

New York City Council:

Committee on Cultural Affairs and Libraries and Committee on Parks and Recreation

“Challenges Preserving New York’s Living Collections”

April 23, 2009, 10:00 AM – Council Chambers

Testimony by Margaret Morton, Deputy Commissioner, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

Good morning. I am Margaret Morton, Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), and I am here today to testify with regard to the challenges we face in preserving New York City's living collections. With me here today are... I am also joined by Robert Garafola, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The living collections in our portfolio include zoos, aquaria, botanical gardens, and horticultural organizations that curate and maintain plant and animal collections as the central part of their mission. In addition, there are many other organizations, including the Isamu Noguchi Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Brooklyn Children's Museum, who also care for certain living collections as part of their public service.

DCA is acutely aware of the challenges that face every cultural discipline. In the case of living collections, these include the ongoing need to care for living animals and plants, even when exhibits are closed; overhead and security costs for large areas of outdoor property; seasonal visitation patterns; and heavy dependence on City and State support. These kinds of challenges come into play when organizations have to cut costs, as well as when they are expanding.

In addition to the annual operating, energy and programs funding we provide, DCA works closely with organizations to determine the needs and challenges particular to each group's facility and programs. Through our capital budget, we service the unique physical needs of living collections. Let me offer a few examples of how we are meeting their needs:

- The \$14.1 million DCA-funded Animal Hospital at the New York Aquarium was customized for the unique needs of aquatic animals. The Hospital included fully-quarantined wet and dry holding areas, specialized air filtration, wastewater treatment, and salt and freshwater systems, the likes of which are rarely found in other municipal building projects. We are currently working on a \$17 million electric capacity upgrade for the Aquarium's entire campus, to accommodate future growth and new exhibits, as well as major renovations to the Main Hall.
- The City has made major investments over the years to help organizations with seasonal visitorship build capacity to attract audiences even when the weather turns chilly. For example, we are currently looking forward to the groundbreaking on a 22,000 square foot “green” Visitor Center at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. The City has allocated \$28.1 million for this project, which will help make BBG a year-round destination for orientation, education and discovery. At Wave Hill, we invested \$4.9 million in a Visitor and Horticultural Center to provide a climate controlled orientation point and gift shop for visitors.

- While all areas of our portfolio lead in terms of green technology, organizations with living collections are at the forefront. I encourage you all to visit the Queens Botanical Garden administration building and landscapes, which won the City's first Green Building Design Award in 2004, and was the City's first LEED Platinum facility. This \$24 million project incorporates a planted green roof, stormwater recycling, and composting toilets – sustainable design features that reinforce the Garden's core mission. The Bronx Zoo Lion House, which houses both the new Madagascar exhibit and a catering facility, is the first landmark building in New York City to be LEED certified by the US Green Building Council. I'd like to point out that the Lion House renovation posed some unique design challenges, including the question of, literally, how to keep the hissing cockroaches out of the kitchen!

Every nonprofit organization is feeling the impact of the economic downturn in different ways, but there are some common threads. All of them are seeing reduced funding from both public and private sources. Endowments are down an average of 24%, and almost every CIG has implemented a hiring freeze. Many are saving further on operating costs by implementing staff furloughs, reducing hours open to the public, extending current exhibitions, and scaling back or canceling new exhibits and education programs for next year. Every organization is working hard to make the most of its available resources, and we are committed to providing the maximum strategic and financial support possible, given the City's fiscal realities.

The good news for most of our organizations with living collections is that attendance is up, and at some venues, membership is up, as well. After 9/11, attendance dropped dramatically due to travel restrictions, and it took many groups five years to rebuild audience. This time, while strong attendance hasn't translated to higher earned income (more people are taking advantage of discount and free admission, and concession sales are down), the fact that organizations are sustaining and even growing audience means that they will be well-poised to take advantage of the economic recovery, when it happens.

The Mayor recently announced a sweeping set of initiatives to help stabilize nonprofit organizations during the downturn, including:

- Greater NY, a strategic partnership program that pairs business executives with nonprofit executive directors, in an effort to build stronger, even more effective nonprofits.
- EDC Capital Access Revolving Loan Guaranty Program, which the Commissioner mentioned at last month's hearing. This program provides easier access to nonprofits and small business who need loans to help bridge cash flow.
- Expansion of NYC Returnable Grant Fund by 150% for the next two fiscal years, to help organizations obtain bridge loan financing for City expense contracts.

Earlier this week, Mayor Bloomberg also announced the NYC Service Initiative to answer President Obama's nationwide call to service. This initiative will not only increase volunteer resources for organizations, as needed, but will also raise awareness among New Yorkers about the value of the nonprofit field.

In the meantime, we are continuing and expanding our advocacy on behalf of the field, encouraging New Yorkers to attend cultural events through our online cultural calendar and partnership with NYC and Company. If you have not already, please visit the NYCulture Calendar on our website and nycgo.com, and encourage the nonprofit cultural groups

in your districts to submit their events so that they can be featured. NYC and Company also hosts "CultureSpot" on nycgo.com, which this month features the Cherry Blossom Festival at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. CultureFinder and CultureSpot brochures are also available at Bloomingdale's and the NYC and Company visitor information kiosks.

