

A group of children, mostly of African descent, are on a red barge. They are wearing yellow life vests over teal shirts. A high-pressure water hose is spraying them from the right, creating a misty spray. The children are smiling and waving. In the background, there is a river, a concrete wall, and several tall city buildings under a clear sky. A large red structure, part of the barge, is on the right.

Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

# The Waterfront Action Agenda →

The Decision-Makers Guide to a 21st Century Waterfront



# An Overview of the Waterfront Action Agenda

The Waterfront Action Agenda is a comprehensive program to enhance the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region's reputation as a world-class port and waterfront destination. It took over 240 organizations one year to establish priorities and identify practical solutions that will make our waterfront what it should be. We are calling upon civic and political leaders to understand these issues and craft policies that reclaim our waterfront for all the people and the competitiveness of the region.

## 1. A Working Waterfront

The New York Harbor is still a world port. Supporting waterfront industry, shipping and maritime jobs is critical to a more diversified economy for our region. This is especially important in troubled economic times.



## 2. Blue Highways

As we struggle with congested roads and an over taxed transit system, the blue highways offer a viable alternative for transporting goods and people in the metropolitan region.



The Waterfront Action Agenda identifies five key areas that contribute to quality of life and the economic strength of the region. Reflected in our 5 headings, these areas are: economic vitality, transportation alternatives, environmental priorities, public experience, and infrastructure at the water's edge.

## 5. A Well Designed Edge

A big box store or a large condominium can lock away our shore line just as effectively as industry, highways and rail once did. A well designed edge will allow for access, maritime use, jobs and fun.



## 4. A Waterfront Town

A waterfront lifestyle in New York? Parks, esplanades, beaches, fishing piers, boathouses and docks are sprouting up. Extending these attractions to all neighborhoods and creating exciting waterside destinations - will create a great waterfront town.



## 3. A Green Harbor

The water quality in the Harbor has come a long way in the last 50 years, as sightings of harbor seals attest. However we are still far away from the swimmable and fishable waters that the Clean Water Act mandates.



◀ **FRONT COVER: Harbor Camp**

Children from Settlement Houses experience the water - first hand - as retired **Fireboat John J. Harvey** displays its water canons. Harbor camp is a joint project of MWA and **United Neighborhood Houses**.

## ECONOMIC VITALITY

# 1. A Working Waterfront

A working waterfront is critical to a diverse and vibrant regional economy. Water-dependent business generates close to 250,000 good paying blue-collar jobs. But this industry is being crowded out by real estate developers taking advantage of rising waterfront property values. **Measures must be taken to preserve and grow the maritime industry.**

Every gallon of gasoline and home heating oil moves through the metropolitan area by ship or barge.



Photo by Bernie Ente

## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WORKING WATERFRONT

### Strong Maritime and Industrial Zoning Districts

The region needs space for the development of this water-dependent transportation/production cluster. Maritime business is threatened by real estate pressures and rising costs. As New York grows and as the proportion of waste that is reused and recycled also grows, the need for a working waterfront that integrates essential transportation and production functions grow as well. Without tugs, barges, repair facilities and other maritime support businesses, the growing shipping industry could not function. This would be an economic and ecological calamity as more trucks would be forced onto our congested highway system.

- Provide residential deed restrictions that recognize nearby industrial and maritime users and prevent lawsuits
- Transfer development rights to preserve maritime businesses and safeguard future water dependent use
- Allow maritime easements for maritime use in perpetuity

## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WORKING WATERFRONT

### An Equitable Dredging Program

From the Hudson to the Bronx to the Passaic, the many rivers that feed our Harbor deposit millions of cubic yards of silt, sediment and clay to our water bed. The cost of removing these materials (some of it contaminated with toxic pollutants) has skyrocketed. Capital improvement projects such as Harbor-deepening are paid for by the taxpayer and the Port Authority. However, small growing maritime businesses, parks and marinas must pay their own way and the cost is often prohibitive. Solving this problem involves finding places to put the dredged material (or better to re-use it) and establishing a system to equitably bear the cost.





Subways and buses are more crowded than ever.



Streets, bridges and tunnels are choked with cars...



... and trucks.

## TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

# 2. Blue Highways

Forecasts by the Metropolitan Transportation Council indicate that between 2005 and 2030 the region will add almost four million people and about three million jobs, a 17 % and 25 % increase. This growth will further tax our already congested and aging roads and mass transit system. **Expanded use of ferries and barges will help relieve traffic congestion, reduce air pollution, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.**

### → SOLUTIONS FOR A BLUE HIGHWAY

## Region-Wide Ferry Transit

Unlike highways or rail, the basic infrastructure for water transport the Harbor itself already exists. Landings and boats are all that is needed to deliver commuters to work and home. To be successful, region-wide ferry transit must be:

- An affordable commute, priced competitively with rail, bus or car
- Integrated with mass transit, linked by MetroCard or SmartCard, and synchronized to the train and bus schedules

New York City asthma hospitalization costs total more than \$242 million  
*New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene*



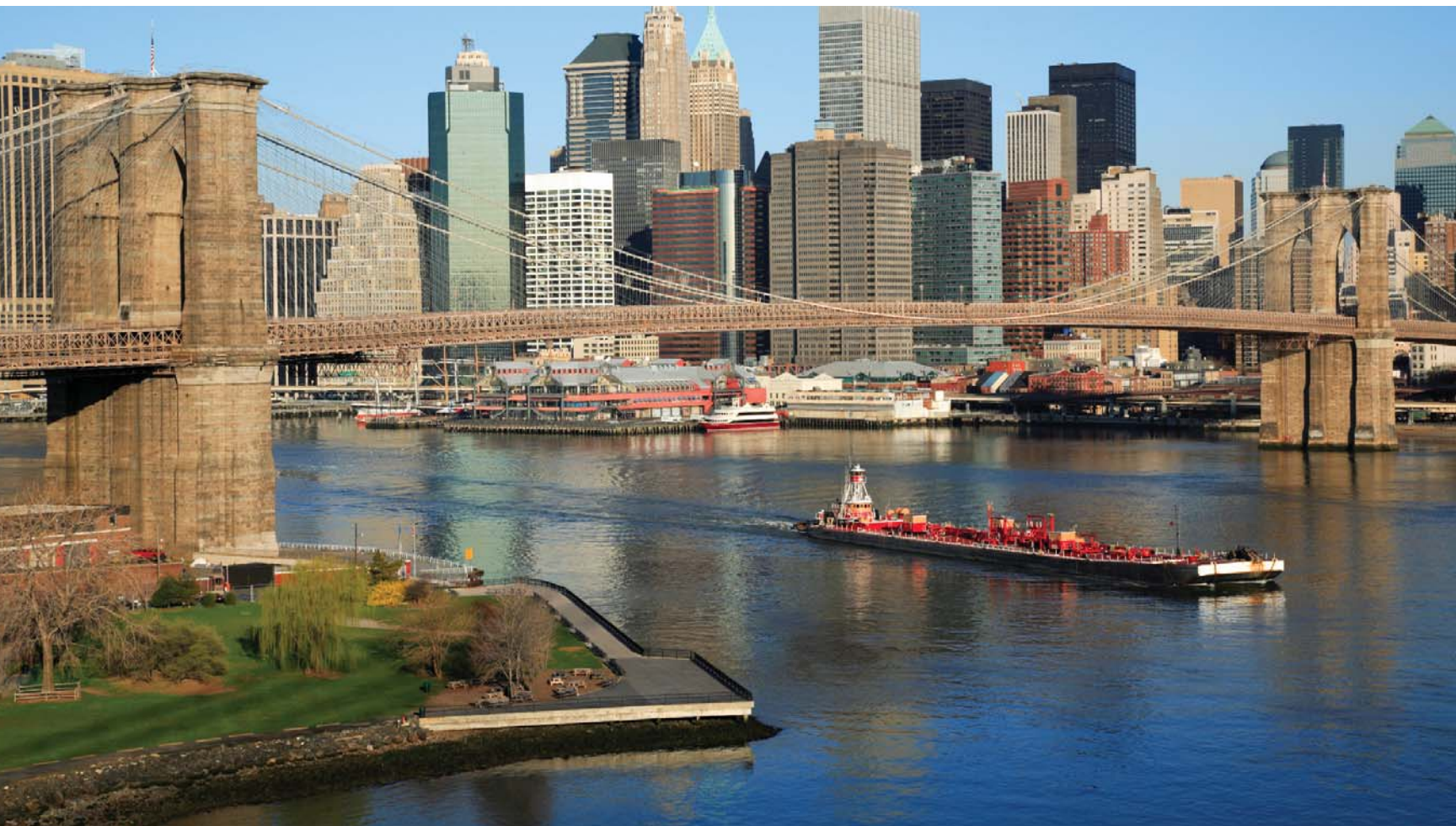
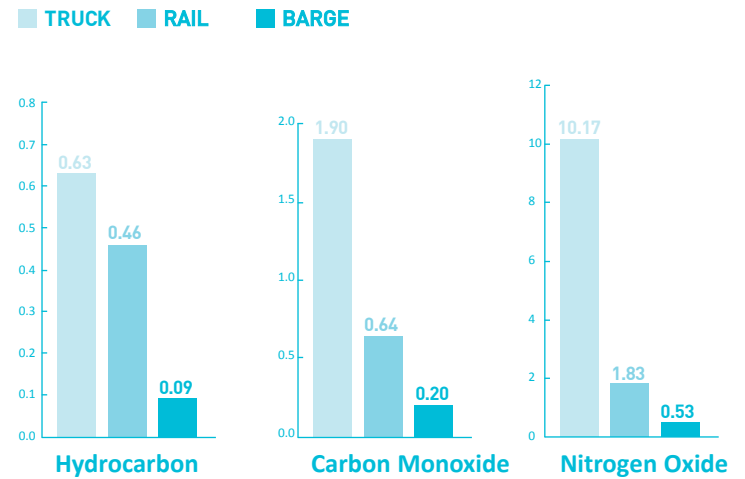


