



# OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

"Connecting people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, native forests"

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Van Cortlandt Park's Forever Wild Preserve inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network!**

On April 12 at 2:00pm, Van Cortlandt Park's Forever Wild Preserve will be formally inducted into the national Old-Growth Forest Network as part of Van Cortlandt Park Alliance's annual [Woodlawn Family Fun Day](#). To celebrate the induction of this NYC Parks forest, the public is invited to attend a brief ceremony at Indian Field (Van Cortlandt Park East/near East 233rd Street) where Old-Growth Forest Network's Northeast Regional Manager, Sarah RobbGrieco, will present a plaque to NYC Parks and Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. The ceremony will be followed by a trail walk through the northeast section of the park, featuring red oak, sweetgum, and tulip trees, as well as a frog-filled marsh. These events are part of a full afternoon's schedule of games, music, activities, and family fun from 1:00 to 4:00pm hosted by Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. For details, visit: <https://vancortlandt.org/event/woodlawn-family-fun-day-3/>

Van Cortlandt Park, located in the northwest Bronx, is a natural showcase of the last vestiges of New York City's native woodlands and wetlands. Founded in 1888, its 1,146 acres abound with sites that are important to the region and nation. Over half of Van Cortlandt Park, 640 acres, is designated a Forever Wild Preserve, a program established by NYC Parks to protect New York City's most ecologically valuable lands. Giving the natural areas Forever Wild Preserve status has helped shield them from damage by construction, development, and other activities. Three major habitats in the park—forests, wetlands, and meadows—are protected as Forever Wild. The core forests are located in the northern part of the park, on terrain varying from the spectacular rock outcrops that provide a glimpse of the forest's underlying geology in the northwest, to low, wet areas in the northeast. Divided into the Northwest Forest, Croton Woods, and the Northeast Forest, Van Cortlandt's forests contain some of the city's oldest trees, with large oak, tulip, sweetgum, and sugar maples forming the canopy and spicebush, arrowwood, and maple-leaf viburnum among the shrub layer.

*"Steeped in history and flush with natural beauty, Van Cortlandt Park provides a stunning perspective of our city's native woodlands and wetlands. Protecting this forest ensures that this natural wonder is safeguarded for future generations to enjoy," said **NYC Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue**. "We're grateful to the Old-Growth Forest Network for selecting Van Cortlandt Park for this important recognition and for all of their efforts nationwide to preserve our precious natural resources and connect people with native forests."*

*Van Cortlandt Park Alliance is thrilled that Van Cortlandt Park's Forever Wild Preserve is being recognized by the Old-Growth Forest Network, highlighting the positive wellbeing of our 600+ acre urban forest. The VCPA team works hand in hand with NYC Parks' Natural Resources Group, supporting their vision for a healthy forest. Together with Van Cortlandt Park's Forest Restoration Crew, led by Landscape & Natural Areas Manager John-Paul Catusco, VCPA's Stewardship Crew and Vital Volunteers continue to implement the Forest Management Plan designed by the Natural Areas Conservancy. Managing and caring for 600+ acres in an urban area like the Bronx is a challenge that can only be met collaboratively. We look forward to continuing this care with our partners for years to come, said **Stephanie Ehrlich, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance's Executive Director**.*

The mission of the Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN) is to connect people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, publicly accessible, native forests. The organization's goal is to preserve at least one forest in every county in the United States that can sustain a forest, estimated to be 2,370 out of a total of 3,140 counties. OGFN's program works to identify forests for the Network, ensure their protection from logging, and connect people to these properties to experience old-growth forests. OGFN also educates about the extraordinary ecological and human wellness benefits of old-growth forests, and speaks out regarding immediate threats to specific ancient forests.

Founded in 2012 by Dr. Joan Maloof, OGFN has over 280 forests in 39 states currently in the Network. Van Cortlandt Park Preserve is the twenty-second New York forest to join the Old-Growth Forest Network, joining Shorarakapok Preserve - Inwood Hill Park in New York County, Thain Family Forest - New York Botanical Garden in Bronx County, Rockefeller State Park Preserve in Westchester County, Zoar Valley Unique Area in Cattaraugus County, Old Growth Trail - Green Lakes State Park in Onondaga County, Ancient Forest Trail and Woodland Trail - George Landis Arboretum in Schoharie County, Ampersand Mountain in Franklin County and more. The full list of forests in the Network may be viewed at [www.oldgrowthforest.net/network-forests](http://www.oldgrowthforest.net/network-forests).

Sarah RobbGrieco noted, "We are thrilled to welcome this extraordinary forest into the Network as a forest representative for Bronx County. We want to recognize and celebrate the NYC Parks' Natural Resources Group, Van Cortlandt Park's Forest Restoration Crew, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance, and volunteers for their work in preserving this special forest for generations to come."

OGFN depends on volunteers in each U.S. county to help identify and induct forests into the Network. In New York County, Mamaroneck resident Nicole Butterfield has been an invaluable volunteer County Coordinator and was instrumental in the inclusion of Van Cortlandt Park Preserve in the Old-Growth Forest Network. Interested volunteers are welcome to contact OGFN through [www.oldgrowthforest.net](http://www.oldgrowthforest.net).

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