Finally, speaking of advocacy, I'd like to remind each of you that next Thursday, we celebrate the seventh annual Poem In Your Pocket day, which will give us a chance to promote the numerous spoken word and poetry programs taking place across the five boroughs. DoE is encouraging schools to reach out to their local elected officials that day, and I hope that every one of you will consider reading a poem at a school in your district.

In conclusion, DCA is always here to work with and advocate for our constituents. I would like to thank Chairman Recchia, Chairman Foster, and all the members of these committees for inviting me to testify today. During these times, your strong advocacy and support is even more important. After Deputy Commissioner Garafola's testimony, I'd be delighted to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.



City of New York Parks & Recreation



New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations Committee on Parks & Recreation

Oversight - Challenges Preserving New York's Living Collections

April 23, 2009

Testimony by
Robert Garafola
Deputy Commissioner for Management and Budget

INTRODUCTION

As you might know, Parks & Recreation is the steward of more than 29,000 acres of land — 14 percent of New York City — including more than 5,000 individual properties ranging from Central Park to community gardens and Greenstreets. We operate more than 800 athletic fields and nearly 1,000 playgrounds, 550 tennis courts, 66 public pools, 48 recreational facilities, 17 nature centers, 13 golf courses, and 14 miles of beaches. We care for 1,200 monuments and 22 historic house museums. We look after 600,000 street trees, and two million more in parks. We are New York City's principal providers of recreational and athletic facilities and programs. We are home to free concerts, world-class sports events, and cultural festivals. And, we have three zoos, which are operated by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) under agreement with Parks, of which I'd like to discuss today.

LIVING COLLECTIONS

First, before I discuss our zoos, I'd like to recognize the primary 'living collections' in our parks: our trees and wildlife. Trees are an invaluable part of our natural surroundings. They beautify our streets and provide us with shade and good air. Living in tandem with our trees are countless wildlife species that make their homes in our wonderfully diverse city. But today, I'm going to focus on our three zoos and the collections they tend to.

CENTRAL PARK, QUEENS AND PROSPECT PARK ZOOS

In Fiscal Year 2008, the Central Park, Queens and Prospect Park zoos drew in almost 1.5 million people. This Fiscal Year to date (July 2008 to February 2009), we increased our attendance by 4.5 percent since last year at this time. And just last week, the Central Park Zoo was packed with happy school kids off on spring break. Clearly, New Yorkers value their zoos and Parks is proud to be partnering with the WCS in offering these state-of-the-art facilities to the public.

As you are all aware, Parks, as with most City agencies, has been required to make a number of budget reductions or revenue enhancements over the past few months. In March 2009, for the first time since 2006, we implemented admissions fee increases at the three zoos. The revenue from the fee increases at all three zoos will ensure that – at this time – their financial condition will be sound. As in the past, we remain committed to supporting and enhancing our zoos and living collections.

Additionally, I am pleased to report that, as of right now, the Capital commitment plan for all three zoos will remain at its current level. Currently, Parks has over \$25 million in capital improvements allocated for its zoos. These projects are either in construction, pending registration, or in design and planning.

We are also pleased with the upcoming opening of the snow leopard exhibit in June of this year. We expect this to be a real boost to the already attractive and diverse living collection at the Central Park Zoo.

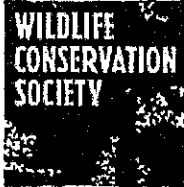
Also, we expect construction to begin in Fiscal Year 2010 on the spectacular jaguar exhibit at the Queens Zoo. In addition, we are in the design phase of our Amur Leopard exhibit at Prospect Park Zoo and hope to go into construction next year.

CONCLUSION

As you can see, these three zoos are dynamic and thriving. They will continue to serve as a place for our children and New Yorkers of all ages to expand their horizons and dream of far-off places. Most importantly, the zoos and animals will teach New Yorkers important lessons on conservation and caring for the environment.

We believe that with our current expense and revenue budget and capital plan, our zoos and their living collections are well situated and cared for in these difficult times.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about our zoos and the special relationship we have with the Wildlife Conservation Society. We look to a successful summer season at our parks and zoos.



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Testimony of John F. Calvelli
Executive Vice President for Public Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society
Before the New York City Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
Intergroup Relations
April 23, 2009

Thank you Chairman Domenic Recchia and the members of the committee for holding this special hearing on the "*Challenges Preserving New York's Living Collections*". The operation of zoos and aquariums is unique and there are two members of this panel that have the expertise to run such world-class facilities. I would like to introduce them to you.

Dr. Bob Cook is Executive Vice President and General Director of Living Institutions of the Wildlife Conservation Society. In this role he coordinates the operations of WCS's five New York based wildlife parks. In addition he oversees the administration of programs in Education, Exhibit Design and Global Health. He served as Chief Veterinarian and Vice President of the Wildlife Health Sciences Division (WHS) for 17 years. Dr. Cook has more than 25 years of experience in zoo and wildlife medicine and it was under his guidance that the Field Veterinary Program was established in 1989 as the first global effort to support the health and conservation of wildlife populations in their native habitats.

