



**Testimony of Roland Lewis, President and CEO**

**THE METROPOLITAN WATERFRONT ALLIANCE**

**Before the Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment and  
the Committee on Waterfronts**

*Friday, April 3rd, 2009*

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I am Roland Lewis, president of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a coalition of nearly 400 organizations working together to transform the New York Harbor and its waterways into a world class resource for work, play, transit and education.

Governors Island has, in a very short period of time, become one of the metropolitan area's most beloved public spaces. While the tangible reasons for this are obvious to any family that has spent a day strolling along its waterfront, we at MWA also believe it is because Governors Island symbolizes the potential of the metropolitan area to truly transform its waterfront in to a world-class destination.

MWA's *Waterfront Action Agenda* lays out a vision for New York City to once again be a beautiful waterfront town. Right now is New York's chance to create the next generation of waterfront parks with Governors Island as a shining example of the importance of a well designed waterfront edge, easily accessible town docks, and

ecologically sustainable infrastructure. We believe and have seen that if you connect people to the waterfront, they will care for it. In very few places in the city is one able to feel the same connection to the waterfront that they do at Governors Island.

MWA believes in the importance of Governors Island so much that we hold our signature event, City of Water Day, there. Last year this event drew over 7,000 people to the island – it was the largest day in its 7 years since being opened to the public. Some came by ferry, some came by kayak, some by sail and some by canoe but everyone, many for the first time, was able to experience the Hudson River Estuary as more than just a view or an obstacle to tunnel under or bridge over. This waterfront is a public resource and it is the responsibility of the city and state to work on behalf of its citizens to make it great.

On behalf of our hundreds of Alliance Partners and their thousands of constituents, we urge the city to not only fund GIPEC for this summer, but to recognize the importance of this resource and develop a long term financing plan for the island. This yearly funding dance must stop if we are to instill confidence in those private and public innovators seeking to utilize Governors Island. We join with the Governors Island Alliance in calling for a simplified governance structure for the island, as well as in cheering on the development of an innovative and feasible park master plan that connects to the water with educational and recreation access.

Ours is a city clamoring for more waterfront parks, more waterfront access and more waterfront recreation and education opportunities - opportunities all available at a well funded Governors Island. Thank you for this opportunity to testify, I would be happy to answer any questions.