I am Roland Lewis, President and CEO of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) is a coalition of 640 businesses, community and recreational groups, educational institutions, and other stakeholders committed to transforming the New York and New Jersey Harbor and its waterways to make them cleaner and more accessible, a vibrant place to play, learn and work with great parks, great jobs and great transportation for all.

Over the past several years, MWA has been hard at work with our Alliance Partners to create a broad harbor policy platform – the MWA Waterfront Action Agenda – and to make these policies real for our waterfront. MWA championed the legislation that called for a Comprehensive Waterfront Plan to be created for the City of New York every 10 years. Once the legislation was passed, MWA’s Waterfront Action Agenda became instrumental in the creation of the widely celebrated New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. Throughout 2009 and 2010, MWA worked with the City to make sure the development of the waterfront plan included a robust input process involving the
widest reach of possible waterfront stakeholders. MWA and the City reached out to the general public and our Alliance Partners to ensure the plan incorporated waterfront ideas and aspirations from citizens in all five boroughs as well as from the working waterfront, water-based transportation, environmental, recreational, educational and waterfront design communities. Because of this inclusive process the waterfront plan is truly comprehensive and reflects many of the goals and initiatives that MWA and its Alliance Partners see as central to the transformation of the New York City waterfront.

The Comprehensive Waterfront Plan has been recognized as a landmark achievement, receiving the American Planning Association's 2012 Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan. The plan has also been recognized internationally as I was honored to be asked to chair the 4th Annual Urban Waterfronts Conference held in Abu Dhabi, UAE in February, 2012 and to present the City’s plan and the process used to create it. Most notably the international attendees were impressed not only by the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan but also by the role that NGOs like the MWA played in promoting the plan and in creating the final strategies. Attendees form Bahrain to Cape Town to Hong Kong remarked that a similar plan development process with promotion from the advocacy community should be used for waterfront planning and strategy development in their countries.

MWA would like to commend New York City for the following waterfront policies and programs that lend the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan its prominence and importance as a progressive and forward looking achievement. The plan:
• Incorporates robust and forward thinking working waterfront policies that recognize the central role it plays in the sustainability of the harbor and the economy of the City and the region.

• Recognizes the importance of developing parks and waterfront access with a goal of not just getting people to the waterfront but also into and on the water as part of the overall vision of improving public waterfront access.

• Addresses the importance of planning for sea level rise and the increased risks from storm surges.

• Recognizes not only the need for greater connectivity on the waterfront through a five borough greenway and the opportunities it provides for greater waterfront access, but also opportunities for the working waterfront community to better inform the public about the importance of their work to the City via greenway access.

• Recognizes the importance of the need to improve government oversight and coordination to improve waterfront regulatory processes that, when reformed, can play a role in increasing the number of innovative waterfront and restoration projects built on the City's waterfront.

• Recognizes historic vessels as important resources that deserve infrastructure and attention to their special needs.

• Commits the City to the implementation of green infrastructure to improve water quality.
• Recognizes the importance of innovative ecological design and highlights Harlem River Park in Manhattan as an example of design innovation we should expect to become more standard over time.

• Recognizes waterfront infrastructure improvements such as Community Eco-Docks that will better connect the City to its waterways.

• Recognizes the importance of design guidelines for ecological, recreational, infrastructure and maritime improvements.

Vision 2020 is without doubt a great achievement and a giant step forward for our harbor, but there are still many unanswered questions and challenges that need to be addressed. Addressing the following issues will further the waterfront momentum and progress begun by Vision 2020.

**Ferry Service**

The Comprehensive Waterfront Plan raises the question of funding and governance of the City’s ferry service. The MWA believes a robust and expanded ferry service is necessary for the success of Vision 2020 and the City must address the challenges inhibiting its growth. The outstanding early success of the East River Ferry service clearly demonstrates the popularity, viability and need for affordable reliable waterborne transit in the region. For ferry service to grow we need to immediately secure a dedicated source of financing for the East River Ferry service. Then, there needs to be an expansion of that service to all five boroughs. Finally, the ferry service must, as is done
in every other major ferry system around the world, be fully integrated into the larger regional transit system.