Jon Dohlin is Director of the New York Aquarium and has been with WCS since 1997 and appointed Director in January 2008. Both a Biologist and an Architect by training, Dohlin has worked as a Exhibit Designer and Project Manager in EGAD and in Capital Construction. He was involved in the design and planning of many of our award winning exhibits at the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium, including the Congo Gorilla Forest, Alien Stingers, Tiger Mountain, Glovers Reef, and the new Madagascar! exhibit. As Director, Dohlin oversees the care and exhibition of over 12,000 specimens representing 395 species.

Like other cultural centers, our living institutions aim to educate and inspire the public. Even in times of economic hardship our wildlife requires constant intensive care. Living collections throughout the city help breed endangered species, address the impacts of global climate change, educate and inspire thousands of teachers and millions of children.

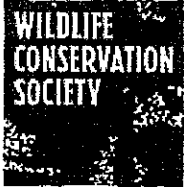
The 114-year-old Bronx Zoo and 113-year-old New York Aquarium are part of the rich history and fabric in New York City and are located in some of the most underserved areas. WCS pumps more than \$400 million into the city economy, we are core to stabilizing our local communities by providing good paying jobs and supporting local businesses and we are the largest youth employer in the Bronx, hiring more than 800 teens each year.

Due to the on-going economic crisis and the continuing fiscal austerity facing New York City, WCS needs to *cut \$15 million by July 1, 2009*. Because we must reduce our payroll by approximately \$10 million, we invited all staff to apply for voluntary retirement or separation package. More than 100 people took advantage of the offer. Due to the success of that program, nearly 60 percent of the reduction has been achieved without a single layoff. Now, we have begun the involuntary reductions to meet the balance of our obligation to assure the long-term financial health of WCS.

In the Mayor's preliminary budget, the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium face a proposed cut of \$1.7 million. Over the last two fiscal years our facilities have lost a total \$3.3 million dollars – a reduction of 33%. According to a 2008 national public opinion survey, 79 percent of Americans believe that zoos and aquariums are good for their local economy, and an impressive 80 percent believe that zoos and aquariums are important enough to local communities to be supported by government funding. We recognize that the city faces challenging fiscal realities and we only ask that the Administration use a scalpel, and not an ax, to make targeted reductions that will allow our institutions to weather the current financial storm. We ask you, the City Council, to continue your support to protect and preserve the environment, education, jobs and ensuring the viability of our tourism industry during your budgetary decision-making process.

I hope you will agree that living institutions play an important and unique role within the cultural sector. We look forward to working with you to protect these vital environmental, educational and cultural institutions.

Thank you.



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Testimony of Jon Dohlin
Director of the New York Aquarium
Wildlife Conservation Society
Before the New York City Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
Intergroup Relations
April 23, 2009

The New York Aquarium needs your continued support.

As a living museum, the New York Aquarium plays a unique role among the city's Cultural Institutions:

- In a world coming to terms with a multitude of environmental problems, in a City that has made resource and energy conservation a cornerstone of policy, in a neighborhood surrounded by the ocean but lacking in green space, the New York Aquarium inspires the next generation of conservationists, scientists, and citizens to take action to protect the natural environment. We welcome over 750,000 visitors annually, and our education and teacher training programs extend our message to [thousands] more... and the children we inspire today will be the environmental stewards of tomorrow.
- Visitors of every age, religion and ethnicity come to Brooklyn's number one tourist destination to marvel at our beautiful animals and powerful exhibits. This visceral experience of nature... the pure unmediated moment of connection with these ambassadors of the wilderness... is available to all regardless of language, culture or educational background. We present an opportunity to find nature in an unrelentingly urban environment, a trip to exotic worlds for the cost of a subway ride, a chance to be educated while being entertained... and we do it all for about the price of a movie. In quality and value we represent the best of New York.

As a living museum, the New York Aquarium faces challenges that are unique among the city's Cultural Institutions:

- We face largely fixed costs. The animals entrusted to our care receive the best in medical and husbandry care, and eat specialized diets that cannot be shortchanged... and the staff attending to these animals cannot simply do more with less and still maintain the proper standards of care.
- Even our infrastructure is critical. The failure of mechanical systems elsewhere represents an inconvenience... but at our facilities these systems are literally life support. The welfare and well-being of our collection relies on the proper

function of pumps, filters, lights, heating, cooling and disinfecting systems. These critical life support systems need skilled staff and constant attention. Our collection relies on us... and we rely on you.

Your support over the years has helped the Wildlife Conservation Society create the world's best urban wildlife parks... and we need that support to continue. The unique challenges that face WCS are greater than ever, and with your help we stand ready to meet them. Thank you.