## → SOLUTIONS FOR A BLUE HIGHWAY

### Move Goods, Recyclables, and Trash By Barge

- Revive barge transport to get trucks off the road and asthma out of our lungs
- Create incentives and infrastructure such as roll-on roll-off facilities for trucks and barges
- Accelerate implementation of the City of New York's Long Term Solid Waste Management Plan to get our refuse onto barges and garbage trucks off the roads

### COMPARISON OF EMISSIONS FOR TRUCK, RAIL, AND BARGE



- One barge can transport the cargo carried by 58 tractor-trailers
- A typical string of 15 barges can take 870 trucks off the road
- One gallon of gas can move a ton of cargo 514 miles by barge, as opposed to 201 miles by rail and only 59 miles by truck

## 3. A Green Harbor

Toxins in the marine environment have been considerably reduced, but significant problems persist, caused by generations of pollution and neglect. As waterfront development goes forward and waterborne transportation expands, the environment must not only be protected but improved. **A healthy harbor will contribute to the well being of millions of residents and visitors as well as a robust regional economy.**

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR CAPTURING STORM RUNOFF BEFORE IT POLLUTES OUR WATERWAYS:

### → SOLUTIONS FOR A GREEN HARBOR

#### Reduce Sewer Outflow into the Harbor

The biggest water quality problem in the Metropolitan area is Combined Sewer Outflows (CSO). In order to prevent raw sewage and polluted stormwater runoff from backing up into our streets, schools, offices, homes, we instead allow sewage to overflow into our waterways and Harbor. It is impossible to build our way out of this problem with more sewage treatment plants. Solution:

- Green our way to cleaner water by building infrastructure that absorbs storm runoff before it reaches our sewers

**Riverkeeper** says New York City dumps more than 27 billion gallons of raw sewage and polluted stormwater discharge via sewer overflows into our surrounding waterways every year.



Vegetated ditches (swales) detain and absorb rain



Moisture-retaining green roofs



Code and regulation changes that allow homeowners to capture and use rainwater on their own properties



Larger tree pits with absorbent soil; street greening programs in areas prone to CSO events



**New York Harbor School**

Students clean and measure oysters aboard historic steamship *Lilac* at Pier 40. In partnership with **The River Project** and **NY/NJ Baykeeper**, **New York Harbor School** helps manage 30 oyster gardens across the Metropolitan area.

Photo courtesy of New York Harbor School

➔ SOLUTIONS FOR A GREEN HARBOR

## Bring Back Shellfish to Clean the Water

Shellfish are "ecosystem engineers," creating reefs that attract diverse flora and fauna, and they have the remarkable quality of being nature's vacuum cleaner. A cubic foot of mussels can filter 2,000 gallons of water a day. Led by organizations such as the **Gaia Institute** and the **NY/NJ Baykeeper**, oysters are being reintroduced into our waters.

- Expand, monitor, and accelerate new shellfish populations.

