



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2015

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On the Third Anniversary of Hurricane Sandy, the Waterfront Alliance Calls for a Comprehensive, Long-Term Strategy for Flood Risk Reduction

“Climate Change Accounting: What is the Cost?” White Paper Details Challenges and Possible Solutions

New York, NY—As the region commemorates the third anniversary of Hurricane Sandy and the devastation it wrought upon New York City and East Coast communities on October 29, 2012, and afterward, the Waterfront Alliance hails the tremendous resiliency initiatives undertaken over the last three years, but is compelled to voice an inescapable reality: We have a long way to go before our waterfronts are safe from storm surge, flooding, and other impacts of climate change.

“Today, the memories of people in the metropolitan area will be drawn back to the terrible destruction and loss of life that this storm caused,” said Roland Lewis, president and CEO of the Waterfront Alliance. “While the [City of New York](#), the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), and local strategies such as the [extensive effort in Hoboken, New Jersey](#) have made great progress in building a more resilient region, we recognize that the work and financial resources committed so far are only a down payment on what we must do to protect our region from future storms.”

This year, the Waterfront Alliance issued a white paper, [“Climate Change Accounting: What Is The Cost?”](#), which tracks the cost of resiliency projects, estimates the cost of inaction, and details the challenges of infrastructure upgrades and flood-risk reduction projects. The white paper is a call to action, urging the following:

1. Identification of the true costs of all currently planned and proposed flood-risk reduction and resiliency projects, the timeframe for their implementation, and the extent of risk they would mitigate
2. Development of a comprehensive capital strategy to dramatically reduce the region’s flood risk through 2100, including determining and prioritizing the necessary infrastructure investments, ensuring appropriate accountability to execute the strategy, and securing the necessary funds.
3. Establishment of a federal commission to develop this strategy, which would include elected representatives from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; federal, state, and local government agencies; and climate change and infrastructure experts from academia and the private sector.

“Remember this day as we go forward to develop our coastal resiliency strategy,” said Christopher Ward, chairman of the board of trustees of the Waterfront Alliance. “The recent near-miss by Hurricane Joaquin tells us that we should be thinking about storm surge and sea level rise not just today, but every day. New York City is doing a great job, but to truly safeguard our future, we need a comprehensive, long-term plan for the metropolitan region. Climate change impact is a national issue; its mitigation should be a national priority.”

The Waterfront Alliance has focused on shoreline resiliency since its inception in 2008. In 2009, the Alliance and partner organizations coordinated the [H209 Forum: Water Challenges for Coastal Cities, From the Dutch Delta to New York Harbor](#), at which international experts discussed innovative water management technology, particularly from the perspective of the Netherlands, and brought the concept of resiliency to the attention of metropolitan residents. In November 2012, immediately after Hurricane Sandy, the Alliance quickly organized the Waterfront Alliance General Assembly, at which 200 people tackled tough questions about the future of the waterfront and began to form the Waterfront Platform for candidates for office for the following year. In 2015, the Alliance issued [Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines](#) (WEDG), a tool for promoting better waterfront projects through resilient, accessible, and ecologically beneficial design—a “LEED® for the waterfront.” An immediate success that was years in the making, WEDG is being adopted by community boards around New York City, and will receive the [American Planning Association New York Metro chapter’s award for meritorious achievement](#) on October 30, 2015.

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The [Waterfront Alliance](#) works to protect, transform, and revitalize our harbor and waterfront.