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Testimony of Robert A. Cook, V.M.D., M.P.A.
Executive Vice President and General Director of Living Institutions
Wildlife Conservation Society
Before the New York City Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup
Relations
April 23, 2009

Thank you Chairman Recchia and the members of the committee for giving us the opportunity to speak with you today.

The Bronx Zoo...
The New York Aquarium...
The Central Park, Queens and Prospect Park Zoos...

The Wildlife Conservation Society manages the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks. Our keepers, aquarists, curators, veterinarians and veterinary technicians care for some 13,000 animals of 1,600 species. We are visited by over 4 million guests per year. Our parks provide green jobs to over 1,000 New York area full-time employees and another 1,000 seasonal employees coming from primarily underserved communities within the City. In an increasingly urbanized world where most people in New York City will never visit the native lands of tigers, gorillas, birds of paradise, walrus or Nile crocodiles - our zoos and aquarium provide a tangible connection with wild nature and by so doing create a respect and appreciation for the environment around us.

The Bronx Zoo is the largest urban zoo in the United States and headquarters to all that we do in the City of New York and around the world. Its 265 acres are home to over 6,000 wild animals in our exhibits nestled quietly into a beautiful and naturally wooded park filled with native plants and animals. A walk through the zoo provides a soothing respite from the frenzied pace of everyday city life. Our new Madagascar exhibit housed in the historic Lion House serves as a state-of-the-art model for immersion exhibitry, excellence in animal care and the application of green technologies. It is anticipated to be the first LEED certified New York City landmark. It won the NY City Green Building Award for design in 2006. Working with the Bronx River Alliance we have taken a leadership role in restoring the Bronx River. The Mitsubishi River Walk takes you along the banks of the river and explains the important role it serves in the local ecology. At Central Park Zoo we will open a fantastic new Snow Leopard Exhibit this June. Next spring we hope to open a new set of aquatic exhibits in the Main Hall of the NY Aquarium and design plans are underway to create a Jaguar Exhibit at the Queens Zoo and thereafter we hope to build an Amur Leopard Exhibit at the Prospect Park Zoo.



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Our scientists and professional staff are recognized nationally and internationally as leaders in the field. They provide unique skills to the City of New York. When a tiger was found to be living in an apartment building in Harlem – we assisted the New York City Police Department in safely removing the tiger and ensuring that no animal or person was harmed. When our local hospitals have a victim of a snake bite they know they can call our herpetologists to help identify the species of snake and if necessary, we can provide supplemental antivenin for the physicians to administer. When an errant coyote was captured in Central Park, it was the Queens Zoo that became his new home.

The wildlife health programs housed in a state of the art 30,000 square foot hospital consist of a team of highly trained veterinary specialists in wildlife medicine and pathology. When a new, mysterious virus was killing crows and people in the City of New York, it was the veterinary pathologists, working with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that made the links which led to the diagnosis of West Nile Virus. When the world was panicked by the specter of Avian Influenza it was our team that developed a global wildlife surveillance strategy that has been implemented around the world....and what we learn over there helps us better prepare at home. The Wildlife Conservation Society and the New York City Department of Health are concerned by the emerging disease threats posed through the illegal importation of wildlife products referred to as bushmeat. WCS was pleased to be invited to participate as a member of the New York City Animal Working Group and to chair the New York Bushmeat Trade Health Committee. This is a city, state and federal multi-agency group tackling issues of regulations, enforcement, health and safety threats to New York City posed by the illegal importation of wildlife products.

We provide environmental science education to more than 50,000 New York City school children each year. Overall some 550,000 students from public schools, camp and youth groups visit the Aquarium and Bronx Zoo annually and this number includes free admission to all New York City school children. Each year we train some 2,000 public school teachers from kindergarten through twelfth grade. We have on-line continuing education programs for teachers both in New York and around the world and distance learning that reaches some 9,000 students. Last year we began a partnership with Fordham University to offer a graduate level master degree in environmental science education. And in September 2007 WCS partnered with the Urban Assembly and the New York City Department of Education to open the School for Wildlife Conservation. It is a public school for grades 6-12 focused on environmental science and conservation issues in an underserved community just minutes from the Bronx Zoo which the students use as a living classroom. In Brooklyn we have an equally important engagement with the Rachel Carson School for Coastal Studies.



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The Living Institutions of the Wildlife Conservation Society are a unique treasure for the city of New York. Truly every dollar invested returns many fold, not only in monetary ways but more importantly to the health, security and vibrancy of the City.

Thank you.

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I love the New York Aquarium. It is an important part of my life. ~~can~~ Since the first time I entered the ~~New York~~ Aquarium, I felt at ease with my surroundings. ~~It~~ offers a place, not just for me, but for millions of people to view aquatic animals that are non-natives to the state. The setting is a caring place for the animals whose setup is made to allow the tourist to see the animals in a different light. It is a beautiful place.

Another reason the NYA is an important part of my life is because my high school, Rachel Carson HS for Coastal Studies, has a close partnership with its faculty. ~~we~~ AS students, we are used to field trips that provide us with a behind-the-scenes and hands on experience that few high school students are able to enjoy the way we have. The NYA offers education, fun events and a sanctuary.

