

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 11, 2017

Eileen Murphy,
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 12233-0001

Dear Ms. Murphy,

We write to urge you to designate the Ridgewood Reservoir as a wetland- thereby granting the reservoir protection from development as provided by the Freshwater Wetlands Act. This environmental landmark, which straddles parts of Brooklyn and Queens, is not only an important example of 19th century urban infrastructure, but a unique ecological environment that deserves the protections afforded by wetland designation.

The Ridgewood Reservoir, built between 1856 and 1858, is the last remaining piece of the water supply system of the City of Brooklyn. It was an engineering marvel at the time, and continues to be an asset to Highland Park - it helps provides flood protection by temporarily holding water and slowing storm water runoff. The reservoir also offers invaluable insight into the environmental history of Brooklyn, Queens and Nassau County.

Since being decommissioned in 1989, the site has become a historical and environmental landmark and has been described as, "a beautiful fairytale forest in the middle of the city" by ecological professionals . The three reservoir basins have evolved into distinct ecological environments, from woodlands to wetlands. The special wetland conditions provide unique habitat for species that cannot survive elsewhere. Migratory birds depend on wetlands, and many endangered and threatened animal species require wetlands during part of their life cycle. It is home to a broad diversity of plants, over 180 species of insects, reptiles, and animals including 148 species of birds. Other mammals and reptiles found in the reservoir include opossum, raccoon, squirrels, voles, snapping turtles, garter snakes, and frogs. The reservoir's abundance of plant life includes Grey Birch trees, mosses, sedges and grasses as well as Poplar and Willow trees. Also, pools of standing water have resulted in the growth of wetland plants- some of which are listed on the Threatened and Endangered lists.

This evolution is unique in the city and affords an unequalled opportunity to study nature. Today, local schools organize trail walk educational tours of the reservoir, teaching students about the rare flora and fauna the wetland supports. With a newfound appreciation for this unique habitat, students have become some of the most vocal advocates for its protection.

Additionally, the 160-year-old, 50 acre reservoir is the last vestige of Brooklyn's historic waterworks. It is imperative to retain Brooklyn's natural beauty, which is why wetland designation for the Ridgewood Reservoir is a prudent decision. In short, this unique part of our city must be preserved and ensuring the sanctity of beautiful ecological marvels must be a top priority given the Trump Administrations' lack of concern for environmental safety

As you know, community leaders, environmental organizations, and elected officials have worked together since 2009 in an effort to preserve the reservoir by attaining wetland designation. Residents and local environmental activists filed an application for wetlands designation with your organization in 2010- yet only in the last two weeks has the regional supervisor finally conducted a field survey at the reservoir; then stating the reservoir will be revisited in July before releasing findings in the fall. While we are happy to see progress is being made, the wetlands designation for the Ridgewood Reservoir has spanned over 7 years. We hope that this lengthy ordeal can be expedited, and that your organization recognizes the distinct and unique value of the Ridgewood Reservoir.

We strongly believe the Ridgewood Reservoir merits said wetland designation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for its urban, engineering and environmental significance. We respectfully urge you to exercise your authority and render this designation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nydia M. Velazquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nydia" being the most prominent.

Nydia M. Velazquez
Member of Congress

cc:

NYC H2O

Queens Borough Parks Commissioner Dotty Lewandowski

Liam Kavanagh, Deputy Parks Commissioner

Steve Zahn, Acting Director NY State DEC Region 2

Ken Scarletelli, Natural Resource Manager for NY State DEC Region 2;

Salema Davis, CB5 Brooklyn Parks Committee Chairwoman



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CATHERINE NOLAN
37th Assembly District
Queens County

February 28, 2018

Basil Seggos, Commissioner
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

Re: Support for Wetland Designation
Ridgewood Reservoir

Dear Commissioner Seggos:

Please accept my official public comments in regard to my support for designating the Ridgewood Reservoir as a class 1 freshwater wetland. As you know, I have had the privilege of being an advocate for the preservation of the Ridgewood Reservoir. In 2014, I along with other elected officials sent a letter to Governor Cuomo (enclosed) expressing concern of the proposed plan by the NYC Parks Department to breach the berms of the Ridgewood Reservoir. In response, your agency changed the designation, which saved over \$6 million dollars and most importantly restarted the wetland study.

As you know, the Ridgewood Reservoir is truly a unique site which consists of natural and largely undisturbed habitats for many species of animals. There are 8 unique ecological zones which encompass 156 bird species and 175 species of plants including 3 that are endangered in New York State. Its cultural significance was recently underscored when the Reservoir was added to the State and National Historic Registers through the efforts of the many civic organizations including Queens Community Board 5.

I support and strongly endorse your agency's formal determination to map all three basins at the Ridgewood Reservoir as Class 1 freshwater wetlands. This will ensure that the reservoir is preserved for future generations. I want to thank you and Governor Cuomo for your leadership in this important environmental initiative. It is also important to acknowledge the wonderful work of community groups and not for profit advocates like Community Board 5, H2O, and many other residents who supported this policy.

