Testimony of Roland Lewis, President & CEO
New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Committee on Waterfronts
April 1, 2015 Committee Hearing
re: Res. No. 549 – Statement regarding Port Ambrose liquefied natural gas terminal

The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) is a bi-state coalition of over 800 community and recreational groups, educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders committed to restoring and revitalizing the New York and New Jersey waterways. Our waterways have been revitalized with active recreation, environmental education, and waterborne transportation, and the harbor has for centuries been a vital conduit for commerce and an engine of economic development.

MWA strongly supports Resolution 549 calling on Governor Cuomo to veto the Port Ambrose liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal project. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for this project fails to sufficiently address concerns about the health and safety of the waterways and potentially conflicts with a proposed offshore wind energy project, which would provide clean energy alternatives – not to mention more jobs – for New Yorkers.

Approval of the Port Ambrose project would likely jeopardize the operations of a proposed offshore wind farm, which would provide cleaner energy and more sustainable full-time jobs. Liquid natural gas, despite clever marketing by its proponents, is a nonrenewable fossil fuel, the burning of which pollutes our air and contributes to climate change. An application from the Long Island-New York City Offshore Wind Collaborative, a partnership between New York Power Authority (NYPA), Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) and Consolidated Edison Company (ConEd), currently stands before the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management for a 350-megawatt (MW) offshore wind energy project. The DEIS does not account for the overlapping footprints of the Port Ambrose terminal and the wind energy project, which could impede the placement of wind turbines, and cause conflict in shipping lanes between support vessels for each project. The applicants themselves project that the Port Ambrose facility would support only five permanent, full-time jobs, once the terminal was completed. (Its construction would support 600 temporary full-time equivalent jobs) The offshore wind project may instead generate as many as 85 new jobs and 2,300 temporary construction jobs, in addition to many more maritime support jobs servicing the turbines.

Port Ambrose poses a direct threat to the health and biodiversity of water resources in the New York Bight, which serves important ecological and economic functions for our region, as a home to many species of marine life and a critical location for recreational boating and fishing industries. Operating the facility will require over 1.1 billion gallons of seawater each year, pumped up from the ocean. This process can injure or kill large marine life that becomes trapped in the metal screens, disrupt food sources for threatened and endangered species, and generally disturb the seafloor with debris and discharge. Additionally, insufficient consideration has been given to the possibility that major accidents or spills could release large amounts of hazardous materials that could be dispersed along currents across a wide area.

The Port Authority of NY and NJ (PANYNJ) has raised important concerns regarding a possible impact to existing vessel traffic patterns, during both construction and operation phases of Port Ambrose. The construction of the Mainline transit system would “cross through the Ambrose to Nantucket Traffic Lane and the Hudson Canyon to Ambrose Traffic Lane.” PANYNJ has stated that the location of the project’s submerged turret loading (“STL”) buoys “lies between two major Traffic Separation Schemes utilized by marine traffic entering and exiting the Ambrose Channel and the Port of New York and New Jersey,” which may cause conflict between Port Ambrose operations and other maritime vessels.

MWA urges these Committees and the entire City Council to pass this resolution on behalf of all New Yorkers, and send a clear message to Governor Cuomo that the proposed Port Ambrose LNG terminal would be an unnecessary, unhealthy, and wasteful addition to our waterways. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony, and I welcome any questions you may have.