~~It is my love for nature sciences and especially the water that motivates me to~~

It is my love for the marine environment and earth, and my close everyday contact that motivated me to advocate for against the budget cuts. I believe that as humans, we have so much energy and power in numbers to be able to change something from bad to great for us and the environment. without it we would not live adequately. A small group of students and I received petition packets before the winter break to ~~sign~~ have fill out with signatures

caused more people to be aware of the situation and remember Friends from The School supported us and gave us props.

I can not believe we have accomplished all together to receive 100% of the state level funding back into the aquarium. I stayed hopeful, and ~~opt~~ enthusiastic, and optimistic through the whole case and I continue to do so. We will continue to do what we have done until we receive the recognition to our cause: NYA is too precious to not fund.

I now believe ~~that~~ ~~what~~ so much that I can influence a change in our government. I believe I can come to you today and show you that the NYA is not a speck of dirt on your clothes but a beautiful, colorful design on your wall. We are half way to ~~so~~ ~~achieving~~ finishing and full funding and having our voice heard loud and clear.

Christopher Baldwin

Why the NY aquarium is important to me:

The aquarium is very important to me. I would like to be in the marine biology field. The aquarium is the only place in Brooklyn that houses various aquatic animals. From fish to jellyfish and from otters to walruses, even a shark tank. The aquarium has a whole spectrum of things for me and the people in the community to learn about aquatic life. It's been one of my favorite places to go ever since I was little. I want to be able to visit the NY aquarium when I get older and I want to bring my future kids there too.

Why conservation efforts are important to them.

Conservation of aquarium or aquatic life?

Grassroots and how I felt.

It feels really good to do my part to help save these beautiful places. Instead of just sitting around just hoping for things to make a turn for the better I got into the effort and did my part to help. Showing that even if you try you can achieve your goal.

What I actually did:

I tried my best to help motivate the cause the best way I can. I got my family, friends, and people around my neighborhood to sign the petition to save the aquarium, zoo, and garden. I also helped get the boardwalk petition started. The only thing I feel bad about is the fact that I couldn't be there for the petition signing as I was sick that day. I was also part of the small group of students from Rachel Carson high school to go to the governors' office.

Eagerness to mobilize to CITY level:

I'm very excited that I was able to help in some way to get the 100% funding reinstatement. Now I am even more eager to mobilize on the city level and do everything I can to protect these beautiful places.

Hello my name is Fred Milus. My peers at Rachel Carson and I have been very concerned about the new budget cuts. Our concerns have led to us signing hundreds of petitions and even going to the governor's office. Our efforts have fortunately caused a positive reaction out of the governor and will hopefully go further than that. We plan on doing the same thing on a city level as well. The New York Aquarium, Bronx Zoo and Botanical Garden all play an important role in the lives of many children such as I. Conserving these institutions are critical for the environment and the world. We have dedicated countless hours during and after school and also on Saturdays to ensure that that my childhood memories don't die and the future generations can create their own memories. I remember as a child going on school trips to the zoo and botanical garden. These places have exposed me to nature and have shown me how beautiful the world can be if we treat it right. After I found out that these places might close down, it almost broke my heart. That is why I am proud to be a part of this movement and will continue to support it with all my heart.

**Wave Hill testimony to the New York City Council Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations and
Committee on Parks & Recreation**

**Oversight Hearing:
Challenges Preserving New York's Living Collections
Thursday, April 23, 2009**

Good Morning, I'm Kathryn Heintz, Development Director of Wave Hill, the beautiful 28-acre public garden and cultural center located in the northwest corner of the Bronx. With cultivated gardens, an urban woodland, conservatory, historic houses and spectacular Hudson River vistas, we are the City's public, private oasis.

On behalf of the many members, visitors and staff of Wave Hill, thank you for welcoming us this morning. We have had the pleasure of meeting with many of you individually and it is an honor to be able to address you in Committee.

Our great City's extraordinary living collections—its zoos, botanical gardens and public parks—are world renowned. They are a reason people come to visit and a reason people stay here to live. They factor in our quality of life and satisfaction. They provide open-air environments for peace, solitude and inspiration as well as for recreation and relaxation. Most important, New York City's green spaces allow everyone—all ages and all walks of life—to connect with the natural world. And connecting to nature is a basic human need.

Our message this morning is a simple one. We need and want you to know how devastating additional cuts in City funding in 2010 will be to our organizations, to the New York City community and to cultural tourism. We recognize that every organization and agency needs to work with realistic cuts in operations. However, we believe that the cuts made to the cultural institutions—and to living collections in particular—have been disproportionate and deeper than our fair share. We must maintain a baseline level of support to remain open and operating for the public benefit.

