowd as I said for a good cause this time,
3 we're all good causes here though so... a lot of happy
4 faces, I see smiles out there. So, my first question...
5 I have questions coming from Council Member Cohen,
6 Councilman Gjonaj and Councilman Ulrich; we have been
7 joined by Councilman... Members Costa Constantinides of
8 western Queens, from southern Queens Councilman Eric
9 Ulrich and from the far southern reaches of the
10 Borough of Brooklyn where it takes him a long time to
11 get here, Mr. Justin Brannan our friend from southern
12 Brooklyn. So, a lot of money huh? Not really a lot,
13 you know what's 385 million dollars between friends?
14 Can you explain to me how that money would be used
15 and would, would most of it be up front, do you need
16 more up front, do you need...

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Do you want to
18 start?

19 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Sure.

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Okay.

21 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: So, the, the full
22 breakdown for the proposed budget is actually in the
23 back of the frameworks that you have, it includes an
24 annual breakdown... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
3 talk]

4 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...and also a
5 breakdown between capital and expense funding. It's
6 worth noting that... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Can you tell me
8 the approximate breakdown of capital and expense
9 beside wise?

10 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Kind of... [cross-
11 talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Anybody out
13 there... [cross-talk]

14 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...I don't actually...
15 [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...somebody got
17 that number...

18 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...have a copy of
19 that... [cross-talk]

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: It's roughly half
21 and half... [cross-talk]

22 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Its roughly half
23 and half and this is not, you know starting... thank
24 you... from zero, there is obviously an existing
25 commitment by the agency to this topic, so those

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2 numbers are sort of all in numbers and they're a
3 build on what we... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, of the...
5 [cross-talk]

6 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...are currently
7 providing... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...385 million do
9 you know how much has been committed already?

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Well we have...
11 [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You said 384
13 million would make everybody's day but I, I hope we
14 don't have to give that.

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Well this just came
16 out and we are... Mayor De Blasio added funding through
17 the Cool Neighborhood program so it's seven... a little
18 bit more than seven million dollars over two years
19 that goes through FY '20 and so that's pretty much
20 the, the level that we're looking at for capital
21 investments for the first few years, builds a little
22 bit from them so for now we have those two years of
23 funding and we do have staff, the existing staff as
24 sort of... as Sarah was saying is part of this plan.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We could talk
3 about those numbers offline, just trying to get...
4 [cross-talk]

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...a sense of what
7 is necessary, you know the, the more I learn about
8 the Parks Department the more I realize how little I
9 know because it's such a vast and complicated agency
10 and it, it... everybody loves their parks, we love our
11 forests and... but it's important to understand what
12 we're getting into and the investments that we are
13 making here. Who would do the work, the restoration,
14 the... all the things that you mentioned today, is that
15 done by Park Department employees or is it done by
16 contractors, a mix of both, how would that work?

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: A mix of both...

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: A mix of both.

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Just as we do now.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Assuming that
21 the Parks Department, the Parks Chair in 20 years
22 from now or somebody whoever he or she may be what
23 will... what would we be looking forward to when we get
24 near to the end of this idea that we should restore
25 and I, I believe we should, this is very important to

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2 New York City, many of the neighborhoods that I
3 represent are forever wild forests and I know that's
4 true in a lot of the different council districts
5 throughout the city especially in stretches of the
6 Bronx and Staten Island and so what might we be
7 looking at when we're completed, I mean I'm just like
8 trying to get a little glimpse into the future?

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, I think you've
10 seen the, the future in some of these places, you
11 know like you're saying in Alley Pond Park or some of
12 the places that we've been restoring in Pelham Bay
13 Park, I mean it's just a question of taking our
14 success and making sure we're covering the... all, all
15 the ground and that we... that it doesn't revert back
16 to where it was and so it's going to be a beautiful
17 multistoried forest that you can sort of see through
18 and see different things in different seasons, there
19 will be trails that will be clearly marked,
20 accessible, there will be sort of an engaged and
21 motivated public to support this work and, and you'll
22 see regeneration of the forest occurring primarily on
23 its own although there's always some management
24 that's going to be needed.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. I'm going
3 to defer right now to my colleague, Andy Cohen, he's
4 got another engagement so Mr. Cohen.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I really
6 appreciate that Barry... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You're very
8 welcome... [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: ...thank you very
10 much. I, I will be brief, I just have a couple of
11 quick questions but I, I want to note... give you... that
12 I had a little heads up that Sarah was going to
13 testify today because her dad told me last night...

14 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Oh good... he's
15 everywhere, that's right...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I, I, I represent
17 the northwest Bronx that there's a, a significant
18 amount of this kind of property in, in my district
19 and I think that a good job is done in maintaining
20 it, particularly when people... if you drive along the
21 Henry Hudson Parkway and you go into Westchester
22 County and you see where they're not doing a good job
23 of maintaining it, it's really a very stark contrast
24 so I, I want to give credit where credit is due but I
25 do want to ask about the, the use of pesticides in

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2 these... in these areas and how it's used, how we
3 determine its use, how much its used and the role it
4 plays?

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, I mean we are
6 committed to restoring natural areas and to using as
7 I said the best technique that's appropriate for the
8 place, safety and safety of our workers and the
9 health of the... our workers and our forests are
10 extremely important to us. With that being said we
11 use many different techniques; we use physical
12 techniques, we use... we do use chemicals in the forest
13 and we use sort of cultural techniques because it's
14 not about what you do it's also about when you do it,
15 how much you use and who's trained to do it. If you
16 give me a moment... so, in general we don't use
17 chemicals where people can access them, they're
18 further away from most of where people are, it's very
19 limited in its... the smallest amount possible. We're
20 always investigating new techniques and approaches
21 using trained... we always have to follow a local law,
22 federal law, state law and, and we're looking at all
23 different kinds of alternatives all the time. We
24 recognize that there... the public is sensitive to the
25 use of that and we want to make sure that we can

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2 manage our forests in the best way possible and also
3 meet the needs of the public.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: If I... if I pressed
5 you on anything, we use it in small amounts could you
6 quantify, do you... do you know how much you use, how
7 often you use it if I... [cross-talk]

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, we... I don't...
9 [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I, I... [cross-talk]

11 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...have it in front of
12 me but it's publicly reported, and we can help you
13 get that information. So, we have to report
14 everything through the Department of Health, the
15 NYCPURS system and we can get that information to
16 you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I just want to
18 also acknowledge that I see the friends of Van
19 Cortlandt who also do a, a lot of work in trying to
20 maintain the trails so I want to acknowledge that. I
21 have to go but I will try to make it back. Thank you
22 very much Chair, I appreciate the courtesy.

23 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
25 Councilman Cohen. I'm going to continue on with a few

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2 more questions then I'll get to my colleagues
3 relatively quickly. On its face it would seem to me
4 that a mature forest would, would be less susceptible
5 but sometimes older things are more susceptible so
6 can you explain a little bit how mature forests fight
7 invasive species better than younger forests might?

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, one thing that
9 invasive species love is in our... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Open space...
11 [cross-talk]

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: As... exactly... [cross-
13 talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We all love open
15 space here.

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: We love open space,
17 they like sunny open space so they take advantage of
18 gaps and a younger forest are... if we didn't have so
19 many invasive species the younger forests are sort of
20 very quick growing trees and other, you know shrubs
21 and annuals and perennials below them and... but
22 they're not vast enough to really shade out the
23 quicker growing invasive species. So, the mature
24 forests have enough shade that they essentially shade
25 out the worst of them and they get it to a point

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2 where it's much more manageable to maintain and so
3 that's why you have to have people... that's why our
4 staff is always sort of looking in the woods, looking
5 for gaps, trying to fill the gaps and those mature
6 forests don't have as many gaps.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, that makes
8 sense. Can you tell me where we might find a newer
9 forest, my forests are kind of old but I'm just
10 wondering where... which is great because I have 100
11 and 200-year-old oak trees in Cunningham Park and in
12 Alley Pond, we have the Queens giant in my district
13 but... [cross-talk]

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I'm wondering
16 where we might find... I know that in the Alley they
17 are restored so you would consider that a newer
18 forest?

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Exactly, I would
20 consider that area that you were talking about near
21 northern Boulevard behind the APAC, behind the Alley
22 Pond environmental center to be a younger forest...
23 [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And that...
25 [cross-talk]

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...or the adolescent
3 forest... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and that has
5 grown just unbelievably really, I mean I, I don't
6 know if it was just because there's so much water... I
7 was there in the spring I wasn't there you know
8 lately I'll go back maybe in the next month or so
9 just to take a look on a... [cross-talk]

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...walk but do you
12 thin them out, I hate to, to say that but I... you know
13 is that part of your forest management program or you
14 just let it grow?

15 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: I think part of
16 the goal of this framework is to increase the funds
17 available for maintenance after planting and also for
18 sites that are in sort of a medium condition and
19 don't actually need a, a big overhaul and the kinds
20 of places you're describing are like kinds of places
21 that can utilize that sort of high scale work of in
22 house staff, who can be very, very effective at
23 really kind of nudging things in the right direction
24 without having to do kind of a big overhaul so there
25 is some maintenance that happens in all past planted

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2 sites and that's very effective but there's, there's
3 a lot of acres that are sort of in that medium
4 condition.

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: To speak to thinning
6 we, we haven't done a lot of thinning now lately... or
7 really at all, we don't typically thin... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
9 talk]

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...but it's something
11 we've been thinking about with the million... [cross-
12 talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'm not
14 suggesting I just wanted... [cross-talk]

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: No, no I know,
16 you're curious... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Curious...

18 JENNIFER GREENFELD: The, the... well the
19 million trees program and really our approach has
20 always been get canopy established quickly because
21 that's what is going to... going to keep out the
22 invasive species and what we've been learning over
23 time that we can do that probably with fewer trees
24 and we could probably do that with not just planting
25 trees but planting shrubs which would help the canopy

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2 and then in the end you're not going to have quite
3 the same sort of competition but that's what happens
4 in the woods anyway. In... some of our researchers are
5 here, I don't know the exact number but when you look
6 at the woods how many... a thousand seedlings might be
7 in a little patch of a... of a couple of square yards
8 so over time that's just going to happen naturally
9 anyway, it will... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
11 talk]

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...need us to do it.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Because I, I
14 guess the, the faster growing trees are an advantage
15 to you, to them, you know and oak kind of grows
16 slower so... some oaks, you know so... [cross-talk]

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright...

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: There have been
20 different philosophies, do you plant what would
21 typically go there... come in on its own which are the...
22 sort of the fast colonizing species, they grow fast,
23 they die fast or do you put everything... do you do
24 like a, you know readymade plant palate that has
25 everything that you're going to need in the future

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2 and we have been putting in a diversity of species
3 with the different successional stages.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. I am... I'm
5 going to take a break here, I'm going to ask first
6 questions for my next colleague from Mr. Gjonaj,
7 Councilman Gjonaj.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you Chair,
9 so good to see you again Commissioner. Who enforces
10 the rules in our natural areas?

11 JENNIFER GREENFELD: PEP officers,
12 rangers, any other enforce... any enforcement... [cross-
13 talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, NYPD... [cross-
15 talk]

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...agent... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Pelham Bay Park,
18 the largest park in New York City, what is the number
19 of PEP officers and rangers?

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, we'll have to
21 get back to you on that, I mean we... certainly...
22 [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I know... [cross-
24 talk]

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...safety is important
3 to us and we... I'll get you the exact numbers, I don't
4 know how many... I know how many rangers there are
5 citywide, I think that's... I can get to you in a
6 second... there are... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Well I can answer
8 it for you... [cross-talk]

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... you know... go
10 ahead... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Not, not... [cross-
12 talk]

13 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...tell me.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Not enough.

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: No, there are 38
16 rangers citywide and nine sergeants, but I don't... I
17 don't know right now but we'll get back to you about
18 that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: 38 citywide,
20 nine... [cross-talk]

21 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Rangers, that's not
22 PEP officers... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right, so that's
24 rangers... [cross-talk]

25

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, I don't have
3 the PEP number one.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right. It's
5 certainly not enough and I know that and its evident
6 in the activities that partake that happen in the
7 Pelham, Pelham Bay Park area. What are the... some of
8 the illegal activities that are concerning when it
9 comes to these areas?

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Well thankfully are
11 natural areas aren't really the site of significant
12 illegal activities and certainly nothing different
13 than anywhere else in the park, what we... our biggest
14 concern is actually what visitors... how visitors are
15 treating the land so the types of activity... illegal,
16 illegal activity that we find are dumping, arson, off
17 road biking and ATVs that's what we see.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right.

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: The mile a minute
21 vine, how dangerous is this for Pelham Bay Park?

22 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I would say we've
23 got it in check, I mean we're watching it, it's
24 definitely something we have to watch, yeah.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: How many
3 personnel are... [cross-talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Do we have?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yeah.

6 JENNIFER GREENFELD: We have... I don't
7 know this by heart... hold on one sec... we have 24 staff
8 members on our forest restoration team and there are
9 other folks who work in some... in the conservancies
10 outside of the natural resources group and we have 33
11 full time equivalents working on forest management
12 across our whole division.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right, well
14 Pelham Bay Park was it 2,600 acres?

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: 2,700 but who's
16 counting.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Exact... 26... 2,712.

18 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: With the number
20 of staff in itself is probably not completely
21 adequate to meet the needs of just Pelham Bay Park
22 let alone citywide... [cross-talk]

23 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right. Well I think
24 one great thing about this plan is that it allows us
25

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2 to do... to be really efficient and, and do the best
3 job with the resources that we have.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: That's a creative
5 way of saying we do a lot with the little that we
6 have.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well she, she
8 has... [cross-talk]

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: We do a lot... [cross-
10 talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: They're here
12 asking... [cross-talk]

13 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...with what we have...
14 [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...for 385 million
16 so they recognize that they need more Councilman...