➔ SOLUTIONS FOR A GREEN HARBOR

## Clean Fuel for Boats

The City of New York mandated the use of less polluting, lower sulfur diesel on the Staten Island Ferry beginning in 2008 and legislation has been introduced in the New York City Council to bring cleaner fuels to all ferries. This can help ensure that expanding waterborne transportation yields the best air quality we can get. Bulk purchase of low sulfur diesel, ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD) or biodiesel will help lower the cost for smaller operators.





## 4. A Waterfront Town

We live on a series of islands and peninsulas yet many of us have little connection to the water that surrounds us. Most kids think the water is toxic and few people think of New York as a waterfront town. In fact hundreds of thousands of people leave the area each year just to have a waterfront experience. This disconnect has real quality of life and economic impact on the region. It is time to raise the tide of awareness if we are to catch up with other U.S. cities. **Connect people to the waterfront and they will care for it.**

### MWA Town Docks ▶

Town Docks helped New York Outrigger canoe club host the Liberty World Challenge at Pier 84 in Hudson River Park. The event brought 400 international participants to the water. Far right: Town Docks helped 202 kayaks, rowboats and sailboats land on Governors Island for the 2008 City of Water Day.



Photo by Etienne Frossard

### ➔ SOLUTIONS FOR A WATERFRONT TOWN

#### Every Kid on the Water

Expand and multiply efforts to get the next generation to embrace the harbor and waterways as a vital resource in their lives. Ensure that the waterfront is available and accessible to all, particularly low-income communities that historically have had limited opportunities along the water.

- Urge the Department of Education to designate a point person to secure environmental and waterfront education funding
- Urge the Parks Department to expand harbor education programs

### Floating Pool Lady ▲

Inspired by the floating baths of the 19th Century, the **Floating Pool Lady** is a self-contained public barge/pool that travels to different boroughs. In its first summer of operation, it attracted 50,000 children and adults to the waterfront.





## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WATERFRONT TOWN

### Town Docks

For a region surrounded by water, there are surprisingly few places where boats can legally and affordably dock. A series of simple town docks can be adapted for a variety of uses including visitor drop-off and pick-up, community programs, and connecting a region-wide water trail to interesting upland destinations.

## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WATERFRONT TOWN

### One-Stop Waterfront Permitting

A single source where people get straightforward information and applications, and where permits can be reviewed and handled expediently. In New York Harbor there are dozens of government agencies that have a hand in regulating waterfront use. For decades this complicated, non-transparent system has deterred community programs and waterfront development from taking place. A cooperative effort of the regulating agencies will simplify the permitting process.

## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WATERFRONT TOWN

### Region-Wide Water Trail

Connect the region's waterfront parks with a New York City Water Trail system - a critical link to what ought to be a region-wide system of launches and destinations for boaters and paddlers. New trails on the Hackensack and the Bronx Rivers join the Hudson River Water Trail as major links in this network.

## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WATERFRONT TOWN

### Recognize Great Waterfront Destinations

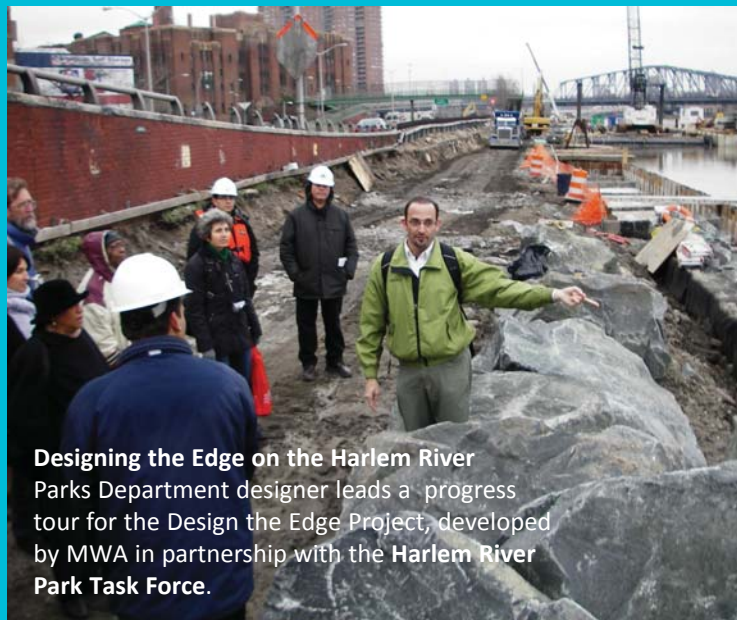
Our waterfront should be as alive and diverse as the cities and towns that surround it. Waterside development should:

- Provide public space, parks, and esplanades
- Create access to the water
- Connect neighborhoods to the water
- Include waterside destinations (especially food!) that are fun and affordable

Just as great environmental design gets LEED designation, great waterfront development that meets this criteria should achieve the "Waterfront Seal of Approval."