Of the more than 130,000 visitors that Wave Hill serves annually, 50% are Bronx residents. Our school partnerships program focuses on 10 Bronx elementary schools. We served close to 25,000 students and family members this past year, in addition to helping train over 430 teachers. We do this in an environment of serenity and beauty that has provided solace during this tumultuous time in our economic lives. In short, Wave Hill enriches the lives of



all who visit its grounds and attend its programs. We, and all my colleagues here, contribute to why living in New York City is so great.

What do we need to do now to strengthen our institution? We must be more relevant than ever to our visitors and our community at large. We at Wave Hill are taking this challenge to heart and making sure that we continue to play a vital role in our community. More people than ever are visiting Wave Hill. They come because we are a beautiful outdoor place to be, because we're an affordable venue, and because our excellent activities and programs are free or very low cost.

This fiscal year, Wave Hill saw cuts in city and state funding of 24% as well as a decline in private revenue of 18%. As a result, we furloughed all full-time staff for 10 days; reduced arts and education programming by 14%; eliminated summer evening hours; and reduced the budget overall by \$800,000 mid-year. We are endeavoring to contract our operations prudently with as little impact on the public as possible, but I can tell you that we're developing a budget for 2010 that is yet 20% lower. Clearly, we are doing our part to reduce expenses and maximize resources.

A further cut of 20% to CIG's in city funding next year will mean a damaging budget reduction of \$182,000 to Wave Hill—that is 5 full-time jobs eliminated on July 1st and if the overall financial climate does not improve, there will be 3 more staff positions cut by December 2009. This is 25% of the Wave Hill full-time workforce of which 60% are Bronx residents. Programming will be scaled back so as to preserve our core mission and remain open to the public, but free days and our low admission price will have to be re-evaluated.

As municipal representatives and stewards of New York City ~~we are asking you to~~ fight for us in the City Council. I believe with you as our champions, we can not only persevere but become stronger institutions. Leave no New Yorker, no New York City child and no New York City tourist indoors!

Thank you.



BROOKLYN
BOTANIC
GARDEN

Scot Medbury
President

“Challenges of Preserving New York’s Living Collections”

NYC Council Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee

The Honorable Domenic M. Recchia, Jr., Chairman

April 23, 2009

Good morning, my name is Scot Medbury and I have the honor and privilege of serving as Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s sixth president in its one-hundred years of service to the City of New York. Thank you, Chairman Domenic Recchia, for holding this hearing and for your Council Resolution supporting living collections during the especially challenging NY State budget negotiations. On behalf of the Garden’s trustees, talented staff and more than 600 volunteers, I am very pleased to offer the following testimony on the challenges of preserving living collections, a subject very close and dear to all of us at the Botanic Garden.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden is of course an essential natural sanctuary and environmental-education center in New York City, with programs that welcome nearly 750,000 visitors and serve 150,000 schoolchildren each year. Our leadership role as the “alpha chapter” among North American botanic gardens for youth gardening and community horticulture is well recognized internationally, and is reflected two recent handbooks on these topics published by the Garden, “*Gardening with Children*,” and “*Community Gardening*”, which I am pleased to share with you.

The beauty of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and its role in inspiring generations of New Yorkers to become more environmentally literate stewards of the Earth is widely celebrated. Less well understood is the fundamental role played by the Garden’s diverse living collections of plants. Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s gorgeous, human-scaled garden spaces are comprised of plant collections that are every bit as complex as the more static object collections curated at art or natural-history museums. It may be a novel idea for some people to think of a garden as a living museum, but that is most certainly what Brooklyn Botanic Garden is, as we are involved daily in such museological activities of tracking the source, identity, condition, and treatment of more than 12,000 kinds of plants. To that list I would add that our science department tracks something called phenology, which concerns such things as the timing of flowering and fruiting – data that over time has provided clear evidence of global warming.

Before me is a plant specimen that is perhaps most emblematic of the challenges of preserving living collections: one of 500 bonsai we care for at Brooklyn Botanic Garden on behalf of all New Yorkers. BBG's bonsai collection is the largest and oldest public collection in North America, and includes specimens that are nearly 400 years old. This Siberian elm is relatively young - having been only in training at the Garden for fifty years - but still requires the same consistent, expert care as all the specimens in the bonsai collection. Its finicky preferences for light, temperature, moisture, humidity, airflow, and fertility must be carefully gauged and provided every single day by a curator who has apprenticed rigorously to the complexities of bonsai care. Caring for venerable and venerated plant collections like BBG's bonsai collection is obviously not mere yard work, but involves collections-maintenance and -preservation activities every bit as challenging as those involved in preserving objects from antiquity.

I often say that you cannot step in the same garden twice, for gardens and the plants in them are always changing and therefore always different. As anyone who has inadvertently dispatched a houseplant knows well, plants need the same kind of constant, consistent, and sensitive care that animals and people require.

These are very challenging times, we will all agree, but for those of us charged with caring for living collections there is very little discretion as to what we will or won't do. My colleagues and I are deeply committed to expertly preserving our portion of New York City's valuable living heritage, but we are increasingly challenged in this effort by the proposed municipal funding reductions for FY10, which come on top of deep cuts already instituted this year.