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I am... I'm actually
18 here to tell you... to make sure you know how great the
19 city parks are and to tell you how hard we've been
20 working to take care of them and to get you a little
21 bit more interested in the work we do.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: How would you
23 rate Pelham Bay Park?

24 JENNIFER GREENFELD: How would I rate it?

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yeah, I mean...

3 [cross-talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Very good, actually...
5 I don't... does Sarah know off hand how it... how it is
6 on the health and threat matrix?

7 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: I can say that it
8 actually ranges across the whole park but that some
9 parts of Pelham Bay Park were in the very best of the
10 best. So, one thing that we actually found was that
11 no individual park was uniformly sort of top of the
12 heap but that we have these pockets of really, really
13 high health and there tend to be kind of located
14 inside of larger parks so Pelham Bay in that... in that
15 sort of regard is very similar to the rest of our
16 city, it has some really great places and it has some
17 places that could use some additional resources.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Resources for
19 Pelham... and again I'm making this all about me,
20 Pelham Bay Park what resources in particular?

21 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: You know what we
22 haven't done a park scale estimate, but we have the
23 ability to do that so... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I think that
25 would be great if we can get to doing a scale, a

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2 better understanding of this large park and the
3 complications in and around it having... [cross-talk]

4 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Uh-huh... [cross-
5 talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...not only a beach
7 and all the other extras that go with it but... a lot
8 can be learned... [cross-talk]

9 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Sure... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...and perhaps
11 gained so I'm supportive of the work that you do and
12 I'm looking forward to... [cross-talk]

13 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Great... [cross-
14 talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...a commitment
16 from you on doing that sooner than later.

17 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: I look forward to
18 working together.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I'm looking
20 forward to doing so myself, thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
22 Councilman, Councilman Ulrich please.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Thank you Mr.
24 Chair. I want to give a shout out first to Portia
25 Danforth and Josephine from Forest Park, they do a

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2 tremendous job and last year we funded, we meaning
3 the council as part of the Parks Equity Initiative I
4 allocated a big chunk of money to restore the pine
5 grove area, I don't know if you're familiar with that
6 project but that was a project that Josephine and
7 some others in Queens had really advocated for, for a
8 number of years and that's a new sort of planting if
9 you... I don't know how you would term it but... [cross-
10 talk]

11 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, restoration...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: ...restoration of
13 course... [cross-talk]

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you very much.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Well don't thank
16 me, thank the tax payers, it's their money but then
17 we had to buy some sort of spray to spray the trees
18 so that they wouldn't... the... was that to... retreated
19 them, right, it's for the beetles, right, that was
20 very expensive... [cross-talk]

21 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Okay, oh for the
22 pine bark needles...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: ...some... for the...
24 yeah and then we were going to paint them, not with a
25 brush or anything but we were going to... we were going

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to cover them so that people wouldn't take them around Christmas time because they were really just very cute and about four to five feet each and there were 131 of them and we didn't want people going into Forest Park and taking them around Christmas time but my point is... I'm, I'm bringing up all of... all of these truthful and funny anecdotes for a reason, even after the initial investment it, it costs a lot of money to maintain some of these restoration projects and we can't always rely on the taxpayers because we don't know what the future of our city's fiscal health is going to be, I mean god willing it will be good and we'll continue to fund these things but you know we know that the economy is a cycle and god forbid ten years from now we enter into a recession, you know how are we going to maintain the great work that we've done and the investments that we've made? I guess I'm curious to find out how do we leverage public and private money into these projects? As elected officials and of course Parks and the advocates how do we really marry the two in, in terms of a true and real public/private partnership because there's a lot of money in New York City, there's a lot of, you know wealth and, and big companies and

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2 corporations and I think that a lot of them would be
3 really interested in like a matching grant program
4 and say hey, we have this project in Pelham Park or
5 Forest Park or Cunningham Park or... give, give me a
6 park in Bay Ridge, you got a... Shore Road Park, you
7 know and we... it's going to cost 300,000 dollars but
8 we have 150,000 in city money and we'd like you to
9 put up the rest and we'll put your name on a sign
10 somewhere, I mean like... I, I think there has to be
11 strategic planning for the long run for the bad
12 times, that's, that's my concern, right now we're in
13 the good times, it's great but we have to plan for
14 bad times too.

15 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Yeah, I mean I
16 think one of the reasons that the public/private
17 partnership model has been so successful with New
18 York City Parks is that it really has helped to sort
19 of smooth some of those ups and downs in our economy.
20 I guess sort of two points to your question; the
21 first is that by our estimates over a thousand acres
22 of natural forests in this city are touched by
23 nonprofit conservancies so part of the work that the
24 NAC is doing is making sure that those private
25 dollars are spent to maximum impact and we think

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2 that's a really great opportunity to align the work
3 of the natural resources group with the work of all
4 of our nonprofit partners and to make sure that we're
5 sharing data, that we're sharing our priorities, that
6 we're working together to really achieve a common
7 goal. There are certainly opportunities to expand
8 that public/private partnership model but I
9 simultaneously think that natural forests are one of
10 the resources in our city that are really valuable
11 public infrastructure and I think we've seen over the
12 course of decades of public/private partnership that
13 private philanthropy doesn't and shouldn't replace
14 public investments so finding that balance is very
15 important and I think it's part of what we are
16 seeking to do in this plan and seeking to do through
17 our partnership with the agency.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: I want more money
19 for Forest Park and I just want to be very clear and
20 up front, I'm willing to put in... what I'm able to put
21 in, I think I put in almost all of my parks equity
22 initiative just into that project last year, fiscal
23 year alone which was great, I was... it was a wonderful
24 project and also it... actually for those who don't
25 know anything about it, I didn't know anything about

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2 it until we started it, it was actually a hundred
3 years ago dedicated as a World War I memorial for the
4 people from Richmond and Woodhaven who died... [cross-
5 talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I've seen those...

7 [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: ...in World War...

9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I've seen the...

11 I've seen... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: ...one so... and some

13 of them were destroyed by hurricanes and, and
14 invasive species and other things so we, we replanted
15 and restored those... the pine grove, those trees in
16 that area... [cross-talk]

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: ...but I, I didn't

19 realize how expensive just that little patch would be
20 and there's so many other areas in Forest Park that
21 need a lot of money and attention, I only represent
22 the, the area sort of adjacent to it, it's actually
23 located within Council Member Holden and Koslowitz's
24 district primarily but I, I fund so much there

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2 because my constituents love it and I love it...

3 [cross-talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: ...and we've seen
6 a... an uptick in, in Forest Park with the carousel and
7 some of the ball fields and I think though to get to
8 your point with the public/private partnerships
9 sometimes these corporations they want to fund tennis
10 courts and basketball courts and things that are sort
11 of sexy and athletic and that's great but when you
12 tell them we need help, you know with reforestation
13 there, I don't... I don't know how difficult it is.

14 Maybe it would be easier if we had like a development
15 associate with fundraising goals or like a, a real
16 strategic plan to go out and raise private money that
17 we can leverage with the... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well we... [cross-
19 talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: ...public money...
21 [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...we do have 17
23 conservancies in the city... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Yeah... [cross-
25 talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...that raise over
3 a million dollars a year some of them well into eight
4 figures so... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Central Park has
6 one... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Central Park,
8 Prospect Park which have large... [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Yes... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...natural
11 forested areas... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Right, but I
13 don't see a lot of private money going into Forest
14 Park that's my point and I've been in office for nine
15 and a half years so...

16 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: I'd be happy for
17 us to schedule a follow up.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: That would be
19 great... [cross-talk]

20 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...conversation with
21 you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: ...and that's all
23 Chairman, thank you.

24

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
3 Councilman Ulrich and now Councilman Costa
4 Constantinides.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you
6 for your time today and thank you for your testimony,
7 thank you Chair Grodenchik for this great hearing. I
8 have a few questions, one I see Astoria Park is a
9 very small blip there but a, a great 60-acre jewel in
10 our community, how is the, the forestry at Astoria
11 Park?

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I don't think it was
13 assessed, there's no natural area... natural area
14 forest in Astoria Park.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Okay, I
16 see you had a little... you had... thought you had a
17 little on, on your map there so... but I mean what I'm
18 noticing... [cross-talk]

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: ...is many
21 of the forests in New York City are butting water and
22 as we are experiencing as you talked about climate
23 change and sea level rise and many of these issues I
24 understand the, the importance of these green areas
25 to combatting climate change but what are the... what

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is the impact of climate change on these areas, what are we doing to make them more resilient to protect them from sea level rise that is in many cases sort of different emission models and climate models possibly going to create areas... places where we're not going to be able to... we're going to see a lot more serious flooding, a hearing earlier this week showed 50 inches of sea level rise by 2080 so what are we doing to protect these natural spaces from sea level rise and climate change in the future?

JENNIFER GREENFELD: I think I'll...

[cross-talk]

SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Yeah... [cross-talk]

JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...NAC has been working on a climate adapted species program, so I'll let them explain it which we've adopted.

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Okay...

[cross-talk]

SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Yeah, so I'll start by saying that actually a third of our natural forests in the city are in flood zone A so it's...

[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Uh-huh...

[cross-talk]

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2 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...a significant
3 portion of the total resource. As Jennifer mentioned
4 we created a tool to select species that are
5 predicted to do well in future climate scenarios in
6 New York City and the agency and NAC and increasingly
7 partners are utilizing that as a way to select
8 species for new restoration projects that we think
9 are more sort of sturdy and more... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Uh-huh...
11 [cross-talk]

12 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...likely to thrive
13 in, you know this... in the future and that includes
14 thinking about some salt tolerance as part of the
15 selection process.

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, another... I'll
17 just mention that the classic way of combatting any
18 sort of change is to have diversity, so you want to
19 have a diversity of species... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Uh-huh...
21 [cross-talk]

22 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...you want to have
23 locally adapted species and we... in particular I
24 mentioned the nursery that we manage in Staten Island
25 which when we plant actually collect seeds from local

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2 species, so you have a very broad diversity of both
3 genes and species to allow us to adapt as things
4 change.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: So, the
6 385 million dollars this report talks about is, is
7 that some of that money to have that, that resiliency
8 efforts baked into that or... [cross-talk]

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, it would be.

10 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: That includes
11 plant material and the plant material would be
12 selected to maximize adaption to future climate
13 scenarios so yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Okay and
15 the... and the other question I have is... I don't
16 represent that area, but we just passed a number of
17 bills that... related to Jamaica Bay... [cross-talk]

18 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: ...and, and
20 what is the role that New York City forestry and... has
21 on those natural spaces there at all... if at all and I
22 know that the national park service has a large role
23 to play there but what are we doing around Jamaica
24 Bay which is another area that's in a flood zone

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2 that, that has been impacted by climate change and
3 could potentially be impacted even more?

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, Jamaica Bay is
5 very important to us. As you know every... all the
6 property that is on the inside of the Belt Parkway
7 is, is New York City Parks and so we have... [cross-
8 talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Uh-huh...
10 [cross-talk]

11 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...a lot of the
12 parkland around the tributaries to Jamaica Bay so
13 people definitely think about the national park
14 service and the Marsh Islands but Fresh Creek, Spring
15 Creek, Marine Park, Idlewild Park they're all New
16 York City parkland and they are part of our plan to
17 manage natural areas, forests and we've actively
18 worked on particular, particularly salt marsh
19 restoration around there, it's not a forest but we're
20 working the Army Corps of Engineers on a salt marsh
21 restoration in Spring Creek and they're all designed
22 to, to reflect potential... the, the climate change and
23 sea level rise.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Those...
25 are those in need of additional funding as well or...

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Nope, not right now.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Oh, okay...

4 [cross-talk]

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, so... [cross-

6 talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: ...that...

8 [cross-talk]

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...that... those... Spring

10 Creek... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: That's

12 good to hear.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You heard it

14 here first... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Right,

16 yes.

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: The Spring Creek is

18 fully funded and some of the other projects are, are,

19 are very long term so they're not really a... they're

20 either Army Corps project, they're on, on a really

21 long-time horizon.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Not to cut into

23 my colleague's time because he... I didn't put a clock

24 on him, so it doesn't matter but do you have baked

25

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2 into this proposal wetlands both saltwater and
3 freshwater wetlands, is that part of it?

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: No, it's not...
5 [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
7 talk]

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...part of this plan
9 but we... but come back to us in about a year and maybe
10 we'll ask you for a chance to tell you about our
11 wetland's management... [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
13 talk]

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...framework because
15 we're in the middle of putting it together.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I've learned
17 you're not shy, so I'm not worried about that. Costa.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I, I
19 would be... I... you've went exactly where I was going to
20 go next as we were talking about wetlands so that
21 sounds very interesting and... [cross-talk]

22 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: ...as
24 Environmental Chair and partnering with my great
25 colleague, Chair Grodenchik we'd be... I'm looking

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2 forward to hearing that report because I know that...
3 what the role the wetlands play in, in our ecosystems
4 and, and make... protecting us from sea level and, and
5 flooding so I'd be happy to, to hear more about that
6 when you have the opportunity.

7 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Great...

8 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Great...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you
10 sir.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
12 much Councilman Constantinides. I'm going to try to
13 get through these quickly, so we can hear from the
14 people who've been patiently waiting. Did you find
15 any surprises in certain areas of the city where you
16 thought maybe things would be worse or better or... you
17 know is there any...

18 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: I mean I think we
19 were surprised by how great so many places were, I, I
20 think the overall finding was of just much, much
21 healthier set of resources than we anticipated so...

