



STATE OF NEW YORK
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
ALBANY 12224

May 24, 2018

Paul Gallay, President & Hudson Riverkeeper
Riverkeeper
20 Secor Road
Ossining, New York 10562

Dear Mr. Gallay: *Paul!*

I'm writing to follow up on your inquiry about the continued commitment to estuarine protection at the Hudson River Park (the Park) and the amount of projected funding that would be dedicated to ensuring the future health and quality of the Park's Estuarine Sanctuary. After several discussions we've had related to the Park, I am pleased to inform you that the Hudson River Park Trust (the Trust) is prepared to spend over \$30 million dollars on the design and construction of restoration-related projects commencing this fiscal year, including \$10 million of new projects outlined in the Trust's capital spending projections. More specifically, the capital investments that will help complete the Park and fulfill the mission of the Trust are:

- **\$10.2 million for the construction of shoreline habitat at Gansevoort Peninsula.** As you know, shoreline habitat is rare in this section of the Hudson that is largely protected (historic) bulkheads and piers. Design will advance this fiscal year for reconstruction of the southeastern edge of the Gansevoort peninsula to create a large stretch of engineered, intertidal habitat.
- **\$10 million for the construction of the Estuarium.** The Estuarium, to be constructed at the entrance to Pier 26, will serve as the centerpiece of the Park's estuary education and research program. The Trust is partnering with Clarkson University to operate the facility.
- **\$9 million for the "Pier 26 Ecological Get Down."** The area at the end of Pier 26 will have descending paths to get visitors closer to the water with three ecological zones – a rocky intertidal pool, a lower marsh with intertidal plantings, and upper marsh plantings area – to be intentionally inundated with each tide cycle as an estuary learning tool.
- **\$1.5 million for oyster or other habitat restoration.** This funding will be used to restore oyster habitat, creating habitat corridors, enhance pile fields and piers, as well as the ecological function of bulkheads.

We recognize the importance of the Estuarine Sanctuary – 400 acres of in-water area within the Park's boundaries – that the State Legislature designated in the formation of the Park through the 1998 Hudson River Park Act (Act). Thanks in no small part to Riverkeeper's advocacy, cleaner waters are now supporting white perch, bluefish, oyster toadfish and American eel, along with mature and sizeable oysters affixed to the pilings and docks which line the Park.

Given the integral relationship between the upland Park and its protected Estuarine Sanctuary waters, the Act also requires the Trust to prepare a Hudson River Park Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan (ESMP) in consultation with the public, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and other cooperating agencies and organizations. This multi-faceted management plan identifies policies for the Estuarine Sanctuary with respect to resource protection, public access and recreation, education, and research activities.

Last year, the Trust and DEC began updating the ESMP and have formed a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of both stakeholders and experts respective to various Estuarine Sanctuary subject areas. We would be pleased to have a biologist from Riverkeeper join the Restoration and Research TAC. TAC members include technical staff from the Hudson River Foundation (HRF), among other respected experts. The Trust anticipates convening the TAC this summer with the goal of having material ready for a required public hearing and comment period this fall, and to the Board for final approval this winter.

Again, as discussed, we are in receipt of the December 22, 2017 document from HRF, entitled, "Advancing Science and Restoration in the Hudson River Park Estuarine Sanctuary" (Document), which details a suite of recommendations that would, "address the resource protection, environmental research, and associated education and public access needs in the Sanctuary." We propose to formalize the incorporation of HRF's recommendations from the Document into the ESMP update process through the TAC. It is our expectation that with Riverkeeper and HRF members on the TAC these comprehensive recommendations can be reviewed with the other TAC members, prioritized and appropriately integrated into the final ESMP that will go to the public and the Trust's Board for adoption.


In addition to these new projects, we are also excited to share with you some of the on-going educational and research activities that the Trust conducts, which annually serve approximately 27,000 children and members of the public and total close to \$1 million in operating expenses, such as:

- **Environmental DNA Sampling for Biodiversity** - sampling aquatic environmental DNA (eDNA) to detect seasonal fish diversity and habitat preference, deepening understanding of fish migrations and use of these waters.
- **Sampling for Microplastic Concentrations** - partnering with Brooklyn College to sample Estuarine Sanctuary waters for the presence of microplastics (<5mm).
- **Water Quality Monitoring Stations.** The Trust manages and services two real-time river data stations that are part of the Hudson River Environmental Conditions Observation System network – one at Pier 26 and one at Pier 84.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Estuarine Sanctuary is already New York City's largest "Billion Oyster Project" host, currently hosting 13 sites.

In closing, we thank Riverkeeper for your advocacy on protecting and enhancing the Hudson River and its priceless estuary habitat; we look forward to working with you on ensuring a robust update to the ESMP to create a meaningful roadmap for investment and research objectives moving forward; and, we trust you will be pleased with the numerous capital projects advancing this year, including Pier 55.

Sincerely,



Venetia Lannon
Deputy Secretary for the Environment