Public Testimony
October 25, 2018
New York City Council, Parks Committee
Re: Oversight - Ensuring the Short and Long Term Preservation of the City's Natural Forest

Submitted by Kate Boicourt, Director of Resilience
Waterfront Alliance

Waterfront Alliance is a non-profit civic organization and coalition of more than 1,000 community and recreational groups, educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders. Our mission is to inspire and enable resilient, revitalized and accessible coastlines for all communities. The Natural Areas Conservancy and New York City Parks have been great partners of the Waterfront Alliance. Recently, staff provided important insight on best available science and practices to inform the Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines (WEDG). Further, we have worked together to provide and improve public access to and from NYC’s waterfront in all five boroughs.

Investing in our natural resources
“New York City’s natural areas – from forests to wetlands and one fourth of the holdings under the jurisdiction of New York City Parks, are critical components of our city’s infrastructure. They provide benefits to human health and wellbeing, are home to our city’s wildlife, clean our water, reduce urban heat, store greenhouse gases, and reduce risks caused by sea level rise and climate change. Investing in their management and restoration is increasingly important in our growing city in light of these pressures. Up-front investments in ongoing maintenance are an agreed-upon best practice that the Waterfront Alliance supports, and that can not only lead to healthier and more productive natural resources, but to cost savings over time.

Challenges
Our natural areas face a number of challenges that can be solved through targeted investments and sound management. Currently, the agency’s natural areas are insufficiently managed due to lack of resources, which are not equitably distributed. This means that people, particularly in low and moderate income neighborhoods, are denied access to opportunities to recreate and support their mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing. These important resources are in need of support and investment soon or they will face decline.
A path forward
Thanks to the Work of the Natural Areas Conservancy and New York City Parks to develop “The Forest Management Framework for New York City,” we now have a clear long-term plan for how to best manage and improve our great natural areas. We encourage you to join in supporting the Natural Areas Conservancy and New York City Parks in asking the City to commit to:

- Investing $385 million over 25 years for the ongoing restoration, conservation, and science-based management of these important resources
- Supporting the implementation of “The Forest Management Framework for NYC,” the first-ever comprehensive plan for this critical resource, which sets ecological and social targets for all 7,300 acres of NYC’s urban natural forests