22 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, I mean I guess
23 it's... it was a... I think we all knew that there were
24 really great spaces... we know that there are great
25 forests in New York City but what was the surprise to

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2 see kind of like that... to see the numbers and the
3 statistics which helps illustrate the, the success of
4 the work we've been doing for the last 35 years but
5 we... what... so, when we saw that 85 percent native
6 canopy species number we were... we were like yes,
7 that's what we were hoping, that's what we kind of
8 felt but it was nice to have... be reassured by the
9 numbers.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And we've been
11 talking about the forests today and we're going to
12 continue to talk about them but within the forests
13 reside many different animals and, you know insects
14 that New Yorkers mostly enjoy including raccoons and
15 coyotes and squirrels and chipmunks and many
16 different kinds of amphibians but in your plan do
17 you... does that work, do you plan certain trees to
18 encourage animals to reside in our forests?

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I mean we consider
20 wildlife as part of the forest, trees are just one
21 piece of it, you can't have one without the other and
22 by focusing on native plants and particularly not
23 thinking just about the trees but about the shrubs
24 and the wild flowers and other, other layers of the
25

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2 forest then we are essentially inviting in native
3 wildlife which is beneficial for everybody.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Can you
5 give me a little bit about the, the structure of the,
6 the natural areas conservancy and how it might
7 different form and function from other conservancies
8 that run and maintain parks like we know we have the
9 Central Park Conservancy and we have... [cross-talk]

10 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Uh-huh... [cross-
11 talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...Prospect Park
13 And others but how are you different from those
14 because you don't have a specific park that you worry
15 about?

16 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Yep, that's right
17 so we are similar in that we are a nonprofit, we
18 raise our own funds and we have autonomy over the
19 projects that we select and work on. The geographic
20 areas that we work in are really aligned with the
21 places where the Parks Department Natural Resources
22 group works... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, you're doing
24 some of what Councilman Ulrich kind of hinted at,
25 well he didn't hint at it he said... you know...

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2 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: We have done some
3 private fund raising for individual restoration
4 projects that hasn't been the core of our focus, we
5 have been very focused on conducting research,
6 creating tools and plans and developing the kinds of
7 recommendations that are in this framework but we do
8 each year raise private funds and do a handful of in
9 the field restoration projects in parks across the
10 city... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Can you... can you
12 tell me what your budget is a year approximately?

13 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Uh-huh, it's about
14 two million dollars a year.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And is that more
16 from foundations and corporations or more from
17 individuals?

18 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: The majority of
19 funding comes from foundations, we do get both
20 individual donations and some corporate support, but
21 the bulk of our budget comes from foundation support.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Commissioner the
23 invasive species that are, are invading our forests
24 and our parks are there this many, is it, you know a
25 handful of really persistent ones or is it... do we

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2 have like ten that are really bad or 50 that... [cross-

3 talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I don't... more like...

5 [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...it's a lot...

7 [cross-talk]

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...the ten that are

9 really bad... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-

11 talk]

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...or really like the

13 four or five that are really bad.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Do we train

15 volunteers to look for that, how do you find these

16 thing... I mean because it's a lot of forest, it's

17 7,000... [cross-talk]

18 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...acres plus...

20 [cross-talk]

21 JENNIFER GREENFELD: We have a great

22 volunteer program, our stewardship group has

23 different... takes different approaches so we do sort

24 of the drop in idea where we offer a program and

25 people can come and drop in as an individual, we

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2 schedule programs with individual groups who are
3 looking for outings but one of I think our most
4 promising program is our super stewards program where
5 people have to... they really commit to taking care of
6 a particular geography... a, a particular place on a
7 regular basis and we invest a lot of time in them, we
8 have... you have to have gone to an event first then
9 there's a work shop then we meet you on site and we
10 teach you what to do and those folks are amazing and
11 they also themselves run volunteer programs so
12 they'll go out, organize their friends and neighbors
13 to meet them... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Do they have IDs
15 so that if a PEP officer comes... [cross-talk]

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yes... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...right... so...
18 [cross-talk]

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yes, they have
20 something... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...they're
22 authorized then to remove invasive species from New
23 York City Parks?

24 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Specific ones in
25 specific places.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Interesting,
5 that's great. I won't ask you what the most... is there
6 a most common... is there a worst offender, which... we...
7 should we have a ten most wanted list, I mean...

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: We could easily do
9 that, five most wanted, porcelain berry maybe, I'm
10 looking at my... at my natural area's manager over
11 there...

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Porcelain berry,
13 huh.

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, I would say...
15 [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It sounds nice...
17 [cross-talk]

18 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...porcelain berry, I
19 know...

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Maybe we should
21 rename it.

22 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, it looks nice
23 but it's not... it's not good, it's a woody vine that
24 can literally weigh down a tree and tear down a tree
25 so it's particularly difficult once it gets large.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Porcelain berry,
3 I think I know... [cross-talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...what it is but
6 I'm not 100 percent... [cross-talk]

7 JENNIFER GREENFELD: It might be our...
8 [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...certain...
10 [cross-talk]

11 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...favorite one to
12 hate.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: How many people
14 currently working in the natural resources group?

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Let's see, I just
16 said that, I think it's... oh, in the entire natural
17 resources group, we have 73 baseline positions, 59
18 are city funded and 14 are IFA funded.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: And then we have
21 additional... about 30 people who are funded by grants
22 or other external funding like the stewardship
23 program has several folks who are... a number of people
24 who are funded through NYC Service for example.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And has that
3 increased recently, has it stayed the same or how are
4 we doing... [cross-talk]

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: It's, it's actually
6 increased recently... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
8 talk]

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...which has been
10 great, we had some temporary lines that were funded
11 through the Croatian Mitigation Grant for example
12 that were baselined in FY '16 and that helps
13 specifically Van Cortlandt Park, Pelham Bay Park and
14 we also recently received I think about a year ago
15 eight new city lines... eight new lines for us, I mean
16 that is... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's a lot...
18 [cross-talk]

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...fantastic... [cross-
20 talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's a lot,
22 I'd take them in my office but I... you know... [cross-
23 talk]

24 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, they conduct
25 mandated compliance and monitoring, so we can really

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2 follow up on a lot of our work so, it's been great
3 for the last few years.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And I know that...
5 I mean just in my district alone I have, you know 500
6 acres according to what... and, and that was pretty
7 much what I estimated looking at my maps and... do...
8 have you been to every corner of every... it's a big...
9 it's a big city and I have been to about 70 parks
10 since I've become chair and I know how many there
11 are, there are 1,800 or so but I, I don't expect that
12 you've been to every square inch... [cross-talk]

13 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I have not... [cross-
14 talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...not you, not
16 you personally but... [cross-talk]

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...the natural
19 resources group or the conservancy has pretty much...
20 [cross-talk]

21 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Oh absolutely...
22 [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...target... okay...
24 [cross-talk]

25

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...we have covered
3 everything particularly during the ecological
4 assessment, NAC had 25 people out there over two
5 summers, plots everywhere and our staff is regularly
6 in, in... I wouldn't say every single square foot every
7 year but we are everywhere, we get to them all...
8 [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, once we
10 identify more funding we'll be able to... there won't
11 be a... there won't be a lag if, if this funding it
12 becomes available more of it then we would be able to
13 tackle these problems immediately, you'd be able to
14 set people out, hire contractors, hire additional
15 staff... [cross-talk]

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: We would never say
17 no.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I didn't
19 think you would, but I had to ask. We have as I
20 mentioned before a, a great example of urban forest
21 co-existing with the mountain bikers who are from
22 concerned Long Island Mountain Bikers climb, they
23 work very closely with Queens Parks and it's really
24 been great, they maintain the trails, they're very
25 distichous, I, I have seen them in action, they do

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2 educational events so have you... are there
3 opportunities like that, developed opportunities in
4 other parts of the city?

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I mean we've worked
6 with Mountain Bikers in all... in every place but we
7 have... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I've seen it...
9 [cross-talk]

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...three mountain
11 bike... [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I, I know
13 there's a trial in... [cross-talk]

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...trails, there's
15 what... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...Prospect Park.

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: No, mountain... I
18 don't think there's an official... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: One is official,
20 and one is... [cross-talk]

21 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...mountain bike...
22 [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...not so
24 official.

25

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: There's definitely
3 one official in... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: According to
5 Commissioner... okay, well maybe, maybe it... maybe it
6 was... [cross-talk]

7 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Wolfe's Pond...
8 [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...maybe I got my...
10 [cross-talk]

11 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...is that right and,
12 and... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...Wolfe's Pond
14 has one... [cross-talk]

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...Wolfe's Pond and
16 Highbridge, they both have official mountain biking
17 trails.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well maybe the
19 one in Prospect Park is not as...

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: So, we work with
21 them, we let... we work with any constituents who are
22 interested in sort of branching out.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Are there other
24 examples other than mountain biking that we have... I
25

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2 mean obviously there's very passive recreation just

3 walking through the forest and you know... [cross-talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...maybe reading a

6 book on a rock or something like that but I'm just

7 wondering if there... outside of mountain biking...

8 [cross-talk]

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right, birders I

10 would say... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well yes, of

12 course... [cross-talk]

13 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...is a pretty...

14 [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...yeah, we have...

16 [cross-talk]

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...significant

18 constituency and then you have other runners,

19 marathon, you know other long-distance runners,

20 certainly they're a huge constituency of Van

21 Cortlandt Park.

22 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: There's also a

23 couple of parks where groups like the New York/New

24 Jersey trail conference have a... [cross-talk]

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Uh-huh... [cross-
3 talk]

4 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: ...direct
5 partnership with the local park administrator and are
6 helping with the public access side of things.

7 JENNIFER GREENFELD: We've actually also...
8 we recently did a, a study looking at... I'm going to
9 get this wrong so I apologize, looking at Bram, the
10 religious groups who often make offerings into the...
11 into the sea and we've been talking to them and they,
12 they've actually taken an interest in doing
13 stewardship and clean ups around these areas so, we
14 definitely look at who... you know you want to start
15 with who uses it and actually recognizes, recognizes
16 the importance of the... of the area so we're
17 definitely being very creative in who we engage.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, I've seen...
19 you know I, I... in my district Alley Pond I think the,
20 the forest there is more heavily used with the
21 exception of Cunningham Park where the mountain
22 biking is but the other parts of Cunningham still
23 fighting the after effects of Sandy and those trails...
24 you know I know they've been working... most of them
25 are reopened... [cross-talk]

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...they're

4 narrower though, the trails in, in Alley Pond tend to
5 be wider and better maintained so we're working
6 though, try, trying to provide some more money for
7 that. Any areas that you close off and, and how long
8 would, would that be, I know that I've seen that in
9 Alley Pond where, where trails have been closed off to
10 allow for regrowth or regeneration of forests, how
11 long do they typically... and I know you don't like,
12 you know the bushwhacking you want people to stay on
13 trails because... is that illegal in a New York City
14 park or no?

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: You too... it is not
16 illegal... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You can walk
18 anywhere, right... [cross-talk]

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Oh, yeah you can
20 walk... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I mean... yeah...
22 [cross-talk]

23 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...anywhere, sorry
24 it's not legal to bushwhack... it's not illegal to, to
25 remove any vegetation... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: No, I... [cross-
3 talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...but you can...
5 [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...no, I don't
7 mean... [cross-talk]

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...walk anywhere...
9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: No, I mean... when
11 I say bushwhack, I mean just walking off a, a trail...
12 [cross-talk]

13 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Oh, yeah, yeah...

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, I, I
15 understand you're not allowed to, you know remove
16 anything.

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right...

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...except trained
19 people with invasive species so... alright, I just
20 wanted to ask that question. We've asked who enforces
21 rules. Is there one type of illegal activity or
22 several types that are worse or that are more common
23 place like illegal campfires probably are up there
24 and... [cross-talk]

25

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I mean I... yeah, I
3 would say arson has a, a... has the most immediate and
4 impact you can see it, but it has also the long term
5 effect because you have to manage what's left
6 afterwards but probably I would say it's like off
7 road bicycles might be worse.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: And then there's
10 dumping, I mean they, they're all, all problems.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, I know I,
12 I see it all the time and, and unfortunately in my
13 neighborhoods and... we had a really bad problem with
14 tires, it was wacky... [cross-talk]

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...over 1,200 were
17 dumped on a short period of time on several different
18 occasions but we did a news conference and since then
19 thankfully not... and it was all in... [cross-talk]

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...parks, it was
22 all in... I think all of it was along the Clearview and
23 all of it happened to be in Cunningham Park and the
24 people that... I think that DOT was angry because they,
25

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2 they came out to remove the tires, but they were not
3 happy so that... [cross-talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...seems to be a,
6 a problem but fortunately not as bad as the, the bad
7 old days when... [cross-talk]

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I was going to...
9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...when cars were
11 driven... [cross-talk]

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...say... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...in and we all
14 remember that those of us who are old enough, I'm
15 looking around to see people who would remember that
16 who are here today...

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: No, we've definitely
18 come a long way and that's one of the first things
19 energy did was to understand that you had to secure
20 so to speak the borders from the negative uses and
21 not the positive uses and once you do that then it...
22 you actually have a chance of restoring it.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I actually found
24 a number of years ago an old car in... [cross-talk]

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Oh, yeah... [cross-
3 talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...Cunningham and
5 I gave them a site and then Phil Sparacio, one of the
6 deputy chiefs he called me, he said we can't find
7 this thing, it was rusted to the color of leaves so
8 unless you were right on top of it... but they got rid
9 of it, they were very, very... [cross-talk]

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: They did?

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Oh, yeah, they...
12 I, I assume they cut it up somehow, you know but it's
13 gone so that's, that's all good, we don't have those
14 kinds of issues in New York City parks. Have you
15 acquired more park... I know Commissioner Silver has
16 been here several times this year, mostly about
17 budget but he was a little, little... talking about
18 we're over 30,000 acres now, was that... [cross-talk]

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...so, have you
21 added new forests to... I know it's not easy to find
22 forest in New York City but... [cross-talk]

23 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Well, I mean North
24 Cove I think was the... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, yes...

3 [cross-talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...was a recent
5 acquisition and Brookfield the, the property that
6 pushed us over has natural areas in it.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay...