This year we have already been forced to reduce the Garden's staff by 10% through layoffs and attrition, and have instituted an institution-wide salary cut and sharply reduced a broad range of other expenses. Any further cut to our collections-care budget will seriously compromise the health and integrity of the Garden's living collections and compromise the environmental literacy work that is so crucial to our future.

I thank you for the opportunity to highlight the importance of protecting and look forward to working with the New York City Council to preserve New York's essential living collections.

Thank you.

Scot Medbury, President
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TESTIMONY OF THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
Cultural Affairs, Libraries &
International Intergroup Relations Committee

Oversight Hearing Topic - "*Challenges Preserving New York's Living Collections*"
April 23, 2009
10:00am

Good morning, my name is Francisca Coelho, *Vivian and Edward Merrin* Associate Vice President for Glasshouses and Exhibitions. I am pleased to offer testimony today on the "*Challenges Preserving New York's Living Collections*." Thank you Chairman Domenic M. Recchia, Jr. and Council Member James Vacca from the Bronx, along with your colleagues on this committee, for holding this hearing and for affording us the opportunity to testify.

My institution, The New York Botanical Garden, is one of the greatest botanical gardens in the world and the largest in any city in the United States, distinguished by the beauty of its diverse landscape and extensive collections and gardens, as well as by the scope and excellence of its programs in horticulture, education, and science.

The Garden maintains our living collections, not only for their beauty and their appeal to visitors from both near and far, but for their value to teach and inspire. These "teaching collections" are the best way to convey the importance of conservation, biology, ecology, gardening and nature.

In my capacity at the Garden, I am responsible for curating, developing and maintaining collections of palms, orchids, ferns, cycads and other tropical plants in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory that have been assembled over more than a century to serve the Garden's research and education programs. These collections consist of over 6,000 different types of plants—many of them rare and endangered and all of them requiring specialized care.

The Enid A. Haupt Conservatory was constructed between 1899 -1902 – it is a New York City Landmark and offers unparalleled opportunities to experience the beauty of nature and to discover the ecology and diversity of tropical plants. A staff of 8 is dedicated to just the Conservatory, to care for these plants and maintain the historic structure that houses them. Without this skilled staff we simply could not meet our stewardship responsibilities.

Seven days a week and 365 days a year the plants in the collection need to be watered, pruned, staked, fed, or tended in some way. Some of these plants were grown from seeds collected in the wild by Garden scientists working to document and preserve biodiversity in the Amazon basin, the cloud forests of Ecuador, and other locations. They are irreplaceable and require

constant care, even in times of economic hardship. It takes more than a few “green thumbs” to maintain one of the greatest collections in the world.

Of course, the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory is only 1 acre—the plant collections that spread across the Garden’s remaining 249 acres also need constant attention from skilled horticulturists in order to effectively serve the Garden’s mission as a museum of plants. These outdoor collections feature thousands of trees a century old or older, native wildflowers, alpine plants, heirloom roses, and countless other historic and irreplaceable plants that are studied by students of all ages and appreciated by hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world. Exposed to drought, deluge, pests and diseases, and a variety of environmental stresses inherent in the Garden’s urban location, these plants depend on regular professional maintenance for their survival.

I can tell you first-hand that our living collections require constant and continuous skilled care that cannot be deferred. We are an institution of living plants, and not the “garden variety” type on sale in plastic trays by the dozen at the Home Depot. Our collections are just that – an array of species found and collected from around the world from places that most of us will never visit. It is not an easy or inexpensive task to recreate a breath-taking Caribbean tropical paradise in the middle of a New York winter. No wonder our visitation is up!

As a protector and advocate for plant life, the Garden is at the forefront of sustainability issues, including understanding and documenting climate change, promoting environmental conservation, and identifying and mitigating the spread of invasive species and the decline of endangered species. We are a leader in “hands-on” plant science education for students of all ages. Over the years we have educated and inspired thousands of teachers and millions of children, growing new generations of conservation stewards and motivating them to pursue the new “green” jobs of tomorrow. The Garden contributes to the public good and the quality of human life through plant science and education, around the world and at home in the Bronx.

We bring the native plant life associated with cultures from around the world here to the Bronx. Children can experience the far away gardens of their parents and grandparents, a small piece of their heritage right here at home. I myself grew up on the island of Trinidad where I discovered my love for growing plants especially edible plants as my father loved to garden. I remember getting extremely excited as I dug for sweet potatoes or hunted every morning for fallen avocados in my backyard. This summer I will be installing an Edible Garden exhibit using tropical plants from throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. Families in the Bronx and surrounding areas will have a wonderful opportunity to see and learn about the plants that produce their food - fruits and vegetables that they eat daily but often buy in supermarkets.

The Garden, like many institutions across the City, is forced to face some challenging fiscal realities. The cuts we have experienced in municipal and philanthropic support have already required us to cut programs, institute a hiring freeze and eliminate dozens of staff positions. The combined effect is 51 job opportunities lost. On top of this, it was recently announced that

all employees at the Garden would be required to take one week of unpaid leave. While funding decreases from public and private sources, our responsibilities to our living collections remain constant.