Sincerely,

Catherine Nolan

cc: Ken Scariatelli, Region 2 Office, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Gary Giordano, District Manager, Queens Community Board 5
Paul Kerzner, Ridgewood Property Owners Civic Association
Linda Monte, President, Ridgewood Historical Society
Matthew Molina, NYC H2O

enc/da



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ERIC L. ADAMS
President

March 19, 2018

Kenneth Scarlatelli
Natural Resource Supervisor
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
47-40 21st Street
Long Island City, NY 11101

Re: Letter from Borough President Adams in support of mapping Ridgewood Reservoir's three basins as Class 1 freshwater wetlands

Dear Supervisor Scarlatelli:

The Ridgewood Reservoir, a landmark in engineering history and one of the most important examples of 19th century urban infrastructure in the City of New York, is the last remaining remnant of the City of Brooklyn's water supply system, and protecting it, along with all of our freshwater wetland ecosystems is a top priority of mine. That is why I support a formal determination to map Ridgewood Reservoir's three basins as Class 1 freshwater wetlands.

When the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) drafted an application for Critical Environmental Area designation last year, the wetland in Basin 3 was omitted from the mapping. Ridgewood Reservoir community supporters argued for a delay in submitting the application pending the New York City Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)'s wetland determination, the outcome of which will affect protection of Basin 3 as a wetland, as well as also extend protections offered by Critical Environmental Area designation.

The Ridgewood Reservoir is an ecological and cultural wonder — recently underscored, when it was added to the State and National Historic Registers through the efforts of the educational not-for-profit NYC H2O — and one of the many reasons why Brooklyn is a great place to live and work. Located between the Jackie Robinson Parkway and Brooklyn's Cypress Hills neighborhood on the Brooklyn-Queens border, Ridgewood Reservoir offers a glimpse into the environmental history of Brooklyn, Queens, and Nassau County, and, as such, is invaluable. Within its three basins are eight unique ecological zones, and its flora and fauna encompass 156 bird species and 175 species of plants including three that are endangered in New York State. Proximal to Jamaica Bay, many of Ridgewood's avian species migrate on the Atlantic Flyway and depend on the availability of the fresh water from the pond's middle basin and surrounding forest and wetlands.

DEC Natural Resource Supervisor Kenneth Scarlatelli

March 19, 2018

Re: Letter from Borough President Adams in support of mapping Ridgewood Reservoir's three basins as Class 1 freshwater wetlands

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With the wetland mapping and Critical Environmental Area designation, both of which NYC Parks now seems to support, success in the fight to ensure long-term protection for Ridgewood Reservoir will have been achieved.

I hope you will consider mapping Ridgewood Reservoir's three basins as Class 1 freshwater wetlands so the development of Ridgewood Reservoir as a protected community resource that can serve as an education resource, historic site, and nature preserve can be pursued.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric L. Adams", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric L. Adams
Brooklyn Borough President

ELA/es

MELINDA KATZ
PRESIDENT



(718) 286-3000
www.queensbp.org
info@queensnp.org

CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS
120-55 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11424

March 20, 2018

Honorable Basil Seggos
Commissioner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12223

Re: Ridgewood Reservoir

Dear Commissioner Seggos:

I am writing this letter in support of a formal determination to map all three basins at The Ridgewood Reservoir as Class 1 freshwater wetlands. The Reservoir is an ecological and cultural treasure for our community.

Its importance is underscored by its proximity to Jamaica Bay since many avian species migrate here and depend on the availability of freshwater along their route. Its unique cultural significance was recently underscored, when the Reservoir was added to the State and national Historic registers through the efforts of the educational not-for-profit NYCH2O.

With the wetland mapping and critical environmental area designation the real work of developing Ridgewood Reservoir as a protected community resource can begin.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melinda Katz", written over a horizontal line.

Melinda Katz
President
Borough of Queens

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244 UNION AVE
BROOKLYN, NY 11211
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ANTONIO REYNOSO

COUNCIL MEMBER, 34th DISTRICT, BROOKLYN & QUEENS

March 29, 2018

Basil Seggos
Commissioner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 122333-4500

Dear Commissioner Seggos,

I strongly support a formal determination to map all three basins at Ridgewood Reservoir as Class 1 freshwater wetlands. The Reservoir is an ecological and cultural treasure for our community. There are 8 unique ecological zones within its three basins. Its flora and fauna encompass 156 bird species and 175 species of plants including 3 that are endangered in New York State. Its importance is underscored by its proximity to Jamaica Bay since many of those avian species migrate on the Atlantic Flyway and depend on the availability of freshwater from the pond in the middle basin and surrounding forest and wetlands.

Its unique cultural significance was recently underscored, when the Reservoir was added to the State and National Historic Registers through the efforts of the educational not-for-profit NYC H2O.

Last year, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR) drafted an application for Critical Environmental Area designation. The wetland in Basin 3 was omitted from the mapping. The community successfully argued for a delay in submitting the application pending DEC wetland determination. This determination will affect protection of Basin 3 as a wetland, and will also extend protections offered by Critical Environmental Area designation.

With the wetland mapping and Critical Environmental Area designation, NYCDPR and NYC H2O can begin the real work of developing Ridgewood Reservoir as a protected community resource that can serve as a nature preserve, historic site, and educational resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonio Reynoso".

Antonio Reynoso
Council Member, 34th District