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. My last
10 question for you, do you know what percentage of
11 people who use New York... or let's... I won't ask
12 percentage, but do we know how many people use our
13 forests every year?

14 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: You can answer
15 that one...

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: You can... [cross-
17 talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I know there are
19 hundred... [cross-talk]

20 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Yeah... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and 30 million
22 park visitors according to the Commissioner and I
23 would say that's probably, you know getting some
24 shaking of the... [cross-talk]

25

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2 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Uh-huh... [cross-
3 talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...head over here,
5 its... but no, I think it might even be higher than
6 that...

7 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: The social
8 assessment that was conducted by the US Forest
9 Service interviewed people in over 40 parks and a
10 little over 60 percent of the people who were
11 interviewed reported spending time in natural areas.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, so it's
13 significant, probably... [cross-talk]

14 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Its significant,
15 yep...

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...in the
17 millions. Yeah, I mean I... based upon my, my informal
18 surveys but... and that includes a lot of school
19 children that get taken to, you know environmental
20 centers and then they go out... [cross-talk]

21 SARAH CHARLOP-POWERS: Uh-huh... [cross-
22 talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...like in eh
24 Alley and... [cross-talk]

25

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2 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right and ranger
3 programs... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...so that's all,
5 all, all good. Alright, I think I'm done with my
6 questions for you, I would ask that as always that
7 somebody stick around or somebody stick around so you
8 can hear what very interested parties... see I really
9 want to thank everybody for being here today and
10 we're going to get to... we're going to get to some
11 advocates and then we'll get back to government so
12 I'm going to call you up and I'm going to put you on
13 a clock but I'm going to be a little more expansive
14 today. So, Lynn Kelly, New Yorkers for Parks; Adriana
15 Espinoza from the New York League of Conservation
16 Voters; Josephine Scalia from the Forest Park Trust
17 and Portia Dyrebforth, did I get that right?

18 PORTIA DYREBFORTH: You did, absolutely.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's unusual,
20 huh. Thank you.

21 [off mic dialogue]

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: After we hear
23 from this panel... it's still not going... after we hear
24 from this panel next up will be Patty Rafferty from
25

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2 the National Park Service and Richard Hallett from
3 the USDA Forest Service. Okay.

4 LYNN KELLEY: Good to go?

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'm waiting... I
6 think we're almost good to go... I'm, I'm ready but I
7 don't know if... okay, okay. Miss Kelly please.

8 LYNN KELLEY: Thank you Council Member,
9 thank you to the Committee, good afternoon everyone.
10 I'm Lynn Kelly, Executive Director of New Yorkers for
11 Parks. I think you've heard a full description, a
12 robust description on how important our natural areas
13 are to us in New York City, they provide us with a
14 view of our city that predates our dense urban
15 environment, it really is how New York City began.
16 And for us we feel it represents a vital ecological
17 buffer against some of the worst impacts of climate
18 change. As such we are 100 percent behind the
19 framework and ask that the city and the City Council
20 consider funding the implementation of this framework
21 as put forth by NAC and the NRG group at parks. This
22 25-year funding plan which yes, has a scary big price
23 tag of 385 million dollars but I want to put this
24 into perspective... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I was going to
3 ask you to raise the money but go ahead.

4 LYNN KELLEY: Yeah. If you average that
5 out over 25 years it's a little over 15 million
6 dollars a year and this weekend when we are in our
7 apartments listening to the wind and the rain from
8 the first of the fall/winter nor'easters battle our
9 apartments in our city, I would say that there's
10 probably an interesting analysis to be done of the
11 cost of what it costs New York City to clean up after
12 all of these storms in aggregate I would say hasten a
13 guess that over a 25 year period if climate change
14 continues in the unfortunate way that it has been
15 we're going to be faced with much larger nor'easters,
16 much bigger storms and much bigger cleanup and bills
17 associated with that. So, I would ask the Council
18 that as you sit down with your colleagues and the
19 budget negotiations team, Council Member
20 Constantinides on the Environmental impacts of
21 climate change that you consider that 15 million
22 dollars a year is a very small investment for
23 maintaining and protecting and restoring our natural
24 areas in comparison to the ecological protections
25 that they provide. I will add that we believe also

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that the protective maintenance of these trails is an equity mandate for New York City which is something that we haven't spoken about today. To give you an example, for residents of Cypress Hills and Highland Park in Brooklyn's district 37, Highland Park itself represents the only sizeable open space in that area, in that neighborhood and in that council district and if the natural forests in Highland Park aren't kept clean, safe, well maintained it's a barrier to public use, it's, it's, it's essentially a barrier to that community's access to open space and cuts off that neighborhood much in the way you've said access to where you live is supported by the park in your area and the maintenance of the park in that area. So, we do consider this an equity issue as well. So, the Committee knows New Yorkers for Parks repeatedly called on the city, the administration and the City Council to fund these important initiatives and what's really critical here is the funding of this project that there are adequate staff lines to implement this forest management framework and we would hope that in this immediate budget cycle that those staff lines are not lost in the administration as they put forth their budget for the city because

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2 if we lose the initial staff lines that we have today
3 that will only impede us from implementing the longer
4 forest management that we have a plan for.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I thank you,
6 it's my intention to not only make sure they're not
7 lost but to add funding to the parks budget for FY
8 '20, that will be my hope and my desire and I'm
9 counting on a lot of people in this room to help me
10 make that a possibility. I do want to introduce the
11 new budget analyst for the committee as many of you
12 know Ken Grace has moved over to the other side of
13 City Hall but we are lucky to have a new Budget
14 Analyst, Monica Bujak, I got to get used to
15 pronouncing that name and she is a recent graduate
16 from Columbia University, does they had... do they have
17 a forest there, probably a little...

18 ADRIANA ESPINOZA: Good afternoon, my
19 name is Adriana Espinoza, I'm the Director of the New
20 York City Program at the New York League of
21 Conservation Voters. I'd like to thank Council Member
22 Grodenchik for this opportunity to testify here
23 before the Committee on Parks. New York City has over
24 77,000 acres of green space it... making New York City
25 approximately 41 percent green. Nearly 10 percent of

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this space is in the jurisdiction of New York City parks where there are over five million trees made up of hundreds of species in our natural forests. And New York LCV considers forests one of our city's most valuable environmental assets with enormous public benefits. They mitigate climate change, provide clean air, contribute to the wellbeing of residents. And just to illustrate that briefly; tree cover can cool down a city by two to eight degrees Celsius, when planted near buildings, trees can cut air conditioning use by 30 percent and reduce heating energy use by 20 to 50 percent, and a single large matured tree can absorb 331 pounds of carbon dioxide in a year and filter some harmful airborne pollutants. In total, New York City trees remove 1,300 tons of pollutants from the atmosphere each year. And so, they're also very valuable to our city's economy. The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation measured the economic impact of its trees to be 120 million dollars a year and each year the canopy captures 1.97 billion gallons of stormwater runoff and stores 1.2 million tons of carbon per year. However, our natural forests are at a critical juncture. Without concerted efforts across

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the board it can be challenging to preserve and protect our urban forestry. Our forests are also under threat as a result of lack... lack of proper maintenance, illegal dumping and invasive species that we heard a lot about earlier. It's, it's... investment is needed now to ensure that we don't find our forests in a crisis. Pushing this investment down the road only guarantees that it will cost exponentially more and create a generations long backlog of work. Just like other critical city infrastructure, it's imperative that our forests are kept in a state of good repair. To achieve, achieve this, the city should invest 800... 385 million over 25 years for the ongoing restoration, conservation and management of our forests. In New York City, the Natural Areas Conservancy is on the forefront of researching our urban forests. This April, NAC and New York City Parks released their Forest, Forest Management Framework, the 25-year roadmap and funding plan for the management of our forests. It is the first ever comprehensive plan for this critical natural resource and is the result of years of data driven and science-based research. NYLCV strongly supports NAC's efforts to restore and preserve our

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2 forests and we urge the city to implement the Forest
3 Management Framework for New York City. We also
4 believe this framework should be adopted as part of
5 the city's One NYC plan, as its benefits contribute
6 to the plans existing goals of sustainability,
7 resiliency and equity. Implementation of the Forest
8 Management Framework is a top priority for NYLCV and
9 will continue to be a major focus of our advocacy in
10 the coming years. I'd like to thank Chair Grodenchik
11 and the Committee on Parks for their attention to
12 this issue, and I look forward to working with you
13 all moving forward to ensure that New York City has a
14 healthy and thriving forest for generations to come.
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Miss Espinoza in
17 your second paragraph you site 77,701 acres, I assume
18 that includes state and federal lands?

19 ADRIANA ESPINOZA: Yes, that's total...
20 [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, okay...
22 [cross-talk]

23 ADRIANA ESPINOZA: That's total.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're a little
25 baffled here but now we know, thank you. We're always

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2 thinking of city parklands, but we know that there's
3 a lot of parkland that is not necessarily city but...

4 PORTIA DYREBFORTH: Hi, good afternoon.

5 This testimony is on behalf of the Forest Park Trust,
6 I'm here with Josephine Scalia, the Landscape Manager
7 for Forest Park. We would like to thank... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You are... would
9 you just identify yourself for the record?

10 PORTIA DYREBFORTH: Certainly Portia
11 Dyrebforth, I'm the Administrator for Forest Park and
12 Highland Park in Queens and Brooklyn and I'm speaking
13 on behalf of the Forest Park Trust. The Forest Park
14 Trust. The Forest Park Trust is a nonprofit
15 organization founded in 1998, we partner with New
16 York City Parks and the community to support,
17 maintain and program forests and Highland Parks. You
18 often hear about the ecological importance of healthy
19 urban forests but what about their effects on our
20 citizens? From Richard Louv's Last Child in the
21 Woods, research, researchers believe that the loss of
22 natural habitat or the disconnection from nature has
23 enormous implications for human health and child
24 development. An individual's connection to nature can
25 improve their interpersonal relationships and

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emotional wellbeing. In Forest Park, we have 274 acres of forever wild natural areas to connect to. Sixty four percent of our patrons use our natural areas, compared to 57 percent citywide. Visitors are attracted to the park's numerous amenities such as the 1901 carousel and the golf course, however, our identity is in the majestic towering oaks, tulip and hickory trees in our beautiful forest. We have some photos that... up until the 1990's, our natural areas were plagued with illegal dumping, an unmanaged trail system, erosion and illegal activities. We also had a plethora of invasive exotic plants creating monocultures and inhibiting native plant regeneration. The last 20 years, with Josephine and the Forest Park Trust, partnering with New York City Parks, half a million dollars was procured in grants and council discretionary funding to work on these issues. These funds supported summer staff, research, management guides and maintenance supplies. We have treated over 100 acres of forest, created a hiking trail system, planted 16,000 native trees and shrubs and mobilized over 5,000 volunteers. Permanent staff and funds are needed to keep our forests healthy. Only consistent, year-round management is effective

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2 in reducing invasive plants and encouraging native
3 plant regeneration. Without treatment, areas can turn
4 into overgrown vine lands, compromising the health of
5 mature native trees. Council Member Eric Ulrich, who
6 was here earlier, immediately saw the value of Forest
7 Park's natural areas. Over the last six years, with
8 discretionary funds, he had helped support a summer
9 forest crew and most recently he funded the
10 restoration as he spoke about of the historic pine
11 grove. With this allocation, we were able to save
12 this deteriorating forest, restoring and preserving
13 it for future generations to come. It really is
14 breathtaking. Working with the Forest Management
15 Framework program, we have learned that Forest Park
16 is at... definitely at the tipping point on the forest
17 health scale. The Trust fully agrees with the NAC
18 assessment and recommendations and we are confident
19 the forests... forestry framework protocol will
20 preserve and sustain and improve our forests for
21 citizens experience the full benefit connected to the
22 forest in their own backyard. We urge you to support
23 the framework. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
25 much, thank you all for your testimony. Obviously,

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2 you know where I believe and I, I'm, I'm happy to see
3 so many people that are here today and I'm going to
4 dismiss this panel. We're going to hear from our next
5 panel. Patty Rafferty from the National Park Service;
6 Richard Hallett from the US Department of Agriculture
7 Forest Service and just to mix things up a little
8 Eric Sanderson from the Wildlife Conservation Society
9 and Jason Smith from the New York Restoration
10 Project. Thank you very much. Ladies first.

