



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

New Yorkers for Parks: James Yolles: 202-997-4559; jyolles@ny4p.org

Council Member Lander: Alex Moore: 718-499-1090; amoore@council.nyc.gov

Council Member Mark-Viverito: Joe Taranto: 917-535-5531; jtaranto@council.nyc.gov

New Yorkers for Parks, Council Members Lander, Mark-Viverito and Oddo to Decry Parks Department Budget Cuts

*-A Call for Worker Retention, Increased Maintenance Funding-
-Park Advocates from All Boroughs Will Join Event on Steps of City Hall-*

June 4, 2012 (New York, NY) – New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P), the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods, will join a bipartisan group of New York City Council Members and park advocates from across the city at City Hall to call on the Council and Bloomberg administration to work together to restore \$33.4 million to the Parks Department’s expense budget, which would provide funding for:

- Up to 800 threatened Job Training Participant maintenance positions;
- Summer seasonal staff, including Playground Associates;
- Four public pools that are slated to remain closed for the summer: Wagner (Manhattan), Howard (Brooklyn), Fort Totten (Queens) and Faber (Staten Island); and
- Tree pruning and stump removal, which have been slashed by 80 percent since 2008.

The Department of Parks and Recreation faces a cumulative cut to its expense budget of \$62 million – almost 17 percent – since 2008. The majority of that money is dedicated to maintenance and operations of the city’s vast network of 2,100 parks.

“The good news is we are experiencing an unprecedented increase in parkland – but at the same time, the Parks Department’s overall maintenance and operations budget has been drastically cut every year since 2008,” said Holly Leicht, Executive Director of NY4P. “Park maintenance, particularly for trees, is not optional. Unmaintained trees create dangerous conditions, and disinvestment in existing parks signals disinvestment in our city’s economic future. If City Hall and the Council do not restore critical funding to the Parks Department for maintenance jobs and tree care, New Yorkers will increasingly see first-hand the painful costs of an underfunded park system.”

"New York City's 2,100 parks are an irreplaceable treasure, providing places for New Yorkers to play, relax, run, bike, picnic, perform, gather and connect to nature. If we care about them – and I know we do – we cannot continue to cut essential funding," said City Council Member Brad Lander. "With the cuts in the proposed budget added to those of recent years, our parks are facing a \$62 million, 17 percent cuts, mostly to the core maintenance. As a result, despite the consistent hard work of our Parks Department personnel, the overall condition of our parks has dropped from an 'A' to a 'B' in recent years, according to the Mayor's Management Report. We must restore the funding needed to keep our beloved parks clean, safe, and healthy."

"Over the last four years, the Parks Department budget has been steadily cut and if Mayor Bloomberg's budget proposal goes into effect, the Parks Department will have lost 3,000 workers who maintain our parks and serve our communities, compared to 2008," said City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation Chair Melissa Mark-Viverito. "Another nearly 1,500 Job Training Participant slots, the primary maintenance workers for our parks, will disappear. The JTP program is crucial to help people escape poverty by learning job skills while maintaining our parks. Four public pools, including the Wagner pool, in my district, will remain closed, depriving communities of vital recreational facilities during the summer months. As we get into a hot, humid summer, New Yorkers are going to be flocking to our parks and so I call on Mayor Bloomberg to restore \$33 million of funding so that all New Yorkers can take full advantage of our parks."

"The City of New York cannot have a 'Borough of Parks' that each year becomes less and less a borough of Parks maintenance," said City Council Minority Leader James Oddo. "And the City of New York cannot continue to see its overall spending increase each year, yet allow vital agencies to see fewer tax dollars. The tall, uncut grass in some City parks on Staten Island and the other boroughs is a symptom of a larger, more complex *fiscal* problem. Until we are willing to address this challenge, core services such as keeping city parks in a good state of repair will grow more difficult and less likely with each passing spring."

In its comparison between the proposed FY 2013 budget and the FY 2008 adopted budget, NY4P also identified the following reductions:

- \$64.4 million – or 23 percent – in maintenance and operations funding;
- 3,000 full-time staff – almost 40 percent;
- 1,435 Job Training Participants (JTPs) – 62 percent – who comprise the bulk of DPR's maintenance crews;
- \$3.3 million – or 70 percent – for tree pruning; and
- \$2.3 million for stump removal, which has been unfunded since FY10.

The City has committed generous capital funds to acquiring and building new parks, but vastly insufficient funds to taking care of our 2,100 existing parks. Major investments of capital funding do not substitute for maintenance dollars; in fact, they make the need for maintenance money even greater. Now is the time to reverse this unacceptable trend.

###