



**New York City Council
Oversight: FY27 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026**

Testimony By: Oded Holzinger, Natural Areas Conservancy, Executive Director

My name is Oded Holzinger, and I am the executive director of the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC). Thank you to Chair Lee and the members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the Fiscal Year (FY27) executive budget.

I want to start by acknowledging and thanking the Mamdani administration for baselining \$15 million in funding for NYC Parks in the FY27 executive budget. This investment represents a step toward more fully funding our parks system, and finally ends the years-long budget dance that impacted many critical positions at NYC Parks. The NAC is particularly grateful that this baselined funding will allow the Natural Resources Group (NRG) to permanently retain 32 staff who support critical forest management and stewardship in our natural areas. This funding also makes permanent 50 Urban Park Ranger positions, which will help support increased programming and visitation in natural areas across the five boroughs.

Despite this win, however, the NAC stands with our colleagues in the Play Fair and Forest For All NYC coalitions in asking for increased funding for NYC Parks in the FY27 adopted budget. We remain concerned that funding for 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) and 15 GreenThumb staff has not been restored, and ask the Council and the administration to work together to baseline the funding for these positions in the FY27 adopted budget.

After many years of a hiring freeze and cuts to the NYC Parks budget, we urgently ask the City Council to add \$23 million in one-shot funding to help increase the headcount for the agency. This funding would support 50 additional staff to support forestry work citywide, and would also fund 100 additional PEP officers, 100 City Park Workers, and 26 Playground Associates. By making this investment, the Council can build on the administration's commitment and move New York City closer to the long-standing goal of dedicating 1% of the City budget to parks, recognizing parks and natural areas as critical infrastructure in addressing both the affordability and climate crises.

We also ask that the City Council and the administration commit at least \$1 million for other non-park agencies to support the implementation of the recently released Urban Forest Plan. The NAC was proud to have worked on the plan with many of our coalition partners as well as the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice, but we are concerned that critical funding to put the recommendations into action remains unallocated going into the next fiscal year. We strongly support the City's ability to meet its 30% canopy target by 2040, but we believe that dedicated City funding is essential to making that vision a reality. Beyond the planting of new trees, achieving the 30% target by 2040 requires investment in the prevention of canopy loss by protecting and caring for the forests and trees that already exist.



Our natural areas aren't a luxury—they are a thriving component of our natural green infrastructure, provide invaluable habitat, and are free and accessible places for New Yorkers to connect with nature in ways that strengthen communities and public health.

We believe funding parks and natural areas is a critical strategy for advancing the Mayor's affordability agenda, and we look forward to working closely with the City Council to help ensure that our forests and wetlands receive the level of care they need in the FY27 budget, and beyond.

Thank you.