11 PATTI RAFFERTY: Good afternoon, I'm
12 Patti Rafferty, Chief of Resource Stewardship at
13 Gateway National Recreation Area. Once more, good
14 afternoon, I am Patti Rafferty, Chief of Resource
15 Stewardship at Gateway National Recreation Area, one
16 of 417 units of the United State Department of
17 Interior's National Park System. Gateway encompasses
18 more than 26,000 acres of recreational land,
19 woodlands, wetlands and other significant natural and
20 cultural areas. In New York City, Gateway includes
21 the Jamaica Bay and Staten Island Units. Jamaica Bay
22 is well known as an estuary that provides important
23 habitat for finfish, shellfish, crabs and other
24 marine species. Perhaps less well known are the
25 Jamaica Bay uplands and coastal forests that provide

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critical foraging and nesting habitat for migrating species of birds along the Atlantic flyway. To date within the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, NPS has recorded 331 of the approximately 700 species of birds that occur within the North American continent. These forested uplands are an integral component of the habitat diversity within the estuary. Our Staten Island Unit contains a... contains a remnant swamp white oak forest at Miller Field as well as substantial forested and scrub shrub plant communities at Great Kills. The total area of the maritime coastal forest within Gateway's Jamaica Bay and Staten Island Units is approximately 3,500 acres, or 50 percent of our combined upland habitat in these two units. New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the Natural Areas Conservancy are critical partners that have worked with Gateway for restoration and management of forested habitats. The million trees program has been extremely valuable to, to the National Park Service and served as a catalyst for the restoration of degraded woodlands within Gateway. Through interagency collaboration, common stewardship goals and combined expertise, New York City Parks, the Natural Areas Conservancy and NPS

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have developed forest restoration projects that total about 30 acres at Floyd Bennett Field and Canarsie Pier in Brooklyn, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens and Crooke's Point in Staten Island. We view the overall goals of restoring, sustaining and connecting woodlands as critical to supporting the ecological integrity of Gateway's vegetative communities. Sustainable forest habitat are among our highest priorities to support diverse native wildlife and provide visitor enjoyment. In addition to the ecological values, forests provide important ecosystem services. Our forests provide an oasis for retreat from the hustle and bustle of the city and an opportunity to engage and observe nature. Forests also provide oxygen, sequesters carbon and reduces local and regional temperatures. While our forests contribute to human health and wellness, the health of our forests is at risk. In 2016, the Natural Areas Conservancy assessed 1,495 acres of grassland and woodland within Gateway at Floyd Bennett Field and Fort Tilden. This study mirrored the work that NAC previously completed on 10,000 acres of city parkland. At the NPS sites, 75 percent of the sampled plots contained invasive vines and dumping was found

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2 in 69 percent of the plots. Two of the five most
3 common understory species were invasive. The
4 nonnative tree of heaven was one of the five most
5 abundant trees within these plots. Information from
6 this assessment is crucial for science-based
7 management of Gateway's forests. More recently, the
8 Natural Areas Conservancy and NYC Parks Forest
9 Management Frame, Framework provides strategic and
10 comprehensive planning for conservation and
11 management. NPS supports the vision presented in the
12 plan as well as the implementation of the plan to
13 improve and protect the city's forests. Investment in
14 forest management is an investment in the wellbeing
15 of the city's residents. Thank you for this
16 opportunity to testify.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for
18 being here today and it's great to know that you work
19 with our Park Service, we don't normally think of
20 National Parks in New York City, but they certainly
21 are here and they're a very important part of our
22 parks system. Next up from Department of Agriculture.

23 RICHARD HALLETT: Thank you. My name is
24 Richard Hallett, I'm a Research Ecologist with the US
25 Forest Service, I'm testifying on behalf of the USDA

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2 Forest Service and our research scientists at the New
3 York City Urban Field Station. We'd like to
4 acknowledge the critical work at New York City Parks
5 and the Natural Areas Conservancy do on behalf of the
6 city's natural areas and our communities. The USDA
7 Forest Service is a multifaceted agency that manages
8 and protects 154 national forests. Today as the US
9 population is over 80 percent urban, we find that
10 urban landscapes also need stewardship and
11 restoration and our calling to care for the land and
12 to serve the people applies just as strongly to urban
13 areas. Over the years we have worked with the New
14 York City Parks and the NAC to assess ecological
15 condition and social value of the city's natural
16 forests and to create STEW-MAP, a citywide
17 stewardship map of all civic groups that are involved
18 in the caring for the environment. Our work as Forest
19 Service research scientists builds on a legacy of
20 studying recreational use and forest ecosystem
21 dynamics in our national forests. The natural forests
22 of New York City require different management and
23 care than the city's street and park trees. The
24 city's natural forests are valuable not because of
25 the project... products we can extract from them but

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2 for the ecosystem's services including cultural
3 ecosystem services they provide the city. Healthy,
4 well managed forests provide more and better
5 ecosystem services, are more accessible to visitors
6 and are more beautiful. New York City's natural
7 forests are an important type of greenspace providing
8 unique nature benefits within the urban context. Of
9 the estimated 6.9 million trees in New York City,
10 approximately 3.3 million are found in the city's
11 natural forests. Consequently, these forests provide
12 a disproportionate amount of the ecosystem services
13 to the city. In a recent social assessment of natural
14 forests, we found that these are highly social places.
15 For many New Yorkers their nearby natural forest
16 amounts to the only nature experience. In fact, about
17 20 percent of New York City park users interviewed
18 said that they go nowhere else to recreate in the
19 outdoors. The recently released forest management
20 framework is based on a comprehensive ecological
21 assessment of the city's natural forest. We now know
22 that 82 percent of the mature trees are native but
23 only half of the young trees that will replace them
24 are native. This suggests a need for intervention to
25 ensure that these forests are not taken over by

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2 exotic invasive species. For the first time in its
3 history, New York City has the information to make
4 comprehensive, science-based management decisions
5 about its natural forests. This information is just
6 as detailed and rigorous as the information we use to
7 manage our national forests. The Forest Management
8 Framework takes advantage of this new knowledge and
9 outlines a plan that will ensure that the city's
10 natural forests will continue to cool the city,
11 absorb stormwater, reach their potential to absorb
12 greenhouse gases and provide access to nature for the
13 people in the city. We stand committed to continue
14 our collaboration with the city's Natural Resource
15 Managers, policy makers, researchers and residents.
16 We look forward to working shoulder to shoulder with
17 our colleagues to improve the health of the city's
18 forested areas as a benefit to the larger ecology of
19 our region and the wellbeing of local residents.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
22 much for your work and please thank your colleagues
23 as well. Up next we have Mr. Sanderson from the
24 Wildlife Conservation Society.

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2 ERIC SANDERSON: Yep. Can you hear me
3 there?

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I can hear you
5 just fine.

6 ERIC SANDERSON: Fine, thank you Chairman
7 and thank you to... and to you and to the Committee for
8 holding this hearing. My name is Eric Sanderson, I'm
9 a Senior Scientist at the wildlife conservation
10 society, a Board Member of the Natural Areas
11 Conservancy and the Author of Mannahatta: A Natural
12 History of New York City. I'm also a resident of City
13 Island in the Bronx, commonly go to Pelham Bay Park
14 so please say hello to Council Member Gjonaj... [cross-
15 talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I absolutely
17 will... [cross-talk]

18 ERIC SANDERSON: ...next time you see him.
19 So, I'm here to make some... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'll be waiting
21 outside from you but go ahead...

22 ERIC SANDERSON: Okay, I won't keep you
23 too long sir. I'd just like to make a few comments
24 about how the historical ecology of New York City
25 informs our modern efforts to conserve and manage our

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2 forests today. And I have three brief points I want
3 to make. The first is that we think of our forests as
4 being embedded within the city but in fact I think a
5 better way to think of it is how the city is embedded
6 in the forest... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I think you're
8 right...

9 ERIC SANDERSON: Yeah, you know we...
10 [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Because you
12 don't have to... you don't have to drive, I was driving
13 out to visit a friend in Pennsylvania last weekend
14 and you get to the forest very quickly once you leave
15 Manhattan.

16 ERIC SANDERSON: No, that's right... that's
17 right... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Or once, once
19 you leave New York City and even in New York City.

20 ERIC SANDERSON: That's, that's right,
21 if, if these buildings weren't here this would be
22 forest again as the pictures on your... on my testimony
23 show you there, you know the, the soil that's under
24 our feet was created by the forest, the forests were
25 habitat for native Americans for 8,000 years before

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2 the Dutch showed up, they were... they were the reason
3 the animals were here that actually brought the Dutch
4 here, they created the freshwater streams that
5 allowed people to live here, 66 miles of which are
6 Manhattan, 514 miles that existed formerly citywide.
7 You know in some way forests as much as the Dutch,
8 you know chutzpah nineteenth century might have, have
9 been what made New York City. We wouldn't be New York
10 City if we didn't have our forests and so I think we
11 owe something back to the forest. So, my second point
12 is that, you know if we were to go back in time to
13 Henry Hudson's arrival in 1609, we'd see that there
14 wasn't just one forest the way we've been talking
15 about today but actually seven kinds of forests on
16 Manhattan Island, perhaps as many as 20... 25 different
17 forest types citywide and I, I think the way to think
18 about that is, is the same way we think of
19 neighborhoods, you know in the same way that Tribeca
20 isn't the same as Astoria or Riverdale isn't the same
21 as, as Coney Island. These different forests provide
22 a different kind of habitat for plants and animals.
23 Each forest had its own cast of characters. It was a
24 unique indelible part of the landscape that were
25 there. So, you know as we manage our forests, we need

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to conserve them with this diversity in mind and this is the basic idea of ecological representation which is something that WCS works on all over the world in our conservation efforts. And third and finally I think... you know a critical reason that we need to conserve forests in the city is because they are natural examples to us of what strength, diversity and resilience mean. They give us clear, locally adapted and inspiring examples to teach upon... teach about to reflect upon, to give us hope. Forests may or may not make anybody any money, but they do make life worth, worth living here in New York City and in fact, these, these are the values that are recognized in the New York City nature goals process that Sarah mentioned and that many of my colleagues here today have been working on. Conserving forests hits several of the targets that we've been talking about managing natural areas, providing safe access to nature and engaging the city's young and old in learning about and caring for our city. Forests provide value that can be shared for all generations to come for the next 400 years.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, let me ask
3 you a question or, or the ecologists who are here
4 today... [cross-talk]

5 ERIC SANDERSON: Yeah... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Would it make
7 sense for us to take some of our public lands, not
8 necessarily parkland... I know it's a constant battle
9 in New York City between places to live and places to
10 work and places to go to school but if we had open
11 lands would it make sense to reforest some of them as
12 opposed to... {cross-talk]

13 ERIC SANDERSON: In, in my opinion, yes,
14 I mean I, I think there's two competing forces that
15 are shaping New York City now... right now; one is the
16 popularity of the city and how the population is
17 rising... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's risen
19 tremendously, in my lifetime it's gone from... it went
20 down to seven million and... or so and now its back up
21 to at least 8.6 million.

22 ERIC SANDERSON: That's right, I mean
23 all, all the... all the great things about New York
24 City and many of our problems right now whether its
25 transit or traffic or enough affordable housing all

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2 relate to just what you're talking about, you know
3 the attractiveness of our city but at the same time
4 the city is facing threats from sea level rise and,
5 and climate change which is taking land from the city
6 and once of the best and most resilient ways to deal
7 with this is through restoration of nature in the
8 city.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, thank you.
10 Mr. Smith.

11 JASON SMITH: Thank you for the
12 opportunity to testify... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you...
14 [cross-talk]

15 JASON SMITH: ...and I, I will reiterate
16 support for the framework that many other speakers
17 have given hopefully useful from the perspective of a
18 nonprofit conservancy with a focus not just on rest,
19 restoring our forests and managing them but
20 programming them and engaging young people in them.
21 NYRP... oh, I should introduce myself I guess... [cross-
22 talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I know you will.

24 JASON SMITH: Jason Smith, I'm the
25 Director of Northern Manhattan Parks and for New York

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Restoration Project and we are deeply excited and motivated by the outline... the vision outlined in the Forest Management Framework. We hope that the City will do everything within its power to support New York City Parks and other practitioners in delivering the steps outlined that will achieve optimal ecological and recreational outcomes for our forests. With the Forest Management report highlights the remarkable natural resources of our forests, it also acknowledges that there's an impending crisis in the quality of those forests, which will only be compounded by growing threats from climate change and invasive species. And to put it in a bit of a regional context, between 1979 and 2000 in the Eastern U.S. net loss of forests was greater than 3.7 million hectares, which is an area larger than the state of Maryland and additional recent research suggests that on average U.S. cities lose about 36 million trees each year because of land use changes and the development pressures we were talking about and this loss of forests it is... one of the large drivers is rapid urbanization, which really creates an opportunity for New York City to demonstrate how our forests can be protected and more fully

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integrated into urban ecosystems. In that direction NYRP has been working to restore neglected natural areas in New York since our finding in 1995. That work we've, we've seen firsthand the transformative impact that a safe and well managed forest can have on a community. We were very pleased to see NAC and the New York City Parks include a social and ecological lens in the framework because we long believed that any approach to land management in New York must center on social and physical resilience. When managed effectively, our forests provide environmental and public health benefits that have been touched on by many of the speakers including cooling the neighborhood, supporting biodiversity, sequestering carbon and improving stormwater management. But really critically, it's become clear to us that a well-managed forest is safer and more inviting and that creates opportunities for environmental stewardship, education, and recreation which NYRP believes really are the right of every New Yorker in every neighborhood. We see many opportunities for the conservancy network to help apply the framework. It's helping us set goals, align our work and motivate all of us to achieve a

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2 collective vision for natural spaces in every
3 neighborhood in New York.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, well I
5 thank you all for being here today and thank you for
6 your work. It's very important and very, very happy
7 to see so far with more testimony to come, everybody
8 pulling in the same direction. So, with that I'm
9 going to dismiss this panel and thank you again and
10 the next panel will be Lynda Tower from the Riverside
11 Park Conservancy, Christina Taylor from the Friends
12 of Van Cortlandt Park and Margot, I don't know if I'm
13 pronouncing that right, Perron of the Van Cortlandt
14 Park Conservancy.

15 [off mic dialogue]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Miss Tower.

17 LYNDA TOWER: Good afternoon... [cross-
18 talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Would you speak
20 into the microphone.

21 LYNDA TOWER: Good afternoon.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good afternoon.

23 LYNDA TOWER: My name is Lynda Tower, I'm
24 the Vice President of Operations for the Riverside
25 Park Conservancy. And as you know Chair Grodenchik as

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2 we've been delighted to host you twice in the Parks
3 since you took helm of this Committee, we are a non...
4 [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you...