# 5. A Well Designed Edge



**Designing the Edge on the Harlem River**  
Parks Department designer leads a progress tour for the Design the Edge Project, developed by MWA in partnership with the Harlem River Park Task Force.

As development of the New York/New Jersey shoreline rapidly expands, construction decisions made today will affect the safety and environmental health of the waterfront for generations to come. **A well designed water's edge takes into account the needs of the maritime community, increased activities on our waterways, and the environment.**

## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WELL DESIGNED EDGE

### Barge and Boat Infrastructure

Bollards and cleats to secure boats and barges and gates that allow access to the water. The indelible image of rescuers having to climb over decorative waterside esplanade fences to get people away from danger on September 11th serves as a warning. As we rebuild our waterfront with dozens of new piers and miles of promenades throughout the area, we must equip them with the simple infrastructure that will make them usable by boats and barges for recreation, commerce and for emergencies.

## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WELL DESIGNED EDGE

### Nature Filled Waterfront Edges

Improve our environment and access to the water for education and recreation with a nature filled water's edge:

- Softened shorelines that include vegetation with shallow sloping intertidal areas, teeming with marine life such as wetlands and shellfish
- Ecology piers to understand nature, to fish and to foster growth of aquatic life
- Street ends and waterfront parks where you can touch the water

## → SOLUTIONS FOR A WELL DESIGNED EDGE

### Design For Sea Level Rise

The undeniable prospect of climate change has profound implications for 20 million people that live in the Metro-politan region. Scientists predict a rise in water level of one to three feet over the next 80 years. A Category 3 Hurricane could flood about 20% of New York City. Vulnerability to catastrophic weather events and sea level rise demands farsighted and decisive action. Some building and zoning codes need to be revised. Transportation and utility systems need to be reengineered to anticipate flooding. Construction projects in areas that are especially vulnerable, such as barrier islands like the Rockaways, may need to be reconsidered."





## Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

### Creating the Waterfront Action Agenda

In 2007 and 2008, the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance convened an unprecedented series of strategy sessions with participants from more than 240 agencies and organizations comprised of leading thinkers and practitioners working on and around the waterfront to develop a comprehensive, consensus-based, and equitable list of proposals for the New York metropolitan region that covers economic vitality, environmental priorities, transportation, public experience, and infrastructure. The resulting Waterfront Action Agenda is a set of priorities and actionable solutions that the collective group deems important to quality of life and economic competitiveness of the region. MWA works to implement projects and support efforts to accomplish these worthy goals.

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Roland Lewis

November 13, 2008

Dear Waterfront Leader,

**The Action Agenda is already being heard. The NYC City Council recently mandated the creation of a comprehensive waterfront plan to be completed every ten years beginning in 2010.**

**This policy shift is a strong sign that the tide is turning. No longer can we think of waterfront access for a privileged few. No longer can we ignore the quality of life and economic impact the waterfront has on the region. The needs of a 21st Century waterfront must be considered in all short and long-term policy and infrastructure decisions.**

**We urge waterfront towns and cities on both sides of the Hudson River to create similar waterfront policies as should the Port Authority of NY & NJ, State and Federal governments. We are a coalition of 362 civic groups, business, and agencies and we stand ready to help.**

**Roland Lewis  
President and CEO**

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**I FISH NY**

Students of I FISH NY celebrate their catch at MWA's City of Water Day on Governors Island. I FISH NY is an outreach initiative of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in partnership with New York Sea Grant.

**The Waterfront Action Agenda is the voice of 362 organizations and agencies who stand united for a stronger, healthier, and more accessible New York–New Jersey metropolitan waterfront. It prescribes practical solutions to many challenges that impact quality of life and the economic vitality of the region. It serves as a starting point for our civic and business leaders -- and we hope inspiration .**



**Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance**



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