

N E W S A D V I S O R Y

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, August 21, 2007

CONTACT: Carter Craft
tel 212/935-9831/ cel 917-709-3371

MWA Celebrates Cutting “Edge” on Harlem River

New Park Design Creates Best of Waterfront Aquatecture

Today, the City of New York, the Harlem River Park Task Force and the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance celebrate a groundbreaking for Phase 2 of Harlem River Park.

“Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Adrian Benepe have wholeheartedly embraced a waterfront design that holds great promise for waterfronts all over the City,” said Roland Lewis, President and CEO of the Alliance. “With the Mayor's plaNYC initiative underway, this project represents the City's commitment to Best Management Practices for dealing with highway runoff, since the edge helps catch and filter runoff from three blocks of the Harlem River Drive.”

The Park extends from 139th to 142nd Street along the west bank of the Harlem River. While the Park vision extends back more than two decades, the innovative "Edge" project was born in 2002, when the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance approached the City of New York and the New York State Department of State and identified the need for more accessible and ecologically productive waterfront edges. Learning from 9/11, when the design of the Battery Park City seawall was as much a barrier to rescue and recovery as an asset, the goal of this effort, called “Design the Edge” was to create a more flexible and useful connection between land and water than waterfront construction typically creates.

“What made this process innovative,” said Carter Craft, Director of Programs and Policy for MWA, “was the interdisciplinary approach of the Parks design and engineering team, and the high level of community involvement. Now we need to transform this energy into waterfront stewardship, by enlisting more community partners and hopefully local teachers to develop a monitoring and education effort to understand the health of the plants and shellfish, and the quality of the water in the River.”

Other notable aspects of the project include:

- tide pools allow safe access to a shallow water environment;
- public design workshop garnered ideas from more than 100 local residents;
- the natural edge helps absorb the impact of wakes created by passing vessels;
- gabion design provides structural stability but also creates new habitat for river life;
- easier access and egress for boats of various shapes and sizes

MWA also thanks Thomas Lunke and Robin Chappelle, Co-Chairs of the Harlem River Park Task Force, and community leader Richard Toussaint for galvanizing community support to make Harlem River Park happen.

About the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

MWA is dedicated to the transformation of 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. MWA has established a Task Force on Aquatecture to identify waterfront designs that are innovative, accessible and ecologically productive.

###