6 [cross-talk]

7 LYNDA TOWER: ...the nonprofit organization
8 that supports Riverside Park providing about half the
9 annual operating budget. We work alongside New York
10 City Parks Department and community volunteers to
11 maintain nearly 400 acres of waterfront parkland in
12 one of the densest urban environments in the world.
13 Our mission is to help restore, maintain and improve
14 Riverside Park and parts of Fort Washington Park, in
15 partnerships with the city for the benefit and
16 enjoyment of all New Yorkers. We view Riverside Park
17 and all urban green spaces as essential New York City
18 infrastructure providing adequate, ongoing care helps
19 ensure the ecological and social health of not only
20 our local communities but also the city as a whole.
21 I'm here today to explain our work and how it fits
22 into the larger framework of forest management in New
23 York City. I then have three suggestions for how we
24 can make tangible steps to better support our city's
25 forests. Riverside Park is almost entirely a built

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environment, thus forested areas occurring there face unique pressures. Spanning six miles along the Hudson River waterfront, the 400 acres of parkland contain large sweeps of natural areas and includes 60 of the 7,300 acres of forested natural areas in New York City. Our restoration goals focus on establishing essential forest functions such as supporting water quality, adding habitat value and educating our community to be active stewards of the park. The conservancy has evaluated the best opportunities for forest and habitat restoration in our park and has created a set of goals that guide our work. One, support water quality of the Hudson River by addressing erosion and strategically planting areas to capture stormwater runoff from city streets and park paths. Two, improve habitat for migratory birds traveling along the Hudson River corridor by creating and sustaining forage and cover at appropriate times of the year. Three, increase ecological diversity by controlling and replacing invasive plant species with plant material that can support regional forest health. Four, educating and enabling our community to be active stewards of natural areas by providing experiential learning opportunities for people of all

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2 ages and backgrounds every year. The Riverside Park
3 Conservancy considers the ongoing restoration and
4 maintenance of Riverside Park's natural areas to be
5 one of the organization's top priorities. To meet
6 these goals, we've engaged the Natural Areas
7 Conservancy, we provide dedicated staff and
8 facilitate direct involvement with the community
9 through 40,000 hours of volunteerism each year. And
10 we're always returning to the big picture context of
11 our work, whoa...

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's okay, go
13 ahead.

14 LYNDA TOWER: New York City's forested
15 areas are a critical... at a critical tipping point,
16 constantly threatened by invasive plants, garbage
17 dumping and pollution. There are hundreds of
18 underutilized, neglected areas that should be
19 improved and utilized to create valuable connections
20 between fragmented habitats and neighborhood,
21 neighborhoods. There is great potential for these
22 spaces to function as an interconnected network of
23 natural habitats that will support one another in
24 vital ways. Riverside Park's 60 acres is just a piece
25 of the puzzle, puzzle. There are tangible social

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benefits resulting from equitable, safe access to forested areas for passive recreation. We strongly support the Natural Areas Conservancy's Forest Management Framework for New York City released this year, which concludes that time spent in natural areas improves cognitive and emotional wellbeing, reduces crime and fortifies social cohesion. As noted in the report, 25 percent of New York City's parkland is natural areas and insufficiently managed due to lack of funding. Year after year, the New York City Parks Department's budget... operating budget is less than one half of one percent of the city's total annual budget. This is insufficient to protect our parks and natural areas. With greater support, many unmanaged areas could be transformed into functioning habitat and valuable public oasis, fostering a more sustainable, equitable and ultimately resilient city. I conclude by asking our local government to first, recognize our forests for a... the essential functions that they provide to New York City while understanding that they are not self-perpetuating systems. Given the harsh urban conditions they exist in, compounded by the reality of climate change, urban forests need to be reconceptualized as a

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2 crucial investment in terms of both 21st century
3 infrastructure and public health. Second, in order to
4 provide the long-term preservation desired, the City
5 needs to provide ongoing support for organizations
6 positioned to provide long term stewardship of
7 restored forests. And third... the third necessary step
8 for the City Council is to take to... is to actively
9 prioritize implementation of the Natural Areas
10 Conservancy's Framework by providing funding and
11 additional outreach support for New York City Parks
12 and its partners. We need this comprehensive plan for
13 ongoing science-based management of our city's
14 forests and it must be established sooner rather than
15 later.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
17 much for your testimony and please give my regards to
18 my friend and former colleague Dan Garodnick.

19 LYNDA TOWER: Absolutely.

20 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: Thank you, good
21 afternoon.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good afternoon,
23 how are we doing today?

24 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: Pretty good. My name...
25 [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: My first park
3 tour... [cross-talk]

4 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: Yes... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...you were there.

6 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: So honored.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It was great.

8 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: My name is Christina
9 Taylor, I'm the Executive Director for the Friends of
10 Van Cortlandt Park and I've been working in the
11 natural areas of Van Cortlandt since 200. The Friends
12 is an independent community-based organization which
13 actively promotes the conservation and improvement of
14 Van Cortlandt Park through environmental education
15 and restoration of the park of its trails and its
16 forest. The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park focus the
17 majority of our efforts on the natural areas of the
18 park and this focus has evolved over time as we
19 realized that the natural areas were not a priority
20 for the city. We do not blame Parks for not making
21 the natural areas a priority as we understand that
22 they have to focus their limited staff and budget on
23 areas such as sporting fields, playgrounds and the
24 perimeter of the park. However, there is a definite
25 need to make the natural areas more of a priority.

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Van Cortlandt Park is the third largest park in New York City with 1,146 acres. And approximately half of that park is composed of, of natural forest so 500 acres is forest. Unfortunately, the forest of Van Cortlandt Park are not health... very healthy because of the three highways that cut through the park segmenting and disturbing the forest. According to the master plan for the park which was released in 2014, at the current rate of expansion without increased management, Norway maples will dominate another 50 acres by 2032, killing the understory and preventing the succession of the native forests. Norway maples are nonnative invasive species of trees that dominate 130 acres of our forests. In addition, the master plan states that at the current rate of expansion without increased management 30 acres of forest will be killed by invasive vines by 2032. Both these statements are cause for alarm and need to be addressed. In total, there are... throughout the city, there are 7,300 acres of natural forests under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks which represents a quarter of the agency's holdings. Natural forests are important for many reasons as we all know; they cool the city, they clean our air, they capture

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2 stormwater, they provide habitat for wildlife and
3 they provide a place for New Yorkers to connect to
4 nature. The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park work
5 closely with NYC Parks and the Natural Areas
6 Conservancy to help maintain the natural areas of our
7 park. We know that there are many other park
8 conservancies, partners and volunteers that
9 contribute to the management of the forests and the
10 individual parks. However, even with this extra
11 support New York City natural forests are
12 insufficiently managed due to lack of funding for New
13 York City Parks and its partners. So, therefore today
14 we're joining with the Natural Areas Conservancy and
15 the New... and New Yorkers for Parks and others to ask
16 that the city invest 385 million dollars over the
17 next 25 years for the ongoing manage... restoration,
18 conservation and management of our forests and the
19 city should implement the Forest Management Framework
20 for the... for New York City that was recently
21 developed by Parks and the Natural Areas Conservancy.
22 The natural areas are at a tipping point. They are
23 threatened by invasive plants, garbage dumping and
24 lack of management. They need continual investment,
25 or they will decline in quality. The forests are at

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2 risk of losing diversity that, once lost, can't be
3 regained. The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park are
4 committed to doing what we can to conserve the
5 forests of the park, but we need the city to step up
6 what it is doing because we can't do it alone. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well we
9 appreciate your work and that of your volunteers and
10 how's that railroad trail coming?

11 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: As far as I know the
12 construction is going to start early next year
13 probably.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Great, great. Is
15 it Margot?

16 MARGOT PERRON: Margot.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Margot, got to
18 add... [cross-talk]

19 MARGOT PERRON: Margot Perron... [cross-
20 talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...your parents
22 had to add the T, huh just to confuse me.

23 MARGOT PERRON: Yeah, they were... [cross-
24 talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright... [cross-
3 talk]

4 MARGOT PERRON: ...they wanted to be
5 French.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, Miss
7 Perron please.

8 MARGOT PERRON: Thank you. I am the
9 President of Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy and the
10 Van Cortlandt Park Administrator. We, we do support
11 the, the NAC framework. Van Cortlandt Park
12 Conservancy's mission is to sustain and enhance the
13 park as a vibrant destination for recreation, leisure
14 and the enjoyment of natural landscapes. We provide
15 educational and cultural programming as well as
16 staffing to enhance the park's forests, fields and
17 ball fields. Just a subway, bus, or bike ride away
18 for millions of New Yorkers lies a dense hilly forest
19 containing 100-year-old... 150-year-old trees. Wildlife
20 recorded on this site include fox, coyote, flying
21 squirrels, owls, salamanders, wild turkey, that's
22 just to name a few. At 140... sorry, 1,146 acres, Van
23 Cortlandt is the city's third largest park with an
24 estimated 80,000 trees. Plant and animal diversity
25 here is especially high because it is attached to the

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mainland with numerous ecological corridors; Henry Hudson and Sawmill Parkways, the Croton Aqueduct, Tibbets Brook and the old Croton... the old Putnam Railroad line, they all reach like tendrils to the less urban areas to the north. One of the beneficial ecosystem services I'd like to discuss is experience. Hundreds of thousands of high school and college athletes come to Van Cortlandt Park every year to run on its undulating, sylvan, hundred year old landmark cross country trail, if you didn't run on... if you didn't run in this forest, you probably know someone who did and Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy maintains the 3.5 mile cross country trail on a daily basis. Started in 2012, Urban Ecology Teen Internship is a year... a year-round paid internship program for students from Bronx area public and parochial schools. The program provides local underserved high school students the opportunity to succeed in their first college experience with related college courses while concurrently working in the field alongside the park's natural resource management professionals. On Saturday mornings NAC... I'm sorry, NYC Audubon experts lead walks for birders of all levels of experience exploring 30 miles of trails that we have. Over 200

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species of birds make their homes in Van Cortlandt Park and we hope that you get to see them all. These are all great experiences to be had in Van Cortlandt Park. There is a growing body of medical research providing quantified evidence of the physical health benefits derived from time spent in the forest. Hiking, sauntering or even just sitting in the forest sometimes called forest bathing, provides the following measurable health benefits: lowering blood, blood pressure; decreased dopamine and adrenaline associated with fight or flight response; diminished negative mood states such as anxiety, fear, depression; decreased rates of asthma, heart disease, stroke and diabetes; increased blood levels of natural killer cells, these are white blood cells that provide the first order of the immune system, systems rapid response; and increased attention. What's unique to Van Cortlandt Park is that in 2006, when 35 acres of parkland were converted for the construction of a water filtration plant mitigation funding made possible for the creation of the Croton Forest Management Program including a Van Cortlandt Forest Restoration Crew. This funding from N... New York City Department of Environmental Protection

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provided an invaluable opportunity to create a management plan just for this park and its natural areas. The basis of the plan is a, a 20-year comparative study, the first of its kind in the nation, that surveyed the entire park to obtain information about how its natural areas have fared since a 1985 study. One positive discovery was that forests had matured and further closed their canopies at the time. Negative trends also became apparent. The acreage covered by invasive vines such as oriental bittersweet and porcelain berry and the presence... the presence and dominance of the invasive Norway maple trees increased throughout the park and other invasive species as well such as garlic mustard and mile a minute. Additional problems such as soil compaction and degradation have also worsened. Initial funding for the forest restoration crew was critical for the efforts to stem and reverse the trajectory of decline and to document changes but that funding expired in 2015. Sustainable urban natural areas require a healthy ecology as well as healthy financial support. New sources of support are needed to complete the task of reversing forest

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2 decline, and for necessary ongoing maintenance into
3 the future. Thank you for this hearing.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you. If I
5 could ask Assistant Commissioner Greenfeld to join
6 them for a second, I just have a question that I'd
7 like to... you to answer which they... two people brought
8 up here. So, we have this invasive species of Norway
9 maple and what do you do about it, what is... what is
10 the recommendation from your group that these... some
11 of these trees must be massive by now, I know the
12 Norway maple gets very big and they are crowding out,
13 you know native species so I just wish you could ed...
14 hope you can educate me on what, what your expert
15 opinion might be on that?

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right, it's
17 definitely tricky... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I knew it was
19 tricky otherwise I wouldn't have asked the question.

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: No, there's no
21 question Norway maple is not a friend of the forest,
22 it's not just that its invasive but its particularly
23 terrible because it's the first to leaf out in the,
24 the beginning of the season, the last to lose its
25 leaves at the end of the season so it's completely

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2 densely shaded and you'll see that if its ever on a
3 hillside there's erosion underneath it because
4 nothing can grow under it, it's not good. Honestly,
5 we take them down when we can and when it's
6 appropriate. We have to follow our tree restitution
7 laws just like anybody else so if we're taking a tree
8 down, we have to plant enough trees to replace the
9 wood that was lost and, and that's, that's what we
10 have to do. We don't... over the course of all the work
11 we do... we don't go in and just take out Norway
12 maples, it would be only in the... in the context of
13 doing a full restoration because you take that out
14 and something else will, will, will grow... [cross-
15 talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes, I, I get...

17 [cross-talk]

18 JENNIFER GREENFELD: ...grow in its place...

19 [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, have you
21 thought about this because this testimony indicates
22 over 100 acres in, in this... [cross-talk]

23 JENNIFER GREENFELD: We've definitely
24 thought about it, I... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
3 talk]

4 JENNIFER GREENFELD: There's no question
5 it's part of our management strategy on a... on a sort
6 of zone by zone process that both Margot's team and
7 our team work on.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: These trees get
9 very large though, Norway maples... [cross-talk]

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: They do, yeah, I
11 mean they also... they're quick growing which means
12 they also fall apart which... that's why we don't plant
13 them anymore so that means they decline and... so you
14 can take them down if they're also hazardous and
15 unhealthy.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I was just
17 curious about that because that is quiet a statistic
18 so thank you. I'm going to dismiss that panel and
19 call the next one, thank you all for your testimony
20 and for your work. Kathryn Heintz from the New York
21 City Audubon Mk Moore, I don't know what this means
22 but I'm going to say it, NYNJTC and... could mean a lot
23 of things and Amy Turner from the New York City
24 Climate Action Alliance. Did I get your name right
25 Miss Heintz?

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2 KATHRYN HEINTZ: You did.

