



**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE STORMWATER
INFRASTRUCTURE MATTERS (S.W.I.M.) COALITION**

**HEARING BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

RE: T2010-1920, Int. 0075, Int. 0398 and Int. 0399

November 10, 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Stormwater Infrastructure Matters (S.W.I.M.) Coalition, a group of more than 70 organizations, including community and environmental groups, academics, architects and engineers, that are dedicated to ensuring swimmable waters around New York City through natural, sustainable stormwater management practices – Green Infrastructure - in our neighborhoods.

The S.W.I.M. Coalition supports this group of proposed local laws that call for the control of invasive species, the preference of “stormwater tolerant” city plantings, and increased biodiversity in public landscapes and sidewalk plantings. In short, all of these strategies support healthy soils and vegetation that will reduce water pollution and provide local ecological benefits. We would like to contribute the following specific comments.

Invasive species tend to create shallow, uniform and dense root zones. Controlling invasive species and preferring a diverse array of native species will, in addition to the economic benefits outlined in T2010-1920, create a more dynamic and permeable root zone, allowing better stormwater infiltration.

In Int. 0075, “stormwater tolerant” plantings are defined as tolerance to salt and anoxia. In New York City, one of the main sources of stormwater is runoff from roadways and parking lots, and the pollution associated with these surfaces include hydrocarbons and heavy metals. We recommend that tolerance and even sequestration or metabolism of these toxins associated with roadways be investigated as well.

Regarding Int. 0398 and 0399, which call for increased biodiversity in sidewalk plantings and public landscapes, biologically diverse plantings including herbaceous grasses and other native meadow plants, shrubs, understory and canopy trees can intercept more than half the rainfall before it hits the ground. New York City plays a critical role for migratory birds as it is centrally located along the Atlantic flyway for birds moving from the tropics to the northern forest. Seed dispersal and insect predation by migratory birds are vital part of the functioning of our plant communities in the temperate ecosystem of New York City. Thriving plant communities, such as the northern woodlands, in turn

sequester carbon from the atmosphere - an ecological service that is invaluable to our society at this juncture in human history.

We support the broad composition of the “invasive species advisory board” described in T2010-1920, that spans pertinent agencies as well as experts from relevant professional and community groups. This same body would have the expertise and reach to create and disseminate plant lists reflecting the native species and biodiversity goals of the other intros, as well as explore related issues such as toxin sequestration.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on these matters.

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