

## OR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## THE RIVER PROJECT ANNOUNCES STRATEGIC TRANSITION PLAN WITH HUDSON RIVER PARK TRUST

*Following the retirement of Founder and Executive Director Cathy Drew, The River Project legacy and programs will continue on under the Hudson River Park umbrella*

NEW YORK-Today, The River Project (TRP) and Hudson River Park Trust (the Trust or HRPT) are proud to announce a formal transition plan that will preserve TRP's core mission related to the Hudson River Estuary beyond the retirement of Founder and former Executive Director Cathy Drew through a structured relationship with the Trust. The change, which will occur in phases over the next year, will begin formally taking effect immediately.

Drew, who officially retired on May 31, 2019, founded The River Project in 1986 and pioneered estuarine research and river educational programming that has helped promote the health and wellbeing of NYC waterways and, with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Hudson River Estuary Program, create the Hudson River Estuarine Sanctuary. TRP's work in these vital fields will live on through the Trust under this new agreement.

The River Project, originally based out of Pier 26 and currently at Pier 40, has worked side-by-side for years with Hudson River Park's Estuary Lab, united in their joint missions to support the health and habitat of the Park's urban waters through hands-on environmental education and scientific research. Under Hudson River Park, staff from The River Project will continue and expand its work in this field.

**Cathy Drew, founder and now retired Executive Director of The River Project, said,** "My vision in founding The River Project 33 years ago was of publicly accessible scientific research and hands-on, get-wet education for all ages. We believe that in connecting people to the Harbor and Hudson Estuary, they would come to appreciate and protect our rich and vulnerable marine life. We created a publicly-accessible marine science field station at Pier 26 with a flowthrough aquarium system, laboratory and exhibit space. The "Wetlab" seasonally houses animals of the Harbor, demonstrates the work of scientists, and hosts educational field trips for people of all ages. At the "Wetlab," which is open to the public, scientists do real research, while educators provide informed access to the River and labs. Scheduled and walk-through visitors experience the rich and wondrous marine wildlife of the Hudson Estuary. I am excited

that this vision will continue and grow under the leadership of Hudson River Park Trust as part of the Hudson River Estuarine Sanctuary."

**Madelyn Wils, President and CEO of the Hudson River Park Trust, said,** "Under Cathy Drew's visionary leadership, The River Project has played a vital role in protecting and promoting the long-term health of the river, wildlife and surrounding habitat. Her pioneering programming with Hudson River animals at Pier 26's original Estuarium inspired the dedication of the Hudson River Park Estuarine Sanctuary. Both in their innovative research and programming, The River Project has inspired and shared our mission to empower the next generation of scientists and educate the nearby community on their local waterways. In this next chapter, we look forward to pooling our collective knowledge and resources to preserve Cathy's legacy and advance our work in the field."

TRP has led the way in offering hands-on opportunities to engage with local wildlife as a way of connecting students and the public to the Hudson River Estuary and building awareness around the local habitat. Their flow-through aquarium system uses water directly from the Hudson River to showcase numerous native estuarine species and by extension, the biodiversity of the Estuary. TRP has also produced leading independent scientific research, supported numerous visiting scientists, provided lab services to institutions and other organizations, and offered water testing services for members of the community.

Since its inception, Hudson River Park has provided estuary-focused environmental education programming to school-aged children, as well as the general public. Today, through Hudson River Park's Estuary Lab, such programming has grown to serve approximately 30,000 people annually. The Trust's Estuary Lab also includes scientific initiatives, conservation efforts and stewardship activities focused on the Park's 400-acres Estuarine Sanctuary.

"Cathy Drew and The River Project were so important in inspiring the creation of the Hudson River Park Estuarine Sanctuary and, with it, this jewel of Manhattan that is Hudson River Park" **said Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.** "We thank Cathy for showing New Yorkers the importance of publicly-accessible science and education which is shared by and built into the guiding principles of Hudson River Park. With The River Project and Hudson River Park Trust joining efforts, I am confident that the vision and the programs that have reached so many children and adults will continue and flourish for many years to come."

There will be a transition period of approximately 12 - 18 months where the Trust will work with The River Project on structurally unwinding the independent nonprofit after which TRP's work will continue under the leadership of the Trust. Effective immediately, two TRP staff will begin full-time employment at the Trust in education and research positions. The remaining TRP staff will help oversee the transition period and will partner with Trust Estuary Lab staff to conduct blended, coordinated estuary programming and research.

**Richard Corman, longtime Tribeca resident and newly appointed Executive Director of The River Project, said,** "During the Transition Period, we will be working closely with the Trust to expand, enhance and integrate our programming and we continue to look forward to the wonderful public support we have always had. The Trust's Estuary lab hosts so many great educational and research programs in the park. Collaboration with them has already allowed us to open the Wetlab to the public on select Sundays, reaching so many more people. And we will continue to work with the Trust through the Technical Advisory Committee to help finalize the Estuary Sanctuary Management Plan 2020 Action Agenda and to pursue the vision of a worldclass Estuarium on Pier 26 where The River Project began."

After the transition period, TRP will cease operations as an independent entity and will donate its assets to the Trust. In addition to continuing to promote and advance the TRP core objectives of hands-on environmental education, scientific research and the maintenance of live estuary animal exhibits, the Trust has agreed to preserve The River Project name and the founding story of Cathy Drew's contributions to the Hudson River Park Sanctuary as another part of the Strategic Transition Plan.

Drew has led The River Project since its founding over 30 years ago. She received a Bachelor of Science in Molecular Biology from Columbia University in 1979 and a Master of Science in Biological Oceanography from the Marine Sciences Research Center, SUNY, Stony Brook, in 1984. From 1973 to 1978, she worked as a scuba diver and underwater photographer on scientific expeditions throughout the southwest Pacific. At TRP, her research on near-shore living resources informs many city, state and academic environmental programs.

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### **About The River Project**

The River Project is a marine science field station founded in 1986 at Pier 26 in Tribeca. The River Project works to protect and restore the ecosystem of the Hudson River estuary and New York Harbor through scientific research, hands-on environmental education, urban habitat improvement and innovative waterfront programs.

The River Project's programs and live exhibits expand public understanding of nature and inspire people to appreciate the ecosystem in which we live. An intimate view of what is at the waterfront and beneath the surface may contribute to a sense of wellbeing for urban residents, and to the perception of New York City as a viable place to live and work.

TRP's Wetlab and offices are at Pier 40, at Houston Street, in Hudson River Park.