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I did, okay.

4 KATHRYN HEINTZ: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's not easy
6 being Grodenchik, I can't... you know it's... it is what
7 it is... [cross-talk]

8 KATHRYN HEINTZ: Well if I gave you my
9 maiden name it wouldn't be easy either. Thank you
10 Council Person Grodenchik for this important hearing.
11 My name is Kathryn Heintz, I'm the Executive Director
12 of New York City Audubon. We are a science-based
13 conservation organization whose mission is to protect
14 wild native birds and their habitats across New York
15 City improving the quality of life for all New
16 Yorkers. We represent 3,000 direct members and
17 supporters. We are an affiliated chapter of the
18 National Audubon and as such represent an additional
19 7,000 of its members residing in the five boroughs
20 and thousands more who follow us and love nature.
21 Wild birds representing more than 350 species, almost
22 a third of all the species in North America, live in
23 or pass through New York City each year. New York
24 City Audubon was founded 40 years ago to protect
25 these birds and fragile nature... natural areas on

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which they depend within our city's borders. For the past four decades we have actively supported the acquisition, conservation, management and maintenance of forests, often in collaboration with City Parks and other government and private not-for-profit stakeholders many of which are represented here today and whose testimony we compliment and support so I'm going to cut two paragraphs from my presentation. Based on habitat needs for avian species of conservation concern, we strongly support the NAC framework in ensuring short- and long-term preservation of the city's natural forest. A prominent category of birds that is conspicuous in New York City forests is the neotropical migrant songbirds. The arrival by the millions of these birds in our area beginning each April, peaking in mid-May, is met by birdwatchers with eager anticipation. During this period, almost any forested area in the city can be good for observing migrants but the ramble in Manhattan's Central Park and much of Brooklyn's Prospect Park are renowned world class birding spots and they bring tourists. Hundreds of birders show up in these parks with the expectation of seeing 30 to 50 or more species in a single

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outing. Some of the birds; the parula, the bay breasted, chestnut sided and black throated green warblers among others are exquisite like colorful tropical fish schooling on a coral reef. Many of these birds are en route between their wintering habitat in South American rain forest and the Caribbean to breeding grounds in northern coniferous forest. New York City contains some forests that are large enough and of sufficient quality that some of the migrants; scarlet tanager, northern restart for example stay and breed. These include Inwood Hill Park in Manhattan, Alley Pond, Cunningham and Forest Park in Queens, Pelham Bay, Van Cortlandt, Riverdale Park in the Bronx, Wolfes Pond, Highrock, Bloomingdale and Arden Heights Woods Parks in Staten Island. And I would add the mature growth pockets of older historic cemeteries; Governors Island and Forts Hamilton, Wadsworth and Totten all have forested areas. The neotropical migrant... migratory songbirds are more than objects of bird watchers' admiration. They constitute an ecological factor of global significance. The warblers and vireos are formidable predators of forest leaf eating insects. The Western Hemisphere populations of these birds have been

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2 declining. Tropical rain forest destruction is
3 implicated as is timber cutting in Canada so these
4 forests in New York City are critical to these birds
5 in their ecological process. And I would add that New
6 York City forests matter as a matter of global
7 migratory scale and by conserving, restoring and
8 managing our forests we are following the
9 conservation ethos of act local, think global but
10 more important, healthy forests are great for birds,
11 healthy forests are critical for people and the City
12 Council is making here a decision of century
13 implications return on investment matters. If you
14 think back 50 years ago, clean water act, the air
15 act, endangered species act made a difference. Ten
16 years ago, the million trees initiative has made a
17 difference, this is a really, really important
18 funding opportunity for the city of New York and for
19 posterity. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I just want to
21 point out that the Mayor has a lot more money than we
22 do but we do as a Council almost always support
23 additional funding for, for parks, we might quibble
24 about where it would go but suffice to say that this
25 chair does support this initiative. I wonder if you

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2 could Miss Heintz if you could tell me of any studies
3 been done on the economic impact of birding on New
4 York City, I don't... it's not something EDC measures
5 but maybe they do, I don't know?

6 KATHRYN HEINTZ: We've had conversations
7 with NYC and Company, it hasn't been a focus area and
8 I don't have an exact study on the impacts, I do know
9 that the parks are full and anecdotal we do zip code
10 catches when we do festivals and birding events
11 around the city and I would say from Governor's
12 Island and Jamaica Bay in particular where we do many
13 of these studies we have people from... repeatedly from
14 the surrounding metropolitan area, all five states,
15 we also have people from other regions of the country
16 and across the world who come.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, thank you
18 very much for your testimony. Mk Moore, I won't ask
19 what... you know maybe I should ask...

20 MK MOORE: I'm all initials.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

22 MK MOORE: Yeah. So, good afternoon...

23 [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: My initials are
25 BS, Barry Steven so... [cross-talk]

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2 MK MOORE: I got it... [cross-talk]

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...there you go.

4 MK MOORE: My name is MK Moore and I'm
5 the Chairperson for the New York/New Jersey Trail
6 Conference, Metro Region. The Trail Conference
7 actively encourages volunteering, preserving and
8 enjoying the 100 plus miles of forest trails in New
9 York City Parks throughout all five boroughs. We
10 volunteered and participated in New York City Parks
11 trails events for over 3,800 hours in 2018 alone and
12 the years not over. I cannot emphasize enough the
13 importance of the care and maintenance of our forests
14 and the benefit New York enjoy because of these
15 beautiful forests. I conduct nature hikes in our park
16 forest for students, scouts, organizations and our
17 neighbors. And volunteers assist in parks maintaining
18 trails, removing invasive species and educating the
19 community about forests and how they enrich our
20 lives. I've benefited greatly from the research and
21 outreach conducted by the NAC and have attended their
22 presentations throughout the city. Their informed
23 approach to New York City Parks' forests and their
24 long-term plans to ensure our city treasures endure
25 for future generations should be strongly supported.

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2 I've included in my written testimony photos taken of
3 our volunteers at work, some nature tours, fun events
4 and our beautiful forests. Often the children in our
5 nature hikes are experiencing the city forests for
6 the first time and that experience will stay with
7 them for a very long time. Our city's children and
8 adults should never be deprived of the opportunity to
9 experience and enjoy a beautiful and healthy forest
10 in their own city. The next generation of children
11 should be guaranteed city forests. The health
12 benefits of our forests cannot be fully measured, you
13 can only attempt to quantify the long-term benefits
14 of the clean air our citizens breath, the joy and
15 knowledge they gain and the peace derived from
16 walking in a... from a busy city street into a healthy
17 and invigorating urban forest. Through volunteering I
18 work closely with the fantastic and dedicated men and
19 women of New York City Parks. Without the great work
20 by the New York City Parks employees to help us,
21 train us and direct us in our volunteering we would
22 not be able to achieve the results that we do. the
23 knowledge shared by all of the New York City Park's
24 partners like the NAC and then disseminated by NYC
25 Parks directly effects the volunteer work that we do.

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2 I'm here today to ask the NYC Council to invest in
3 the forests of NYC Parks so future generations can
4 enjoy the beauty that we all live with today, take
5 the long view towards parks and forests in New York
6 City. Invest today, once this valuable resource is
7 gone, there is no recovery. I think the children and
8 grandchildren of the children that we take into the
9 parks today and into the city forests deserve to take
10 the same hikes, they... to appreciate the forest of
11 natural beauty and enjoy the benefits and the same
12 experiences that we do. I think future generations
13 should not have to learn about our city forests at
14 the museum of natural history. I ask the New York
15 City Council to commit and invest in science-based
16 management that will save money and ensure high
17 quality natural spaces for all New Yorkers. And I'd
18 also add this volunteer event up there and Alley Pond
19 Park.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I was... I was at
21 the last one... [cross-talk]

22 MK MOORE: Okay...

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I think it's on
24 my schedule, I was over by the Oakland Lake Meadow
25 planting shrubs, they had planted the trees by the...

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2 it was wet that day but there were a lot of people,
3 it was about 20 people there so it was... it was good
4 and I look forward to being with you again, supposed
5 to plant on... in Cunningham Park on Saturday morning
6 but mother nature may have another idea so... we'll
7 see. Miss Turner.

8 AMY TURNER: Good afternoon, my name is
9 Amy Turner, I'm the Executive Director of the NYC
10 Climate Action Alliance, a growing coalition of New
11 Yorkers who are committed to helping New York City
12 achieve its goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
13 80 percent by 2050. Thank you to Chair Grodenchik and
14 to the City Council Members who attended today for
15 the opportunity to participate in this important
16 public hearing and to the Natural Areas Conservancy
17 and the Parks Department for their crucial work in
18 this area. I'm here today to express my support for
19 the implementation of all recommendations set forth
20 in the Forest Management Framework for New York City
21 released by the NAC and the Parks Department in
22 April. New York City's forested areas are hugely
23 important in mitigating the impacts of climate
24 change. We know that the world is warming, with 17 of
25 the 18 hottest years on record having occurred since

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2 2001. New York City, with its susceptibility to urban
3 heat island effect, will continue to see record high
4 temperatures during the summer. This puts at risk the
5 health and lives of already vulnerable populations. A
6 robust tree canopy is one of the most effective ways
7 to mitigate the urban heat island effect, with data
8 showing that urban forested areas can lower the
9 surrounding air temperature by up to nine degrees,
10 helping protect New Yorkers from the dangerous and
11 potentially fatal impacts of extremely hot
12 temperatures. In addition, the changing climate
13 nearly ensures that we will continue to experience
14 stronger, wetter and more devastating storms than
15 were previously seen in New York City. Urban planted
16 and forested areas can capture million of gallons of
17 stormwater each year, filtering pollutants and
18 minimizing the impact on our water treatment system
19 when current infrastructure is overwhelmed by intense
20 storm events. Furthermore, live trees and plant
21 sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The
22 7,300 acres of forested natural areas in New York
23 City parks have the potential to sequester hundreds
24 of thousands of tons of carbon dioxide each year.
25 Maintaining them is crucial to offsetting some of the

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carbon dioxide released each year and to mitigating the impacts of climate change. On the other hand, disturbance of these natural areas from neglect or failure to maintain a healthy forest ecosystem would cause the release of large amounts of carbon dioxide that are... is currently stored in the forests' trees and plants, further exacerbating the effects of climate change. While New York City's trees can help to protect New Yorkers from the impacts of climate change, I must also note that they are suffering from, from the extreme temperatures and changing weather conditions as well. The recommendations in the Forest management Framework include integrating climate adapted planting palettes into forested areas. Given the many benefits to New Yorkers of urban forested areas, not only those related to climate change but the many others... the many others that have been highlighted today, the city should take all necessary steps needed to protect urban forested areas from the impacts of climate change. New York City has set laudable goals to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050, to do its part to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius over preindustrial levels and to grow and

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2 develop the city in a way that is resilient and
3 equitable. The role of urban forested areas in
4 achieving each of these goals cannot be overstated.
5 Protecting them is crucial to mitigating climate
6 change and adapting New York City in the face of
7 continuing, continuing impacts. The recommendations
8 set forth in the Forest Management Framework
9 including those to protect urban forests from the
10 impacts of climate change should be implemented in
11 their totality. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
13 much, thank you all for being here today and thank
14 you for your appreciation and your support of our
15 urban forests.

16 AMY TURNER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I think we have
18 one more panel. If anybody else would like to testify
19 and had cold feet before, anything like that and you
20 change your mind please come forward. You're not
21 going to believe this, but we have a Mr. Todd Forrest
22 here to testify today from the New York Botanical
23 Garden; Natasha Sidarta from the Gowanus Canal
24 Conservancy; Donald Recklies, Recklies, Recklies, I'm
25 sorry from Brooklyn and Adam Martinek from the Inwood

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2 Hill Park Conservancy, he's also with the NAC and
3 also New Yorkers for Parks so, if you could come
4 forward. Mr. Forrest.

5 TODD FORREST: Good afternoon, my name is
6 Todd Forrest, Arthur Ross Vice President for
7 Horticulture and Living Collections at the New York
8 Botanical Gardens. I would like to thank the Chair
9 and the committee for giving me the opportunity to
10 offer testimony today. The Garden shares Parks and
11 the Natural Areas Conservancy's commitment to
12 preserving and restoring forests in New York City.
13 The New York Botanical Gardens is a conservation
14 organization... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Is that on...
16 [cross-talk]

17 TODD FORREST: ...and museum of plants with
18 a three-part mission of... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Is your
20 microphone on, is the little...

21 TODD FORREST: That's better.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, whole
23 better... thank you.

24 TODD FORREST: The New York Botanical
25 Gardens is a conservation organization and museum of

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plants with a three-part mission of science, education and horticulture. The Garden's location in the Bronx was chosen primarily for its 50-acre old growth forest, the largest remnant of all growth forest in New York City. The Garden has strived to be the best possible steward of this extraordinary natural landscape once the late 19th century. Today, the Thain Family Forest is an outdoor laboratory where scientist study the impacts of environmental change on the forested ecosystems, a living classroom where students of all ages come to learn about forest ecology and ecological restoration and an oasis for countless New Yorkers who crave a quiet and wholesome connection to nature. The Garden's long commitment to documenting and preserving local biodiversity began with the first inventory of the flora of the forest in the late 1890's and continues today with many collaborative and outward looking projects. Since 2007, we have engaged citizen scientist and regular phenology walks in the forest in an effort to establish a baseline against which we can compare the impacts of climate change on our native flora. The forest served as the training and pilot locations for NYBG's New York City EcoFlora project, a

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2 collaboration be... among NYBG botanists, colleagues in
3 sister institutions and government agencies,
4 including Parks and the NAC and citizen scientists to
5 document the complex relationships between New York's
6 plants and the vast array of birds, insects and other
7 living things that depend on them for their survival.

