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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Sandra Meola of NY/NJ Baykeeper Wins Environmental Champion Award  
from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

Sandra Meola, Communications and Outreach Associate for NY/NJ Baykeeper, was honored as an Environmental Champion by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at a ceremony today at EPA's offices in Manhattan.

Ms. Meola was recognized for her leadership in creating NY/NJ Baykeeper's "Reducing Plastic Pollution" Campaign, which aims to document and reduce plastic pollution in the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. Ms. Meola is also an active member of EPA's Trash Free Water initiative.

This past February, NY/NJ Baykeeper published the first [report](#) to document the amount of plastic pollution in the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. Based on our estimates, **there are 165 million particles of plastic floating around in the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary at any given time.**

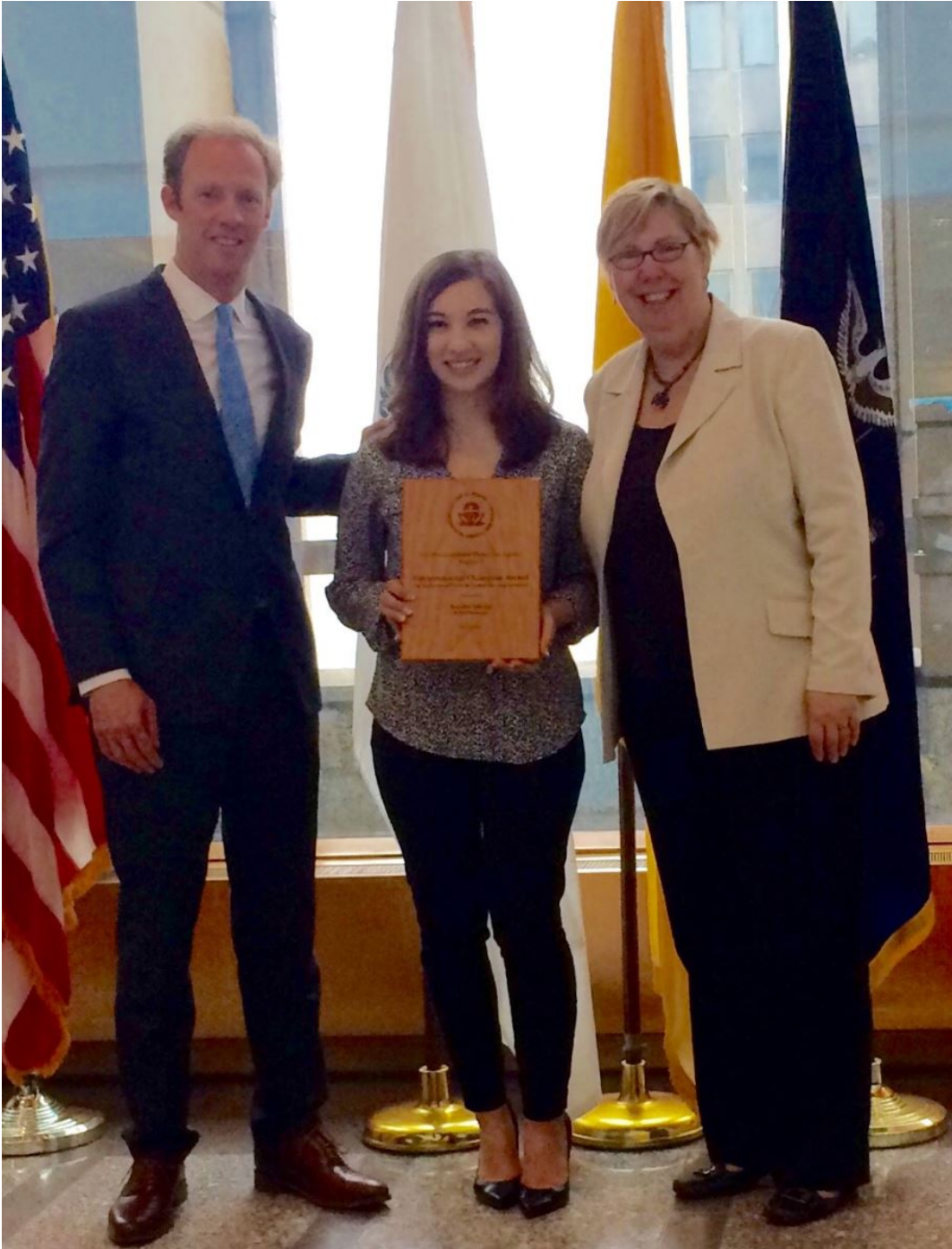
"Anyone who has walked along our local waterfronts and beaches knows we have a plastic problem," said Meola. "I was stunned to discover the extent of the amount of plastic pieces in our local waterways

through our microplastics trawling and research last summer."

"NY/NJ Baykeeper's Reducing Plastics Pollution campaign includes water sampling and analysis for plastics and supporting efforts to reduce plastic bags, plastic bottles, and single-use styrofoam containers and plastic utensils," explained Debbie Mans, Executive Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper.

"As a resident of Neptune City, New Jersey, it is important to me that my work makes a positive impact on my community and the environment," said Meola.

NY/NJ Baykeeper will continue its microplastics work this summer, including expanding sampling in the Passaic River and Raritan River, identifying sources of plastic pollution, testing the impacts of plastics on aquatic life, and partnering with local organizations on education and outreach on the impacts of plastics in our waterways.



From left to right: Murray Fisher - New York Harbor Foundation, Sandra Meola - NY/NJ Baykeeper, Judith Enck - United States Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator

### **About NY/NJ Baykeeper**

NY/NJ Baykeeper is the citizen guardian of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. Since 1989, we've worked to

protect, preserve, and restore the environment of the most urban estuary on Earth – benefiting its natural and human communities. Through our Estuary-wide programs we seek to end pollution, improve public access, conserve and restore public lands, restore aquatic habitats, encourage appropriate and discourage inappropriate development, carry out public education, and work with federal and NY/NJ state regulators and citizen groups as partners in planning for a sustainable future for the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary watershed.

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Protecting, preserving, and restoring the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary since 1989.  
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