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MAYOR DE BLASIO LAUNCHES PURESOIL NYC TO RECYCLE CLEAN SOIL FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

*PUREsoil NYC provides communities across the city access to high-quality soil for
neighborhood projects & to help protect against climate change*

NEW YORK— Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced the launch of PUREsoil NYC, an innovative initiative that recycles clean soil from construction projects in NYC to community uses, where it improves soil quality and increase resilience to the effects climate change. Under this program, the city will provide clean soil to community-based organizations to improve the quality of degraded soils in gardens, yards, and other open spaces and lower exposure to lead and other pollutants. Clean soil will also be used to create tidal and fresh water wetlands, berms, and levees and raise the elevation of coastal land to reduce risks from sea level rise and stronger storm surges caused by climate change. PUREsoil NYC and the source of the soil, the NYC Clean Soil Bank, are operated by the NYC Mayor’s Office of Environmental Remediation (MOER). PUREsoil NYC is the first city-run program of its kind in the world.

“Not only are we finding new uses for New York’s own, pristine soil, we are helping beautify neighborhoods and making communities more resilient,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “This program is a global first, helping us build a better, fairer city.”

“The clean soil deep beneath our feet is one of the most precious natural resources we have in NYC. Each year, hundreds of thousands of tons of surplus clean native soil are exported long distances out of our city. By keeping this soil in NYC and ‘upcycling’ it to its best use, we can improve the chemical quality of our urban soil to reduce pollutant exposures, build new wetlands, and raise our coastal land to prepare for the effects of climate change and sea level rise,” said **Dr. Daniel Walsh, MOER Director and founder of the NYC Clean Soil Bank and PUREsoil NYC**. “This administration recognizes the disproportionate risk from environmental pollution and climate change in disadvantaged communities and is focusing use of our natural resources to achieve equity in environmental quality and preparedness.”

PUREsoil NYC seeks to achieve the highest uses for NYC’s surplus pristine soil resources and to prioritize this work in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. The soil will be obtained from the NYC Clean Soil Bank, the nation’s only soil exchange and the only city-run soil

exchange in the world. Pristine soil is extracted from deep below the ground during construction of basements, underground parking and other underground structures. The soil is native sediment deposited by glaciers in NYC over 10,000 years ago and is among the highest-chemical-quality soil found in the northeast United States. PUREsoil NYC is part of MOER's Progressive Urban Resource Exchange (PURE) initiative established under OneNYC.

Soil used in PUREsoil NYC is subject to a 12-step chemical quality vetting process to ensure purity. Recent study by MOER and Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory showed that by retaining and recycling pristine native soil, soil exchange lowers soil transport distances by over 70% and provides a series of environmental benefits, including reductions in truck mileage on highways, fossil fuel consumption, and greenhouse gas and other air pollution emissions. Local sourcing of soil through the exchange also preserves NYC's original soil character, conserves natural resources in regional quarries, and lowers costs of soil management by 85%. In the absence of programs like PUREsoil NYC that retain and recycle valuable native soil resources within NYC, studies have shown that over 95% of NYC's clean soil resources are exported for uses outside of the city.

The NYC Clean Soil Bank and PUREsoil NYC are the only programs designed to retain clean soil resources within a city to achieve a broad set of environmental and societal goals. The design of PUREsoil NYC was guided by an intensive set of scientific studies by MOER, Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory Columbia University and Brooklyn College and is advised by a distinguished panel of soil scientists and other experts. Retention and upcycling of NYC's clean soil resources is supported by over 350 soil scientists, engineers, environmental professionals, advocates, and community members in NYC.

"The Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation and its Clean Soil Bank program have been invaluable to building the city's resiliency against climate change. The City's Interim Flood Protection Program has relied on the soil bank to build flood control structures in Red Hook and Hunts Point to protect these communities from coastal storms," said **Jainey Bavishi, Director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency**. "We're excited to have PUREsoil NYC as a new tool to support the resiliency of our neighborhoods."

"This approach is good government! Keeping our clean soil resources in NYC and using them for improving our environment and quality of life for our communities not only makes NYC resilient, but also conscientious, and sets an example in sustainability for the rest of the world," said **Tatiana Morin, Director of the New York City Urban Soils Institute**. "This program is supported by many soil scientists in NYC and has been vetted in scientific literature. It is absolutely a high priority for our organization and other soil resource leadership organizations."