8 The Garden's forest is not just a haven for wild
9 plants, birds, mammals and insects. It has become an
10 invaluable outdoor classroom where New York City's
11 school children learn about science and discover the
12 joys of nature. Each year, more than 18,000 students
13 predominately from public schools in the Bronx and
14 more... and more than 1,800 New York City teachers use
15 the forest for everything from self-guided ecology
16 tours to in depth curriculum driven programs.

17 Students participate in several citizen scientist
18 activities including water quality monitoring,
19 surveys of emerging invasive species, and recording
20 plant phenology. Regional high school and university
21 students have partnered with NYBG staff to use the
22 forest and other natural landscapes at the Garden for
23 more in-depth ecological studies on subjects ranging
24 from the assessments of snapping turtle and breeding
25 bird populations to the monitoring of forest canopy

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2 gaps and soil seedbanks. We know from our own
3 research, from the scientific literature, and from
4 our own personal experience that even the smallest
5 remnant forest in New York City is an oxygen
6 producing, storm water filtering, wildlife
7 sustaining, soul lifting miracle that should be
8 protected, restored and celebrated. Therefore, the
9 New York Botanical Garden wholeheartedly endorses
10 Parks and the Natural Areas Conservancy in their
11 efforts to secure the resources required for the
12 short- and long-term preservation of natural forests
13 in New York City. Thanks again for the opportunity to
14 testify.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for
16 being here today. I haven't been to the botanical
17 garden since I became Chair, but it is on the short
18 list.

19 TODD FORREST: You should get, get there...
20 [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We will... [cross-
22 talk]

23 TODD FORREST: ...soon.
24
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I will... well
3 maybe in the spring, although you do have a great
4 railroad model exhibit every year so...

5 TODD FORREST: It opens the third week in
6 November.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
8 talk]

9 TODD FORREST: You're always welcome.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Miss
11 Sidarta, I hope I pronounced your name correctly.

12 NATASIA SIDARTA: Yes, Sidarta.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, close
14 enough for government work, okay, go ahead.

15 NATASIA SIDARTA: Thank you for letting
16 me testify today. My name is Natasia Sidarta, I'm
17 representing the Gowanus Canal Conservancy which is
18 in Gowanus, Brooklyn. Gowanus Canal Conservancy
19 advocates for and stewards ecologically sustainable
20 parks and public spaces in the Gowanus lowlands by
21 engaging those who live, work and play there. We
22 envision a Gowanus Canal and surrounding environment
23 that is clean, resilient, diverse and alive. Since
24 2006, we have served as the environmental steward for
25 the neighborhood through leading grassroots volunteer

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2 projects, educating students on environmental issues
3 and working with agencies, elected officials and the
4 community to advocate for, build and maintain
5 innovative green infrastructure around the Gowanus
6 Canal. We're also a participant of New York City
7 Nature Goals of which we support their overarching
8 goal of increased equity and access to nature in New
9 York City. The Gowanus Canal and the surrounding
10 lowland neighborhoods have endured over a century of
11 environmental injustices including industrial
12 dumping, sewage overflows and heat island impacts.
13 Urban forests, specifically street trees are an
14 essential component of the emerging network of
15 equitable and resilient parks and public spaces in
16 the Gowanus lowlands. Through restitution and
17 plantings and neighborhood development, we anticipate
18 about 800 new street tree plantings in Gowanus over
19 the next five years. These young trees have the
20 capacity to provide critical ecosystem services,
21 which have been mentioned today, from stormwater
22 management, to habitat corridor, to increased shading
23 and cooling. However, they will only reach this
24 capacity if they are cared for along the way, every
25 day actions including watering, weeding, aerating the

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soil and pruning are just as important to tree survival as the one-time action of planting. As volunteer program manager for Gowanus Canal Conservancy, I have firsthand experience in how much care those young street trees need. Over the past ten years, we've worked with New York City Parks Department to inventory our trees, draft a tree management plan that identifies challenges and strategies for caring for our growing urban forests. And every year we engage 110 volunteers in caring for those trees. Thanks in part to City Council's Parks equity funding and Greener New York City initiatives, we've grown this stewardship into two main programs that support long term engagement through the neighborhood. Our Gowanus Tree Network for one is made up of neighbors working together to build a network of tree stewards on their blocks. Just in 2018 two of those blocks actually place in the Greenest Block in Brooklyn through the urban botanic garden competition and neighbors came together over a shared goal of caring for the valuable open space on their blocks. On the job training side, our Gowanus Green Team high school apprentices became licensed citizen pruners and they learned about environmental

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careers in green infrastructure, urban conservation and design, building the next generation of engaged environmental leaders. We're committed to working closely with the Parks Department to care for the Gowanus urban forest by cultivating those... that community stewardship of street trees but our maintenance capacity will be challenged by the sheer number of new trees planted at once. In neighborhoods across the city the Parks Department needs more funding to provide direct maintenance and to support conservancies like ours that amplify the agency's efforts through stewardship. One more paragraph. As the effects of climate change worsen, there's more need than ever to invest in natural areas. Urban forests mitigate extreme heat, absorb greenhouse gases and are an effective form of green infrastructure reducing flooding and sewage overflow. As the Gowanus Canal specifically undergoes a comprehensive clean, there's a tremendous opportunity to restore natural areas along the shoreline which can buffer storm surge and reduce flooding and ultimately the city needs to invest now in the ongoing restoration and conservation and management of our forests and natural areas in order to protect

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2 and grow a vibrant city for generations to come.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
5 much for your testimony. Mr. Recklies. I hope I... I'm
6 sorry, I... some names are just beyond me.

7 DONALD RECKLIES: I answer to just about
8 anything.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, that's
10 good.

11 DONALD RECKLIES: First of all, let me
12 thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify
13 here today. I am a Vice President of Protectors of
14 Pine Oak Woods, it's a land conservation organization
15 on Staten Island. I mention that because I'm very
16 familiar with the parks and natural areas in that
17 place. I am however testifying about my own
18 viewpoints and not for the organization because I've
19 gotten notice of this meeting only last night and was
20 not able to involve them. As a Brooklyn resident, I
21 have hiked and ambled through those areas for more
22 than 15 years. For 12 years I've been a trail
23 maintainer there and I've been involved in the
24 monthly restoration and activities there for over 12
25 years. That activity is mostly removing alien wooding

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vine... woody twining vines from the woodlands there.

During that time, I've noticed considerable

improvements in those natural areas especially in the

cleanliness of the trails and the attempts to

reforest abused areas. But at the same time, it was

obvious that invasive species overall have not been

checked despite a variety of attempts to do so. In my

own mind, I don't believe that the invasion of these

species can be halted but I do believe that we can

and must make the attempt if we are to preserve any

variety in the number of native plants that still

exist in our woodlands. On Staten Island my first

impression was that the alien vines strangling the

shrubs and saplings were one of the largest problems

but then I observed the invasion of white-tailed

deer, the growth of Japanese angelic trees then I

became alarmed at Japanese stilt grass spreading

along the trails suppressing the native growth and

becoming a meadow like monoculture. All serious

problems, I will not speak about the deer because it

will take all of the remaining time that I have. I

urge that more volunteers be... continue to be

recruited and trained to remove invasive plants from

the woodlands. The Park Steward program should be

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2 possible... should be possible emphasized and expanded.

3 My opinion is that if we did this many years ago such

4 plants as Japanese stilt grass and Japanese angelica

5 trees that are now out of control would have been

6 halted. I suggest that commercial landscapers could

7 be employed to work more generally on controlling

8 invasive plants not just on specific projects. That

9 trained workers, I emphasize trained, could range the

10 woodlands year-round employing spot treatment of

11 herbicides in the spring and fall, cutting or pulling

12 Japanese stilt grass and mile a minute vine in the

13 summer and cutting and uprooting twining trees in the

14 winter. I also urge that special attention be paid to

15 recognizing and eliminating emerging invasive species

16 before they become an established and expensive

17 problem as have oriental bittersweet, etcetera. And

18 as regarding the established invasive plants, I urge

19 that attempts to control them especially focused on

20 eliminating newfound infestations and existing

21 infestations that are small and perhaps likely to

22 expand. Thank you, committee, for soliciting my

23 comments and...

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very

25 much for your many years of wisdom on this. The last

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2 person to testify today Adam Martinek from the Inwood
3 Hill Park Conservancy, he's got a lot of... he wears a
4 lot of hats.

5 ADAM MARTINEK: Yeah. I just wanted to
6 thank you Chairman, Council Members for letting me
7 speak here today. My name is Adam Martinek, I'm a
8 resident of Inwood Hill Park in northern Manhattan,
9 I'm an activist, and the founder of Inwood Hill Park
10 Conservancy, a group that works with scientists to
11 tackle local issues such as... sorry, Anthropogenic
12 activity caused by human presence, dog presence in
13 addition to the fundamental issues which are
14 impacting Inwood Hill Park, which is the compaction
15 sort of lactification and erosion attributed to
16 invasive species. I'm here testifying in support of
17 the Forest Management Framework for NYC developed by
18 the Natural Areas Conservancy and NYC Parks which I
19 believe will begin to lay an important foundation in
20 response to several decades of insufficient funding
21 for natural forests. I would like to take a few
22 moments to highlight some of the innumerable benefits
23 that natural forests bestow upon park goers as well
24 as the impact of a well-funded and robust forest
25 management plan will have on the longevity of New

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York City. Trees play a vital role in keeping our city cool, natural forests reduce urban heat island effect, absorbing much of the heat emitted by asphalt and other dark, flat surfaces that permeate heat within the city. A single hanging branch over a sidewalk can reduce summer heat temperatures by up to 33 to 41 degrees Fahrenheit. Between 2007 and 2015, NYC Parks partnered with NYRP organizing 50,000 people to volunteers to plant nearly 500,000 trees. This amazing feat of botanical engineering allowed us... allowed dozens of parks and sidewalks to feel cool and lowered the general heating effects to the city by nine degrees. Natural forests have statistically been proven to improve the immune system, reduce stress, accelerate the rate of recovery from surgery and illness, increase energy, and to generally improve a person's mood. Shinrin Yoku is the forest bathing method prescribed by Japanese in 1982, it is the most cost effective, drug free method to improve health. New York City is home to 600 species that live within our urban wilderness according to Commissioner Silver. Natural forests are comprised of a complex ecological niche community that provide a refuge to migratory fowl, owls,

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raccoons, and possum. In areas such as Pelham Bay Park, Van Cortlandt Park and Inwood Hill Park, home to some of the largest contiguous natural forests in the city, of white-tailed deer, coyotes and bald eagles can be found. Natural forests make excellent classrooms. Children, young adults and enthusiasts benefit from guided tours to inform on ecosystems of a given park. Identifying species allows for observers to gain an empirical experience into what makes a forest so special. Moreover, educating children and young adults within a... within nature provides the best insurance against vandalism and pollution in the future. It is difficult to harm something you have come to understand and respect. The New York City Parks Division of Forestry, Horticulture and Natural Resources has managed 7,300 acres of forest within the city park system for over 25 years. It had done amazing work to preserve and protect our cityscape. What the city needs now is a restoration plan that addresses the long-term effects under its care while providing funding that ensures five million plus trees will be well managed into the city's future. Thank you very much.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for
3 your testimony. There are no other people here to
4 testify today and I think I've asked enough questions
5 so I'm going to end the hearing but before I do I
6 want to thank all of you who came today, those of you
7 who are still here and those of you who could not
8 stay till the end of the hearing. Based on what we've
9 heard it is quite obvious to me at least that and the
10 testimony that we've heard that our forests are both
11 beloved and that they need to be cared for by the
12 residents of New York City. Securing the funds that
13 we need will not be easy but given the passion and
14 the number of people represented by the organizations
15 that have testified today, it is certainly doable
16 especially over a long period of time and I as Chair
17 of Parks am committed to raising the overall budget
18 for the Parks Department, certainly would include
19 funding for our natural forest areas as well. So, I
20 end asking that as we go forward over the next few
21 months and if your organization or yourself or both
22 are called upon to help us in whatever activities,
23 all legal I can assure you; lobbying on this... your
24 local Council Members, appearing on the steps of City
25 Hall for rallies and all those things that we do to

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raise money for our... each individual. See Miss Greenfeld works for the city as do I but she works with the Mayor and I don't so that's all good. The Mayor has been very good to our parklands, we have increased funding for Parks greatly percentage wise and in actual dollars since he has become Mayor and there is apparently about 4.6 billion dollars in the pipeline in capital work for the city Park, parklands but we do need, I think, and I've had several discussions and I'm going to continue to have them and hopefully we will grow this, that we need more of a constituency. We know that New Yorkers love our parks and so we're going to... we're going to start and we're going to expand and so if you're organization is called upon to come to a meeting or to come to a rally or make those phone calls or send those postcards we hope that you will join with me and my colleagues here and likeminded New Yorkers. It is obvious from the amount of money donated to the conservancies that are in place in the city, there are 17 that raise over million... raise and spend over a million dollars a year in addition and, and Central Park is closing in on a hundred million dollars a year. These numbers are massive and they're all to

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the good, it shows that New Yorkers care about their parks and if somebody donates a million dollars it's not like they get to use the park by themselves so it's really a very selfless act. So, with that I'm going to close this hearing. Again, thank you all for being here today, thank you Commissioner... Assistant Commissioner, I call you Commissioner because, you know what's, what's, what's... we'll just take away the Assistant just don't tell Commissioner Silver I did that, as Liam our first Deputy Commissioner and, and outstanding, truly a treasure to all New Yorkers, he has been for... how many years is it now Commissioner? Too many to count. So, with that I'm going to close the hearing and I thank you again for being here. if you'd like to follow up with me or with Kris Sartori or Monica our, our new... she's got all the money, she's the Finance... she's... you're in the corner that's your first mistake. I thank you all again and I'm going to put this on my desk and we're going to go forward from this date, thank you all.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date

November 21, 2018