



# Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Region's First Community Eco Dock Opens 2014 Season

*Historic Schooner Lettie G. Howard will inaugurate free summer programming*

NYC Council Member Vincent J. Gentile, NYC Parks and Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance Invite Brooklynites to Step Aboard *Lettie G. Howard*, a Collaboration of the South Street Seaport Museum and the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School

New York, NY - The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) and the Office of Council Member Vincent J. Gentile celebrate the kickoff of the 2014 season of on-water programming at the Bay Ridge Community Eco Dock, at the 69<sup>th</sup> Street Pier in Bay Ridge. The event will be held Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, from 10am to 1pm.

The Eco Dock is a project of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, with support from New York City Council Member Vincent J. Gentile and community programming coordinated by MWA. The flexible, floating dock provides access to large and mid-sized historical, cultural, commercial and educational vessels and smaller human-powered boats, and serves as a platform for environmental education programs, with minimal impact to surrounding natural resources.

South Street Seaport Museum's recently restored Fredonia-model fishing schooner *Lettie G. Howard* will inaugurate a season of maritime programming at the Eco Dock. *Lettie G. Howard* is a designated National Historic Landmark and the flagship of the Port of New York and New Jersey. Between 1991 and 1993, the South Street Seaport Museum completely restored *Lettie G. Howard* to her original 1893

appearance. In 1994, she was certified by the U.S. Coast Guard as a Sailing School Vessel (SSV), allowing her to carry students of all ages as a training ship. In 2013, *Lettie G. Howard* was restored once again, and is once again operating as a Sailing School Vessel in collaboration with the New York Harbor School and other schools around the port. Additional support for *Lettie* comes from the New York Harbor Foundation and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

*Lettie G. Howard* serves as a platform for learning about the history, science and industry of New York Harbor. While a fireboat from FDNY provides a festive water display offshore, visitors will step aboard *Lettie* and meet the crew and student trainees following one of her overnight sails, where trainees are given real responsibilities in the operation of the vessel.

The Bay Ridge Community Eco Dock is also part of a citywide effort to revitalize the New York metropolitan area waterfront, linking regional water trails and upland destinations throughout the New York Harbor. Community Eco Docks also provide destinations for studies in environmental science, aquatic habitat monitoring, fishing instruction and tidal observations. Visitors on Saturday June 28<sup>th</sup> will also meet with faculty and staff from John Dewey High School, who will be providing public demonstrations on their oyster gardening program at the Eco Dock and its role in the school's environmental science curriculum.

"The Eco Dock was a dream come true for me," said New York City Council Member Vincent J. Gentile. "If you look at a map of New York, what you'll see is a whole lot of blue. Indeed, before there was a city, there was a harbor. Right along with San Francisco and Hong Kong, New York City has one of the greatest natural harbors in the entire world - and now the waterfront of southern Brooklyn is connected to it all. At last we are giving the community access to its waterfront in a whole new way. It is high time for us to rediscover our relationship with the waterfront. I am very excited to kick-off the inaugural season of New York's first recreational Eco Dock right here in Bay Ridge!"

South Street Seaport Museum President Jonathan Boulware praised the Bay Ridge Eco Dock, and said "I look forward to both schooners *Lettie G. Howard* and *Pioneer*, along with other SSSM vessels, visiting the Eco Dock with programming and public interaction. South Street Seaport Museum supports the Eco Dock and all manner of public access to the harbor and its tributaries for the people of New York. We're thrilled to have *Lettie* there this weekend and we look forward to future visits."

"*Lettie G. Howard* offers incredible experiences for students that bring out the best in teamwork, cooperation and communications. Students that sail aboard this historic

schooner prepare themselves not only for maritime careers but everyday life," said Captain Aaron Singh, Vessel Operations Director for the New York Harbor School. "When they get out of the sight of the concrete sidewalks and skyscrapers, our students discover that they are a part of a team and need to work together to safely bring the vessel to her next port. They learn sail handling, navigating, cooking, rigging and good seamanship that make the journey much smoother. This year we hope to have our students visit *Lettie's* original home port in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Pretty amazing for city kids!"

"We are thrilled to kick off the first full season of programming at the new Bay Ridge Community Eco Dock," said Roland Lewis, President & CEO of MWA. "Throughout the season, we will welcome historic ships, community sailing demonstrations, environmental education programs and so much more! Together with our partners in government, we are excited to reconnect people in Bay Ridge and southern Brooklyn with the great maritime community of New York and all the great cultural and educational resources our waterways provide."

MWA is working with maritime educational groups and community organizations to plan programs and events at the Bay Ridge Community Eco Dock. Activity for the 2014 season at the continues with special events on July 6, 13 and 19<sup>th</sup> with visits by *A.J. Meerwald*, a restored oyster dredging schooner turned sailing classroom, and the historic fireboat *John J. Harvey*, offering free public tours around the harbor. For more information on the schedule of events, and on dockside and water tours on these vessels, please visit <http://www.waterfrontalliance.org/bayridge>.

## **About the Partners**

The **Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance** is an alliance of 800 civic organizations and businesses with ties to our regional waterways. The MWA 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. The Open Waters Initiative is a program bridging community organizing, planning and advocacy to unlock the waterways for recreation and education in communities where on-water access is currently limited.

Founded in 1967, the **South Street Seaport Museum** celebrates the rich maritime history of NYC's 19th-century waterfront and is dedicated to telling the vital story of the maritime foundation of New York and its role in the development of the United States of America. The Museum houses a working nineteenth-century print shop, a

maritime library, a maritime craft center, a working pier, and the largest privately-owned fleet of historic ships in the country.

The mission of the **Urban Assembly New York Harbor School** is to provide a college-preparatory education built upon New York City's maritime experience that instills in students the ethics of environmental stewardship and the skills associated with careers on the water. Located on Governors Island in the heart of New York Harbor and accessible only by ferry, Harbor School offers a unique, on-water learning experience for all its students. Students learn to build and operate boats; spawn and harvest millions of oysters; design submersible, remotely-operated vehicles; conduct real-life research; and dive underwater.

**New York Harbor Foundation** is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the condition of, and promoting access to and education about New York Harbor. The Foundation was originally created in 2010 to support the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School, and most of the Foundation's work still is carried out through Harbor School. The Harbor Foundation's partnership with Harbor School has made it possible for the school to offer a unique array of educational, professional and environmental programs designed to engage New York City students in the stewardship of New York Harbor.

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