



Foundation Document Overview

Gateway National Recreation Area

New Jersey and New York



Contact Information

For more information about the *Gateway National Recreation Area Foundation Document*, contact: gate_superintendent@nps.gov or (718) 354-4606 or write to: Superintendent, Gateway National Recreation Area, 210 New York Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10305

Purpose



GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA provides a national park experience in the country's largest metropolitan area. The park preserves a mosaic of coastal ecosystems and natural areas interwoven with historic coastal defense and maritime sites around New York's Outer Harbor. Beaches, marshes, waters, scenic views, and open space offer resource-based recreational opportunities to a diverse public, recognizing the importance to preserve these special places for future generations.



Significance

Significance statements express why Gateway National Recreation Area resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Forts Hancock, Tilden, and Wadsworth comprise one of the largest sets of military installations and distinctive fortifications in the country, dating from pre-Civil War through the 20th century. These installations represent a long period of military presence and served as the defense of New York City, the largest city in the United States.
- Gateway contains an assemblage of coastal ecosystems formed by natural features, both physical and biological, that include barrier peninsulas, estuaries, oceans, and maritime uplands. The habitats that comprise these ecosystems, so rare in such highly developed areas, support a rich biota that includes migratory birds; marine finfish and shellfish; plant communities; and rare, threatened, and endangered species. These features provide opportunities to restore, study, enhance, and experience coastal habitats and ecosystem processes.
- The maritime resources of Gateway include the oldest continuously operating lighthouse in the United States and one of the first federally sponsored lifesaving stations in the country. These resources served to protect ocean commerce and enhance the safety of the busiest U.S. seaport.
- The vast and diverse park resources at the gateway to the most densely populated region of the United States provide an abundance of outstanding recreational and educational opportunities.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

Fundamental Resources

- Coastal Defense Resources
- Beaches/Dune System
- Natural Areas
- Jamaica Bay Waters
- Sandy Hook Maritime Forest
- Maritime Resources

Fundamental Values

- Beach Experience (including public access to bay and ocean shorelines and surf)
- Variety of Recreation Experiences
- Direct Sensory Experience
- Connections to National Defense History and Opportunities for Visiting Historic Sites

Gateway National Recreation Area contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- Civil and Military Aviation History Resources at Floyd Bennett Field and Miller Field
- Historic Landscape at Jacob Riis Park, Including the Beaches, Boardwalk, and Bathhouse
- Pre-Contact Archeological Sites, Historic Archeological Sites Related to Domestic and Military Occupations of Park Lands, and Submerged Resources

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Two Centuries of National Defense
- The Natural Wonders, Dynamics, and Challenges of an Urban Estuary
- Recreation and Education: Quality of Urban Life for All Visitors
- Maritime Heritage



Description

Gateway covers more than 40 square miles in New York and New Jersey. That is an area nearly twice the size of the island of Manhattan. The park is split into three different areas in Monmouth County, New Jersey, and the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island.

The legislative boundary for Gateway is 27,025 acres and extends into adjacent waters, including the Atlantic Ocean, Jamaica Bay, Raritan Bay, and Upper and Lower New York Bay. The park manages 21,680 acres of land and waters. An additional 5,345 acres are managed by other federal agencies, owned by New York City, or privately held by entities such as Breezy Point Cooperative, Broad Channel, and Roxbury. The park has three administrative units: Jamaica Bay, Sandy Hook, and Staten Island.

These three distinct geographic areas are linked together by similar types of resources and recreation uses, yet retain distinctive characteristics that make them special.

The Jamaica Bay Unit is the largest of the three units and is one of the largest expanses of open space in the region, consisting of over 19,000 acres of land, bay, and ocean waters within two boroughs of New York, Brooklyn and Queens. The unit includes Plumb Beach, Floyd Bennett Field, Bergen Beach, Canarsie Pier, Pennsylvania Avenue and Fountain Avenue Parks, Frank Charles Memorial Park, Hamilton Beach, Spring Creek, Jacob Riis Park, Fort Tilden, Breezy Point Tip, and the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in the center of the bay.

The Staten Island Unit encompasses bay waters, shoreline, and four areas including Great Kills Park, World War Veterans Park at Miller Field, Fort Wadsworth, and Swinburne Island and Hoffman Island in Staten Island, New York.

The Sandy Hook Unit encompasses the Fort Hancock and Sandy Hook Proving Ground National Historic Landmark District and natural areas and shorelines adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean and Sandy Hook Bay in Monmouth County, New Jersey.