It is the world-class nature of our offerings that make the City's cultural institutions world-class organizations. Together we are the foundation of what makes New York a world-class city to be proud of. Like the magnificent living collections in the Garden's Conservatory, we must preserve and protect what makes "us" a vibrant place to learn, live and visit. The City's funding support for cultural institutions is more important than ever. We are asking that the City maintain adequate funding support of our City-owned facilities as has been budgeted in years past.

It is my fear, and the fear of my colleagues at The New York Botanical Garden, that there is nowhere else to cut. The Garden, holding true to its mission, has fought hard to hold our living collections harmless from the harsh realities of this economic climate. Much like our greenhouses, we have "sheltered" our precious and fragile specimens thus far. The cuts that we have sustained are hindering our ability to stage exhibits and the public access to our collections we would like to provide. The need for continued cuts at the Garden will come at the expense of my staff and my work.

I hope you will agree that living museums play an important and unique role in the education of our youth and the health of New York City's environment and economy. We look forward to working with you to protect these vital resources.

Thank you.

Francisca Coelho

Vivian and Edward Merrin Associate Vice President for Glasshouses and Exhibitions
The New York Botanical Garden

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GARDEN FACT SHEET

The Garden's Economic Challenges

- ❖ The economic downturn has resulted in double digit reduction in corporate and foundation support, and the value of our endowment which is down like every other fund that is invested in Wall Street.
- ❖ Despite increases in visitation, earned income will fall short of budget by 22%. While visitors are willing to buy show tickets, they are spending less while they are here. Sales in our gift shop, food cafe, etc. are down significantly.
- ❖ Budget reduction – The Garden's FY09 \$64 million budget has been cut more than \$6 million and it will be difficult to keep it flat in FY10, amounting to a two-year \$12 million cut in expenses. These cuts have had the greatest negative impact on Children's Education, Summer Programming, Public Relations and Marketing, Retail, and E-Commerce.

Impacts of Cuts

- ❖ CIGs are badly hurt by losses in operating support from a variety of sources. The Garden has had to close a \$7.6 million budget gap in FY09 and is projecting a larger gap in FY10.
- ❖ In view of recent cuts the Garden has put in effect a 10% reduction in our workforce through layoffs and hiring freezes. The result is a loss of 50 positions. Non-union salaries are frozen and a one week furlough of all Garden staff is planned this summer.
- ❖ DCA has proposed to implement the proposed PEGs by instituting a 20% cut in funding for FY10 (before the recently announced 4% PEG) in addition to the 11% cut in FY09. Over two years that is a 30% loss of City funding.
- ❖ For FY10 the City will not be providing any new funding for Bronx-Green Up through the Sanitation Department.

Other Garden Facts

- ❖ In a single year, our website receives 19 million hits.
- ❖ In support of the Parks Department's ambitious MillionTreesNYC program, between March 2008 and June 2009 the Garden will have planted more than 3,000 new trees in its native Forest, historic living collections, and community gardens in the Bronx.
- ❖ The Garden partners with the New York City Parks and Recreation Department to train existing Parks Foresters in Urban Tree Care, and to train the next generation of horticulturists in the Parks Opportunity Program.
- ❖ Bronx Green-Up – Is a community outreach program of The New York Botanical Garden, which provides horticultural advice, technical assistance, and training to community gardens interested in improving urban neighborhoods in the Bronx through greening projects. There is more demand than ever before from people wanting to learn vegetable gardening.
- ❖ Orchid Giveaway – Each year at the close of the Orchid Show the Garden donates hundreds of these beautiful plants to local nursing homes, schools, and hospitals.
- ❖ The Garden services are particularly important to the local community as we are located in an economically distressed census tract.

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/23/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Francisca Coelho, Assistant VP for

Address: Glasshouse + Exhibiter

I represent: The New York Botanical Garden

Address: Bronx NY

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Name: Kathryn Heintz

Address: 5460 Valles Ave Bronx NY 10471

I represent: Wave Hill

Address: 675 West 252nd St Bronx NY
10471

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Name: Daniela Saut Abdibourah

Address: 350 5th Ave 10th fl NYC 10001

I represent: Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Address: 1000 Washington Avenue

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Name: Randall Bourgeoischeidt

Address: 127 W. 70 St

I represent: Alliance for the Arts

Address: 330 W. 43rd St 10036

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(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Rachel Carson School High School for Coastal Studies

Address: _____

I represent: Christopher Baldwin, Fred Mikas, Emilia Jerez

Address: _____

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(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Deputy Commissioner Robert Garafola

Address: 830 Fifth Ave NY NY 10065

I represent: NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

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(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Margaret Norton

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: John Calvelli, Jon Dohlin, Robert Cook

Address: Wild Bronx, Bklyn, Queens, Manhattan

I represent: Wildlife Conservation Society - Bronx Zoo,

Address: NY Aquarium, Prospect Park Zoo, Queens Zoo,
Central Park Zoo

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