



Testimony of Roland Lewis, President and CEO
on **Clearing the Air: Greening New York City's Working Waterfront**

Before the Committee on Waterfronts
August 9, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Roland Lewis and I am President of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a coalition of 420 groups working together to transform the New York Harbor and its waterways into a world class resource for work, play, transit and education. I'd like to thank the Committee and especially Chairman Nelson for bringing us all here to discuss greening the port.

The working waterfront is critically important for our region because it supports thousands of jobs and generates billions of dollars in economic activity. Today, the Port of New York and New Jersey is the largest port complex on the East Coast. Waterborne transportation is one of the most energy efficient and environmentally friendly ways to move goods around the region. With added maritime jobs comes better public health, because the maritime industry removes more than 3.1 million trucks from New York City's roads every year. That can mean much cleaner air for all of us. NYC is the only major metropolitan city that is not connected by rail. We applaud the City's effort to modernize the rail freight network, which will enable critical rail connections and encourage more environmentally friendly transportation options.

Our city currently suffers from an epidemic of asthma especially among children. A recent Columbia University study done in conjunction with the Harlem Children's' Zone found that one in four Harlem children suffers from asthma. Another recent NYU study found a direct correlation between truck traffic and asthma rates. Waterborne movement of goods can be a key part of solving this problem as long as we continue to push for programs such as LA's Clean Truck Program aimed at dramatically reducing emissions and associated health risks while allowing port development to thrive. To really make the most of our waterways as transportation resources, we need to a) invest in clean fuels and clean fuel technology for our ferries and tugboats, b) reduce the effects of port trucking, c) require "cold-ironing," and d) enhance habitat in the water and on the water's edge.

Currently, the US Army Corps of Engineers is helping to re-power a number of tugboats serving this Port to help reduce the levels of air emissions that these working vessels create. There are literally hundreds of tugboats based and in operation in this Port and we should allow all of these businesses access to cleaner fuels, for example, by creating grant programs just as we do for private vehicle fleets such as school buses. The Council and the Mayor have taken a great step forward for cleaner air by providing the Staten Island Ferry with Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel and Biodiesel. We should make these fuels more accessible and cost-effective for smaller maritime businesses too. Ultimately, every ton of cargo and every passenger commuter that moves by water is reducing the stress and congestion on our land-based transit and highway system, and therefore they are creating a public benefit that is worthy of public support.

To help green the port, alternative fuel needs to be produced and offered for sale in more places, the delivery of alternative fuel, where reasonable, should be made via the waterways, and the federal tax credit for bio-diesel that expired on December 31, 2009 needs to be reinstated.

We must take this opportunity to learn from other major ports. San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan,¹ developed by the San Pedro Bay ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, is the most aggressive strategy to significantly reduce the health risks posed by air pollution from port-related sources. It progressively invested hundreds of millions of dollars by the ports and private sector businesses to replace diesel trucks with a new generation of clean or retrofitted vehicles prior to any federal or state requirements. As part of the Plan, all major container cargo and cruise ship terminals at the ports would be equipped with shore-side electricity within five to ten years so that vessels can shut down their diesel-powered engines while at berth. Also within the next five years, all cargo-handling equipment would be replaced or retrofitted to meet or fall below emission standards for new equipment called for in the toughest U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations. Ships also would be required to reduce their speeds when entering or leaving the harbor region, use low-sulfur fuels, and employ other emissions reduction measures and technologies.

¹ <http://www.cleanairactionplan.org/reports/studies.asp>

In the next ten years, the Port Authority's Clean Air Strategy plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from port activities by 30% in criteria pollutants and 50% in greenhouse gas emissions from baseline 2006 levels. However, LA expects to meet its 2012 goal of 80% emissions reductions from overall drayage operations ahead of schedule. We applaud the Port Authority and New York City's goals however we encourage them to reach the level of abatement that our colleagues in LA have aggressively taken on, and we encourage New York City to substantially aid in this work. MWA strongly supports Congressman Nadler's effort to pass federal legislation to allow the Port Authority to develop a similar comprehensive program like the LA. We need a comprehensive clean-air plan modeled after the Port of Los Angeles policy.

In addition to ports' efforts to reduce emissions, we have to remember the importance of enhancing and maintaining the ecological health under the water. Ecological restoration and port activity are not mutually exclusive. Bulkheads have great potential for providing massive amount of in-water habitat to foster biodiversity. An ongoing study at Pier 40 on the Hudson River suggests that pier piles are preferred habitat for fishes. The addition of structural elements such as gabions, reef balls and rebar enclosures to pier piles can provide physical habitat diversity, which in turn can produce a more complex aquatic community. Dutch scientists have successfully designed hulafix, which are bands of hanging ropes that are wrapped around piles to provide improved habitat for fish. Part of any greening the Port activities should therefore include preservation and aquatic habitat enhancement.

We would like to invite everyone in the room to Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance's Working Waterfront Task Force meeting on Wednesday June 23rd at 9:30am to discuss and formulate updates to New York City's Comprehensive Waterfront Plan with a special focus on regulatory, and tax incentives needed to protect the economic health of the maritime industry. The results of the MWA Working Waterfront Task Force meeting will be submitting to City to help ensure that policy decisions and input shaping the updated Comprehensive Waterfront Plan reflect the wide spectrum of all waterfront uses, priorities, and policies.

Overall, MWA believes that increased water transit for people and goods is critical to solving the city's air quality problems. We very much appreciate the Council for drawing attention to these issues and also for recognizing that waterfront and water-dependent businesses can be a part of the solution. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.