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UNITED NATIONS HONORS HURRICANE SANDY DEBRIS REMOVAL EFFORTS

Green Star Award recognizes those who have made efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to environmental disasters around the world

One effort, sand sifting and reclamation, saved taxpayers approximately \$80M

Monday, September 2 – NYC Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today announced that the City’s Hurricane Sandy Debris Removal Task Force received a prestigious 2013 Green Star award from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Green Cross International and the United Nations Environment Programme. The Green Star Awards recognize those who have made efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to environmental disasters around the world. New York City’s Hurricane Sandy Debris Removal Task Force is comprised of 25 federal, state, and local agencies including the NYC Office of the Mayor, NYC Office of Emergency Management, NYC Department of Sanitation, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These agencies were charged with the coordination, removal, and final disposal of over two million cubic yards of debris of all types caused by Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. Commissioner Bruno accepted the award, as part of the 20th anniversary celebrations of Green Cross International. The Task Force was nominated for the award by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg for its efforts in sand renewal, boardwalk recycling, wetland debris removal, reuse of vegetative debris, and debris recycling.

“The Hurricane Sandy Debris Removal Taskforce created a new model and standard for post-disaster environmental responsibility and sustainability,” Commissioner Bruno said. “It is our hope that this model can be used across the United States and in the world in future recovery efforts.”

Hurricane Sandy significantly affected many areas of New York City, which required a massive and coordinated recovery effort, including an immense debris operation. As the city does not have a municipal landfill or significant open space for staging debris, reusing and recycling debris was a priority post-storm. The Task Force developed and successfully implemented environmentally and fiscally sustainable, multi-faceted strategies to conserve natural resources, reduce damage to the environment, and minimize final disposal in distant landfills, while reducing the cost to the taxpayer.

Highlights of the Debris Task Forces efforts:

- **Sand Renewal:** Sandy’s storm surge and waves eroded the city’s beaches. The Task Force reclaimed more than 187,000 cubic yards of sand from the streets and public property. Contractors sifted and tested the sand before it was returned to nearby beaches. This strategy saved taxpayers over \$80 million, and reduced the Task Force’s carbon footprint by eliminating the need for trucks to remove the sand.
- **Boardwalk Recycling:** Sandy displaced most of Rockaway Beach’s 5.5-mile boardwalk, which was made of valuable tropical woods. The Task Force salvaged all undamaged wood – 144,000

square feet of decking and 55,000 square feet of support joists – and will use it to repair other sections of the boardwalk.

- **Wetland Debris Removal:** Debris was pushed into the Oakwood Beach wetland in Staten Island, posing a major health and safety threat to surrounding neighborhoods. In addition to the wetland’s importance in the water cycle and for wildlife habitat, this area is also part of the Staten Island Bluebelt, a collection of natural drainage corridors that have been preserved for conveying, storing, and filtering storm water. The Task Force, using environmentally conscious processing, removed over 5,000 cubic yards of debris and hazardous waste from this site.
- **Reuse of Vegetative Debris:** Sandy knocked down or damaged 20,000 trees. The Task Force worked under a strict federal mandate that requires all vegetative debris to be chipped to prevent the spread of the Asian Longhorned beetle. To combat this and the risk of combustion in debris piles, the Task Force chipped nearly 200,000 cubic yards of vegetative debris and 85% of this has been or will be recycled as mulch and ground cover.
- **Debris Recycling:** The Task Force ensured the following items were recycled from the debris gathered at the temporary storage site: metal, concrete, household hazardous waste, appliances, electronics, heavy woods, small motors and fuel. Prior to demolition of any structures, materials containing asbestos were abated. Remaining debris was shipped to municipal solid waste facilities, where additional recycling took place.

“We thank the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Green Cross International and the UN Environment Programme for this great honor,” Commissioner Bruno said. “We remain committed to developing innovative, environmentally sustainable strategies to prepare for and respond to emergencies.”

Staying in Touch with the NYC Office of Emergency Management

The Office of Emergency Management communicates directly with the public through a variety of tools, including Notify NYC. This is just one way the City of New York communicates urgent information to city residents. In addition to sending e-mails, text messages, and phone calls, the emergency notification office has the ability to activate NYC’s Emergency Alert System (EAS), which sends information immediately via television and radio. Residents can also visit Facebook, Twitter, and the agency’s website, nyc.gov/oem for more information. The public can sign up for Notify NYC by calling 311 or going to www.NYC.gov/notifynyc.

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