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PARK OVER PLASTIC: HUDSON RIVER PARK LAUNCHES PLASTICS REDUCTION PROGRAM

Together with tenants, Hudson River Park aims to be the first park in New York City to significantly reduce single-use plastics

POP will help preserve the long-term health of the Hudson River and local wildlife

NEW YORK—Hudson River Park (HRPK) today announced a new initiative, Park Over Plastic (POP), to critically reduce plastic pollution in the 550-acre park and educate New Yorkers on the impacts of plastic in the Park’s sanctuary waters. As a waterfront park, HRPK sees firsthand the harm that plastics have on the river and wildlife. With this initiative, Hudson River Park aims to become a local leader in single-use plastic reduction and create a model for parks across the country working towards plastic-free goals.

“Chronic over-reliance on plastic is overwhelming our planet and harming the health of our waterways – and we see the impact right here in Hudson River Park,” **said Madelyn Wils, President and CEO of the Hudson River Park Trust.** “Last summer alone, we led the cleanup of close to 1000 pounds of plastic debris from our shoreline. That is why we are taking action and launching Park Over Plastic to significantly reduce single-use plastics in the Park and educate New Yorkers on the dangers of plastic pollution.”

To launch Park Over Plastic, Hudson River Park has ceased nearly all purchasing and use of single-use plastics at its offices and operational areas, and has vetted suitable green alternatives. HRPK also asked all their tenants and occupants to do the same and sign onto a Green Partnership Agreement. The agreement stipulates that the tenant or occupant will discontinue the distribution and sale of single-use plastic bottles, straws, stirrers and flatware and use green products instead. So far, 13 tenants have become Green Partners, while others are making efforts to reduce their plastic use.

To accommodate the transition away from single-use plastics to green products, HRPK has installed additional recycling bins throughout the Park, as well as water fountains and portable hydrations stations in key areas to encourage park-goers to make use of reusable water bottles. The Park has also created an educational curriculum on plastic pollution for school groups and is hosting free public education programs on plastic pollution and reduction.

“By putting their Park over Plastic, Hudson River Park Trust is stopping trash where it starts, helping create trash-free waters that will improve the lives of fish, wildlife and people,” said **Robert Pirani, Director of the New York - New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program**. “Our research indicates that the food and drink-related plastics targeted by the Park are the largest source of street litter in waterfront communities” he added.

Julie Tighe, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters, said, “Single-use plastics pollute our waterways and increase our reliance on wasteful disposable products. The Park Over Plastics initiative will go a long way towards reducing plastic pollution in Hudson River Park, while also making a positive impact on our water and wildlife. We are especially thrilled with the plans for hydration stations and educating park-goers about the importance of limiting plastic use, which are critical components of any single use plastics reduction program. Thank you HRPT for your leadership in breaking the plastic addiction.”

“The Nature Conservancy commends Hudson River Park for its efforts to protect the health of our waterways by decreasing plastic pollution,” said **Emily Nobel Maxwell, NYC Program Director for The Nature Conservancy**. “The people of New York City and the abundant wildlife that make their home in the Harbor benefit from cleaner waterways and depend on a thriving Hudson River.”

“We commend HRPK for taking this bold step that will not only improve parks and waterways in New York City, but across the globe,” said **Lynn Kelly, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks**. “The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, largely comprising single-use plastics, would fill NYC’s parkland more than 7,000 times over. Closer to home, the North Atlantic Garbage Patch is estimated to be hundreds of kilometers across in size. What we do in our parks in New York City matters and reducing single-use plastics will have an undeniably positive effect. Kudos to HRPK for championing parks locally and the environment more broadly!”

“Hudson River Park, our first great waterfront park, is once again taking the lead,” said **Roland Lewis, President and CEO of the Waterfront Alliance**. “Knocking out single use plastics is a far sighted and progressive step to rid the scourge these pollutants inflict on our waterways. I hope all other parks and institutions around our harbor follow suit. Bravo Hudson River Park.”

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PARK OVER PLASTIC KEY COMPONENTS:

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Plastics Ban: Nearly all single-use plastics have been taken out of use in Hudson River Park Trust events, offices and operations areas.

Green Guide: HRPK has compiled a comprehensive guide to sustainable, biodegradable alternatives for a range of products, from garbage bags to straws. All products in the guide underwent a careful vetting process to ensure that they met green standards and are suitable alternatives to existing products.

New Green Park Features: Park-goers will now find brand-new portable hydration stations throughout the Park to encourage people to bring their own water bottles, as well as more recycling bins to accommodate the shift away from non-recyclable products.

Green Partnership Agreement: HRPK has asked all existing tenants to sign onto a “Green Partnership Agreement” that requires the discontinuation of the sale of single-use plastic bottles, straws and plastic stirrers. All new tenants will be required to sign onto the agreement going forward.

Plastic Pollution Education: HRPK and the Estuary Lab will offer programming and classes designed to boost awareness of the importance of reducing plastic pollution, starting in the Park.

Plastics Audit: HRPK has retained a consulting firm NewKnowledge to audit the program and measure its success in reducing plastic waste across the Park, and publish the findings as a report.

Plastic Research: HRPK and the Estuary Lab will continue to conduct microplastic research and marine debris clean ups on the Park’s shorelines to increase scientific understanding and remove plastics from the estuary.

POP builds on steps HRPK has already taken to implement environmental best practices, including reduced consumption, and composting and recycling strategies to minimize the Park’s carbon footprint. Last year alone, the Park composted 400,000 lbs of food scraps and horticultural waste. And with over 400 educational programs and activities, Hudson River Park’s Estuary Lab also actively works to transform the way people think about the urban waters that surround them.

Hudson River Park extends from Chambers Street to 59th Street along Manhattan’s west side, making it one of the longest riverfront parks in the United States and an important outdoor recreational area for countless New Yorkers. The Park plays a critical role in protecting the Hudson River ecosystem and is committed to educating residents on the local habitat and environment.

More information about Park Over Plastic is available at www.ParkOverPlastic.org.