"Use of clean soil to improve the quality of land in our disadvantaged communities is a good use of this resource and takes important steps to mitigate environmental injustice. It also lowers the impact of truck traffic to waste processing and transfer facilities that cluster in our low income communities. The focus on resiliency also lowers the risk to disadvantaged neighborhoods of exposure to contaminants from sea level rise and climate change." said **Eddie Bautista, Executive Director of New York City Environmental Justice Alliance**.

“The EPA enthusiastically supports efforts by our local partners to address contamination through programs such as the PUREsoil NYC. We commend NYC’s success in developing this innovative program,” said **Peter Lopez, EPA Region 2 Administrator**. “This action on the part of New York City bolsters EPA and 16 other federal agencies’ plan to help eliminate lead exposure to children in the U.S.”

“Research at Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory is seeking to find ways to make our cities more protective of public health, more livable and more resilient to the effects of climate change,” said **Arthur Lerner-Lam, Deputy Director of Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory**. “We are excited to see our research move across the academic threshold to help build informed public policy and launch new programs in NYC that can help achieve these important societal goals.”

“Sustainable community development is crucial to creating a just, resilient city,” said **Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director of UPROSE**. “The PUREsoil program not only prioritizes local use of New York City resources, but also cuts down on transportation and emissions affecting our communities.”

“We are very pleased to see the efforts the de Blasio administration is making to reverse the burden of legacy pollution in disadvantaged communities,” said **Peggy Shepard, Executive Director of WE ACT**. “PUREsoil NYC’s focus on upcycling and finding the best uses for NYC’s soil can revitalize community spaces in contaminated areas, taking steps to mitigate environmental injustice in these communities. The Clean Soil Bank’s focus on resiliency also lowers the risk to disadvantaged neighborhoods of exposure to contaminants from sea level rise and climate change, and ensures soil appropriate for vegetable gardening in our urban neighborhoods.”

“NYC is leading the nation when it comes to management of its soil resources. PUREsoil NYC provides the first glimpse of the solution to degraded soils in urban communities and improving our climate change preparedness. The work that MOER is doing in NYC is a model for other cities around the U.S. and the world,” said **Ernie Rossano, President of the NYC Brownfield Partnership**.

“Wise use of our natural resources is an important priority for our members. The Mayor’s Office of Environmental Remediation’s PUREsoil NYC program will help improve soil quality and increase resiliency. We look forward to seeing this program help New Yorkers become strong stewards for our natural environment,” said **Marcia Bystryn, Executive Director of the New York League of Conservation Voters**.

“We are impressed by the good work done by the NYC Clean Soil Bank over the last few years,” said **Jim Tripp, Senior Counsel of the Environmental Defense Fund**. “The success of the program is a phenomenal accomplishment for our city. PUREsoil NYC is the next generation of that program and provides new opportunities for protecting human health and improving New York City’s native ecosystem.”

“PUREsoil NYC will provide needed resources and soils to community gardens across Brooklyn and Queens, helping community members ensure the positive success of these open spaces,” said **Demetrice Mills, Board President of Brooklyn Queens Land Trust**. “PUREsoil NYC also helps these communities mitigate costs of maintaining neighborhood garden spaces.”

“Wisconsin glacial deposits underlie hundreds of square miles of New York. OER developed a unique program to literally transform construction sites into quarries, recovering pristine soils. Shoreline elevation is a major contribution that can come from this resource, anticipating sea level rise with resilient, biologically diverse coastal edges. Sculpted into dunes, we aim to construct habitat for least tern and piping plover, powering ecological development with resources mined from beneath the next generation of City skyscrapers.” said **Paul Mankiewicz, Ph.D., Director of Gaia Institute**.

“All cities face major challenges from contaminated soils, especially the pollution by lead. Reclaiming our clean, native soils helps mitigate the threats to public health due to legacy contamination from New York City’s industrial history. The Clean Soil Bank’s work helps communities and neighborhoods create spaces where there will be no concern for exposure risks in the future,” said **Zhongqi (Joshua) Cheng, Associate Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Brooklyn College and co-founder of the NYC Urban Soils Institute**.

“Healthy open spaces are critical to healthy communities. We are excited that PUREsoil NYC will make pristine soil available to support community projects,” said **Carter Strickland, New York State Director of The Trust for Public Land**.

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