**Waterfront Governance**

The Comprehensive Waterfront Plan recognizes governance as a priority, but it is largely silent in regard to the creation of new governmental mechanisms to manage the emerging needs of our reinvented harbor. There are a few immediate steps that we can take to address this important challenge. An easy place to start is with the newly repopulated and revitalized Waterfront Management Advisory Board (WMAB). The WMAB now consists of 12 civic waterfront experts abetted by City officials and led by the Deputy Mayor of Economic Development. The WMAB has untapped potential to be of great service towards the implementation of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. The WMAB could be a much more effective body if it:

- Held quarterly meetings
- Were supported by a full time office staff person
- Had staff supported committees that focused on Waterfront Action Agenda initiatives and reported directly to the full board

With increased staffing, functioning committees and frequent meetings, the WMAB can quickly be an effective and influential contributor to the governance of our waterfront by advising the City on the implementation of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, the Waterfront Action Agenda and other waterfront projects, and more importantly,
formulating waterfront policy for future administrations and waterfront plans. There are other governance steps that can be implemented in the near future that will improve governmental efficiency such as:

- The consolidation of the many agencies and personnel who now have some jurisdiction over pier and bulkhead maintenance, in order to standardize the inspection and repairs and maintenance of this critical infrastructure.
- The establishment of a one stop shop for permitting assistance with a dedicated funding source serving applicants with small to mid-size waterfront projects.
- The creation of a system or pilot program for mitigation banking.

The governance ideas set forth above must be steps towards the establishment of a new governance entity such as a Department of the Waterfront to manage the new parks, new ferries, increased recreational boating, the need for ecological restoration, the threat of sea level rise and many other issues, challenges and opportunities that our 21st century harbor will face.

**Access**

The Comprehensive Waterfront Plan calls for the creation of a blue network and the enlivening of the waterfront. However there are many practical steps that must be taken to make the vision a reality. For instance, the City must commit to funding for the five borough greenway and to growing the new Community Eco-Docks into full service town docks that serve as maritime, educational and economic development hubs.
While historic boats are recognized as an important part of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan it is necessary for the City to support historic boats with infrastructure, management, coordination and subsidies for fostering and developing the community of historic ships. The recent difficulties of the tanker Mary Whalen and the historic ships of the South Street Seaport are evidence of the precarious nature of these important components of our City's maritime heritage.

**Port NYC**

The City established and must continue its commitment to and expansion of Port NYC. The recent growth of maritime and port activity in New York City is evidence of the viability of these industries for the City. We believe regulatory and financial incentives can be put into place for the use of our maritime highways as an alternative to the transportation of goods by truck.

**Financing a 21st Century Waterfront**

We recognize the substantial investment of the current administration in Vision 2020 but we also recognize that additional funds are needed, as mentioned earlier, for ferry transit, infrastructure improvements, ecological restoration and for many other needs in a re-envisioned harbor. We propose that through the work of the Harbor Coalition, greater federal funds be brought to our harbor and innovative financing techniques, such as tax increment financing revenue, be developed and the necessary investments be made to actualize the transformation of our waterfront.
**Restoration and Ecology**

The Comprehensive Waterfront Plan recognizes the natural waterfront as a priority and the opportunities we have for enhancing the ecological value of the shoreline through a variety of strategies. Though waterfront projects, both large and small, benefit from innovative ecological design, such designs are not yet standardized. The target ecosystem characteristics of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan for the Hudson-Raritan Estuary, a central component of Goal 5 of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, to restore the natural waterfront, have yet to become a part of waterfront design decisions in current projects let alone incorporated as standard waterfront design components in public and private sector waterfront projects. As a first step towards a new waterfront design paradigm, the City must commit to the development of waterfront design guidelines, permitting reform, and mitigation wetlands banking by fully resourcing and funding the staff positions in the Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability and the Economic Development Corporation that would be charged with this work.

**MWA 2012 Waterfront Conference**

Many of the ideas set forth in this testimony will be examined at MWA's 2012 Waterfront Conference to be held May 18 and 19, 2012 where civic, government and business champions, waterfront leaders, advocates and policy experts from the region will convene to collaborate and inspire progress for the waterfront. Conference panel sessions will cover the emerging sustainable practices and designs committed to by the
working waterfront, the importance of ferries in inspiring waterfront revitalization, ways we can better incentivize ecological waterfront design, the NY-NJ Harbor as a tourist attraction equal in status to Broadway and Times Square, how to implement green infrastructure while involving communities and improving interagency coordination, governing and financing waterfront improvements, and next steps for preparing for sea level rise and storm surges. The Saturday morning portion of the conference will cover issues important to the recreational boating community including real time water quality notification, how to deal with wakes and public access design guidelines.

We look forward to the conference serving as a catalyst for new ideas, plans and innovations on the waterfront.

In summary, MWA would like to emphasize the importance of a sustained commitment from this administration and future administrations to implement the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. The New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan is the beginning and a great strategy. But it is only the beginning of a profound transformation of our City, that will turn it inside out, embracing the water that surrounds us. People will come to New York to visit and to live by the water's edge. The harbor was the start of our metropolis and the reason it grew to dominance. Its importance is undiminished. We stand ready to work with this administration, future generations and our Alliance Partners to embrace the opportunities that lie before us for our magnificent harbor.