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Environmental Advocates Join NYC Parks Department to Celebrate Pesticide-Free Parks

*Successful Demo Sites in the Five Boroughs
Highlight Sustainable Practices*

New York, NY— Eco-Friendly Parks for All, a coalition of environmental, public health and political action organizations has teamed up with Beyond Pesticides, New York City Parks and Recreation Department, and the Stonyfield Organic Yogurt to celebrate the success of pilot organic land management programs at nine sites across the five boroughs. The demonstration programs, directed by nationally recognized natural turf expert Chip Osborne, were initiated by the coalition after the city council adopted new legislation in 2021 prohibiting the use of chemical pesticides on all New York City parks.

“We are excited to be working with the City of New York on organic land management practices that protect community health and the environment, and support efforts to mitigate climate change and biodiversity decline,” said Jay Feldman, Executive Director of Beyond Pesticides. “Organic practices such as those being used in these demonstration sites eliminate fossil fuel petroleum-based products and sequester atmospheric carbon in the soil, combating the climate crisis. It's a win for the city, the public and the environment.”

The new law, adopted on Earth Day 2021, restricts pest management products to those compatible with organic systems, which eliminates synthetic weed killers like glyphosate (Roundup), tied to cancer by the World Health Organization, and bee-toxic insecticides like the neonicotinoids, which have been prohibited by many communities and countries. The goal of an organic system is to help beautify the park land and playing fields by strengthening the grass plants, which become better able to stand up to the stress associated with use.

“We are proud of the significant reduction in pesticide use at Parks, and our collaboration on this pilot with Eco-friendly Parks for All will further demonstrate what can be achieved through our continued and expanded use of sustainable landscaping practices,” said NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner for Environment and Planning Jennifer Greenfeld.

“It's critical that municipal governments take these positive steps forward to make our parks safer for people and our cities more sustainable,” said Patti Wood, executive director of Grassroots Environmental Education, one of the Coalition's founding members. “We're hoping this will help convince other cities across the country that they can do it too!”

Bertha Lewis, Founder and President of The Black Institute said "This initiative not only benefits the environment, but it also addresses environmental justice by ensuring that our Black and Brown communities have access to safe, healthy, and sustainable parks. We're working together to create a better future for all New Yorkers, regardless of their background, by promoting organic land management practices that protect our people."

Paula Rogovin, NYC public school teacher for 44 years (now retired) said, "It is a joy of a lifetime to see this law, introduced in 2015 on behalf of my kindergarten students from PS 290, coming to fruition. No one is too young or too old to advocate for a better world for all."

"Stonyfield is pleased to collaborate and support the city's efforts as a leader in sustainability and now organic land management with demonstration sites that serve as an opportunity to adopt practices that meet the environmental and health challenges of our time," said Mairead Dunphy-Fabrycki, Public Relations Manager, Stonyfield Organic Yogurt, which helped underwrite the costs of the pilot program.

"Eco-friendly lawn care takes a responsible approach to maintaining our green spaces, including parks like Pelham Bay Park. The use of pesticides can have harmful effects on our environment and the health of humans and animals. By adopting eco-friendly practices, we can promote the growth of healthy parks and green spaces without compromising the health of our community," said New York City *Council Member Marjorie Velázquez*. "These practices not only protect our environment but also contribute to the resilience and sustainability of our communities for generations to come.

"By embracing sustainable practices, families can enjoy the beauty of our parks without it being a health hazard. We support Eco-Friendly Parks for All and The Black Institute in ensuring New York City parks are safe and sustainable." said New York City *Council Member Darlene Mealy*.

One unique aspect of the program is the use of compost from the city's Sanitation Department, where food scraps are turned into compost, which can provide valuable nutrients to park grounds, reducing the costs of fertilizer.

The long-term goal of the program is to adopt organic practices that rely on methods and products that support soil biology and soil health.

Eco-Friendly Parks for All founding members include: Beyond Pesticides, The Black Institute, Grassroots Environmental Education, Children's Environmental Health Center, at Mount Sinai Institute for Exposomic Research. (Icahn School of Medicine) and Voters for Animal Rights.

Demonstration sites include: Bronx—Claremont Park, Mapes Playground (Jacobco Field); Brooklyn—Canarsie Park (cricket field) and Lincoln Terrace; Manhattan—Morningside Park; Queens —Rufus King Park; Staten Island—Rev. Dr. Maggie Howard Playground and Mahoney Playground.

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