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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## PRESS RELEASE

# The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance Urges New York City to Protect the City from Floods While Continuing the Commitment to a Revitalized Waterfront

### **MWA releases 12-point plan to balance future waterfront protection with revitalization efforts**

New York, New York -- The devastation of Hurricane Sandy underscores the need to protect New York City's waterfront. But it must not displace efforts to create a more vital, healthy, clean waterfront with better ferry service, more boats, more recreational opportunities and new waterfront parks.

Participants at the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA)'s General Assembly met on Nov. 14 to formulate a proposal on how New York City and the region should move forward in Sandy's wake.

**From this work MWA is releasing a 12-point plan emphasizing that New York City must simultaneously maintain its commitment to revitalizing its waterfront and commit to a wide variety of methods to protect the City from future floods and storms.**

Roland Lewis, President and Chief Executive Officer of the MWA said, "Resiliency and a great waterfront go together. We must agree to both protect the shoreline, and protect our vital access to it."

"It is imperative that we safeguard our shoreline infrastructure with both soft and hard modifications," said Christopher O. Ward, Chairman of the MWA Board of Trustees and former Executive Director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. "At the same time, elected officials must recommit to the City's *Comprehensive Waterfront Plan*<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/cwp/index.shtml>

MWA's 12 Point Plan:

1. **Maintain the commitment to revitalizing the waterfront.** In 2011 New York City renewed its commitment to the waterfront for the first time in almost 20 years with the release of Vision 2020: New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. Thousands of New Yorkers weighed in on this award-winning and nationally recognized plan for revitalizing one of the largest and most diverse waterfronts in the world.

New Yorkers want better ferry service, more boats, more recreational opportunities, new waterfront parks, a cleaner and healthier waterfront, and better management and improved regulations on the waterfront. And these are the goals New York City committed to and which remain the same even after the great devastation wrought by Hurricane Sandy.

While the New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan recognizes the need to address sea level rise and storm surges, we need more specific strategies to make our City more resilient to major storms and flooding. We must make our waterfront resilient but we must do it without losing the vast opportunities we have to revitalize and restore one of the greatest waterfronts in the world.

2. **Weigh benefits of sea gates and barriers.** Research all of the potential environmental, logistical, and equity issues along with economic costs and benefits that large scale sea gates and barriers would bring to our region. Give equal weight in all analyses to protection measures that are decentralized such as changing building codes, re-nourishing beaches, greening the waterfront, capturing and releasing water, and sealing buildings.
3. **Expand maritime infrastructure,** including ferry landings, piers and docks, to better utilize waterborne transit as a redundant system that moves people and goods in times of emergency.
4. **Update FEMA flood maps** for New York City to more accurately reflect current land use conditions and incorporate sea level rise projections.
5. **Create government waterfront oversight.** Establish well-resourced local and regional governmental offices to plan for sea level rise and climate change. New York City must commit to maintaining and resourcing the current Mayor's Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability for the long term and establishing senior staff in every department responsible for coordinating and implementing solutions.
6. **Retrofit existing waterfront infrastructure.** Seal, retrofit, and make resilient infrastructure that is close to the shoreline and vital to the functioning of the City such as subways, telecommunications, energy, and electricity infrastructure.
7. **Restore the regional waterfront to mitigate future flooding.** New York City, New York State, New Jersey, and the federal government must commit to the restoration

of the harbor based on the Comprehensive Restoration Plan for New York Harbor and funded through the Harbor Act<sup>2</sup> to establish oyster reefs, wetlands, and other flood and wave attenuating natural features to soften the edge and help to mitigate the effects of storm surges, sea level rise, and extreme weather.

8. **Adopt neighborhood-based climate change planning strategies** based on outreach to community boards, local councils, civic organizations, and grass roots organizations to help communities plan for emergencies and to build support for infrastructure changes.
9. **Consider retreat from land that is at high risk** for storm surge and extreme flooding with equitable compensation for those displaced. Consider conversion of flood-prone and surge-vulnerable areas to parkland.
10. **Secure hazardous materials and contaminated areas:** Commit to implementing comprehensive plans and establishing regulations that require securing hazardous materials and contaminated areas to prevent the release of toxic and hazardous materials during flooding.
11. **Create and fund sufficient government budgets to protect waterfront.** Governmental budget offices such as the New York City Office of Management and Budget, the New York State Division of the Budget, and others should be required to weigh the extra costs of making resilient our vital infrastructure versus the costs required to replace that infrastructure in the event of storm surges, extreme weather, and/or other coastal hazards.
12. **Build better.** Review zoning, building codes and standards to prevent loss of life and property in the event of storm surges.

**About the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance** (<http://www.waterfrontalliance.org>)  
The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance works to transform the New York and New Jersey harbor and waterways to make them clean and accessible, a vibrant place to play, learn and work, with great parks, great jobs and great transportation for all.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.harborcoalition.org/>