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AND CONSUMER CREDIT

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

7th District, New York

February 3, 2020

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Mark Klotz, Director
Division of Water, NYS DEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

Dear Mr. Klotz:

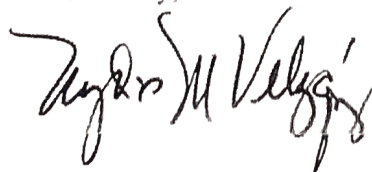
I write in support of the Gowanus Canal Superfund Community Advisory Group's (CAG) request that your agency reclassify the waters of the Gowanus Canal to a higher standard. The current industrial SD classification is outdated and not consistent with existing uses or with the goals of the Clean Water Act.

There have been substantial water quality improvements in the Gowanus Canal since the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers partnered with NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on an Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study in 2002, and DEP reactivated an upgraded Gowanus Pump Station and the flushing tunnel. In 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) put the canal on the National Priorities List. That year, I also secured funding for one of the first green infrastructure projects on the canal through the EPA STAG Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Program. Since then, DEP has implemented one hundred green infrastructure projects in the Gowanus watershed area to improve water quality. All these actions have helped foster a rebirth of this waterbody. Existing uses of the Gowanus Canal today include primary contact recreation, habitat restoration projects, and STEM learning lab investigations into the canal's water quality, flora and fauna by a conservancy.

There is still much work to be done, and the progress continues. Pilot dredging of a basin in the canal was completed last year, and just last week EPA issued an administrative order for responsible parties to begin full-scale environmental dredging. Dredging, capping and restoration of the canal will proceed under EPA, New York State Department of Health and your agency's oversight. Additionally, DEP is building two large combined sewer overflow holding tanks along the canal under EPA direction.

We have reached a significant milestone in the cleanup of the Gowanus Canal, and we are on an ambitious timeline compared to other Superfund sites throughout the nation. It is high time we reexamine the water classification of this waterbody and assign it a designation that reflects current use and progress. I look forward to working with your agency to build on that work and provide further opportunity for community education, stewardship and environmental restoration. Should you require additional information or wish to discuss this further, please feel free to contact Dan Wiley of my staff at (718) 599-3658. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress