

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gateway National Recreation Area
New Jersey / New York



GATEWAY STATE OF THE PARK 2010



FOREWORD



This State of the Park report details the progress Gateway National Recreation Area has made in the last year. The park has expanded recreational kayaking, developed mentoring programs with youth and collaborated with several organizations for the year's BioBlitz at Floyd Bennett Field, where volunteers identified nearly 500 different species of plant and animal life. It is satisfying to look back at our accomplishments. However, we are even more excited about what comes next.

Gateway is currently drafting a new General Management Plan, or GMP. This visionary document will outline the road ahead for the next twenty years. The plan is a collaborative process, where employees and visitors engage in a dialog about the park's future. You can keep up with the progress of our GMP at www.nps.gov/gate/parkmgmt/gmp.htm

In creating a vision for Gateway, park employees, partners and visitors can learn a lot from visual artists.

Artists see their subjects not just with their eyes, but with their hearts. They make choices with colors and lines—some strong and bold, some feathery and impressionistic. Together, they help us to see the potential within.

That's how creative vision works. Like an artist mixing paints, creative vision mixes optimism with realism. The process helps us to focus on large and small details.

The GMP process helps a park sketch out its fundamental purpose. What is Gateway all about? What should visitors be able to enjoy here? What historic buildings and natural spaces are most important to tell the stories and protect critical plants and animals? What services should be provided by us? By others?

Those decisions will not be made by the National Park Service in a closed room. The GMP requires us to talk to Gateway's owners—the American people. We want you to tell us what you want and need from our three units at Sandy Hook, Jamaica Bay and Staten Island. Visit our website to fill out a comment form or call the park office at **718-354-4628** to request one.

Once we have heard your comments, the park will take another look and come up with draft alternatives. Once again, the public will have a chance to comment and help us refine the plan.

Finally, we begin to add color to the vision we have sketched out together. Buildings like Floyd Bennett Field's Ryan Center, where Amelia Earhart and Wiley Post once visited, are restored. Endangered species like the piping plover repopulate protected coastal habitats. Students have fun learning history and science through hands-on programs. Visitors enjoy clean beaches and green hiking trails.

Optimistic? Sure. Realistic? We think so. What we plan together will help make Gateway a better park for years to come.

Making this vision come true will be a shared responsibility, a shared labor of love and pride and a shared success story.

Linda Canzanelli
Acting Superintendent

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

Students Place Jacob Riis on a Pedestal



This past April, a bust of Jacob Riis “returned” to its pedestal almost 50 years after the original bust disappeared, thanks to a dedicated teacher and class of students from Immaculate Conception School in Jamaica Estates, Queens.

Journalist Jacob Riis, best known as the author of *How the Other Half Lives*, immigrated to America in 1870. Riis spent much of his life documenting the living conditions of some of New York City’s poorest residents. In the 1940s, to commemorate Riis’ support and passion for parks, a bronze bust in his likeness was placed near Bay 9 at Jacob Riis Park. Sadly, the bust was stolen from its pedestal in the 1960s, before Riis Park was included in the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area.

A few years ago, teacher Carl Ballenas challenged his students to learn the rich history of their neighborhood. These Aquinas Honor Society students discovered

that Riis had spent much of his life there. They were so impressed with his life’s accomplishments that they chose him as their class “hero.” Once they learned that his bust was missing from Riis Park, they sprang into action. They contacted Gateway to find out how to donate a new bust. They also commissioned artist David Ostro to create a new bust of their hero.

In addition to the unveiling, the event included readings from the Honor Society students’ book about Riis’ life as well as students visiting from Riis’ native Denmark.

Coca-Cola Grant Launches Expanded Kayak and Biking Programs



Photo: Harold Hohne

One of the most exciting ways to see Jamaica Bay is sitting in a kayak right in the middle of the bay. This summer, Gateway received a \$50,000 donation from Coca-Cola through the National Park Foundation. This donation allowed Gateway’s Jamaica Bay Unit to expand its kayaking program and to purchase bicycle

racks. The check donation ceremony took place at Riis Landing, where a new kayak landing will open in 2011. Since 2009, Jamaica Bay Unit has offered free summer kayaking at Canarsie Pier and hopes to expand to other sites in addition to Riis Landing. Gateway is one of eight national parks that received a donation through Coca-Cola’s new initiative “America is Your Park,” which encourages Americans to “come out and play” at their national parks.

“Rude Awakenings” Saves Lives



For the sixth year, the Sandy Hook Unit Law Enforcement (LE) Rangers and members of the Sandy Hook Structural Engine Company participated in the Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST) *Rude Awakenings* program. The program, which encourages safe driving

among high school students, takes place prior to prom nights and summer vacations. Personal testimonies, presentations, and interactive field activities show students the tragic consequences of driving under the influence.

Rude Awakenings is administered by the Middletown Township Police Department. Gateway’s law enforcement rangers at Sandy Hook Unit assist with the administration of the program at other area high schools throughout the year. Approximately 1,200 students take the program, not only from MAST (a magnet high school located within the park) but from several area schools as well.

“Kids Don’t Float”



Kids don’t float—unless they wear life jackets. A new life jacket station was unveiled to the public this past summer at Nichols Marina, located at Great Kills Park, part of Gateway’s Staten Island Unit. The “Kids Don’t Float” kiosk allows boaters to borrow the jackets simply by taking them off the hook, without having to check

them out or leave a deposit. Eight jackets in three different sizes—infant, child and youth—are available. The life jackets were donated by the United States Coast Guard, with Nichols Marina donating the construction of the station.

Treasure Your Island



Photo: Tamra Walker

The second annual *Treasure Your Island* Staten Island Community Awareness Day was held at the Joan & Alan Berikow Jewish Community Center. Gateway’s Staten Island Unit participated with the Jewish Community Center, the Greenbelt, and Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve.

Treasure Your Island showcases

nearly two dozen organizations that celebrate the treasures found on Staten Island. The program included music and dance performed by students from P.S. 36 and 69, the band STOUT and the Jewish Community Center Israeli Dancers.

Citizens Keep Beaches Clean at Staten Island and Jamaica Units



At the Staten Island Unit, 150 volunteers from the New York Police Department (NYPD) Law Enforcement Explorers program worked with park staff to clean beaches at Great Kills and Fort Wadsworth. The Explorers came from I.S. 72 on Staten Island and work through NYPD Community Affairs Bureau – Youth Services

Section. The Explorers program is designed to instill a sense of leadership and community involvement in youth ages 14-20. Nearly 200 bags of shoreline debris were removed.

Citizens living near Gateway’s Jamaica Bay Unit also took part in a uniquely New York-style beach cleanup. The Joseph P. Addabbo Memorial Bridge site has been an important place for spiritual and religious ceremonies, particularly for those of the Hindu faith. Frequently, religious offerings such as fruit, flowers and cloth are left behind and this has caused environmental impacts. On April 24, a group from Shiva Mandir, a local Hindu temple, took to the beach to clean the shoreline and demonstrate their commitment to leave no trace. Other efforts include the filming of a local TV show by Hindu leaders about keeping NPS beaches clean and park rangers speaking to an audience of 2,000 at an annual reading of the *Ramayana*. The park and community continue to work together in mutual respect, understanding, and discovery.

“Hooping” It Up at Miller Field



Teams from Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Long Island “hooped it up” at Gateway’s third annual 5-on-5 Basketball Tournament held this past summer at Staten Island Unit’s Miller Field. The tournament spanned five weekends over the course of the summer and it remains the field’s most popular event that is not part of organized league athletics.

YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

The Long and Winding "Road"



Visitors celebrated the ribbon-cutting for the latest extension of the Sandy Hook Unit's Multiple-Use Pathway (MUP) by bringing their bikes and in-line skates out to the park for a spin. The scenic asphalt pathway adds two more miles to the existing MUP and completes the loop connecting North Beach Plaza, Gunnison Beach Plaza and the Mortar Battery at Fort Hancock.

The pathway travels past dunes, maritime forests, salt marshes, ocean beaches, bayside waters and historic sites associated with America's military past. Pedestrians, cyclists, in-line skaters and people who use wheelchairs can enjoy the park safely, away from motor traffic, at a leisurely pace. The Sandy Hook MUP begins at the entrance of the park and extends a total of seven miles.

Over the last six years, the NPS has received \$4.7 million to construct the MUP system. Funding for Phases 1 and 2 came from a combination of appropriations, including Line Item Construction,

U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highways Funds, Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and the Federal Highways Public Lands Grant Program. Gateway received an additional \$810,000 secured in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act to begin the planning and future construction of the Sandy Hook MUP system. It is anticipated the final phase of construction will commence in 2011-2012.

Historic Jet Fuel Pipeline Removed



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers supervised the removal of a jet fuel pipeline from Floyd Bennett Field, located in Gateway's Jamaica Bay Unit. Congress appropriated \$2.4 million to investigate and remediate possible jet fuel contamination. It took two weeks to remove the length of jet fuel pipeline that led to the

shoreline, where Navy seaplanes used to refuel during the years when Floyd Bennett served as a Naval Air Station.

Ferry Dock Makes Travel Easier for Visitors



Sandy Hook Unit's newly installed Ferry Dock opened this spring. This summer the dock served two ferry companies, which brought more than 19,000 visitors directly to Sandy Hook between Memorial Day and the end of September. Shuttle buses dropped off visitors at North Beach, Gunnison and

Lots D and E. The new floating dock is the first phase of a dock system that aims to serve ferry riders, park and partner needs. Since Sandy Hook's distance by car limits educational and research opportunities at the Hook, Gateway ultimately plans for an expanded dock.

Giving Comfort to Sandy Hook Visitors



Several Beach Center boardwalks and comfort stations were rehabilitated this year at Gateway's Sandy Hook Unit, thanks to funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The retaining wall at Beach Center B was replaced with recycled content timbers.

Deteriorating boardwalks were replaced with recycled material boardwalks and roll-out mats, making access to the beach much easier for pedestrians. Bathroom partitions, sink countertops, hand dryers and other fixtures were replaced to improve energy efficiency, performance and appearance.

Frank Charles Park Gets a Makeover

New playground surfaces, rebuilt picnic tables and benches and resurfaced tennis courts gave Frank Charles Park a fresh face this fall. At this 20-acre park in Gateway's Jamaica Bay Unit, NPS employees have installed water-saving sprinklers and new timers for lighting, removed potential hazards such as dead wood and recast water fountains. Athletic fields are scheduled for restoration in spring 2011, but recreational activities have already stepped up including kayaking, natural history explorations such as seining and even arts and crafts programs. Enhanced public programming is taking place through the cooperative efforts of Gateway and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.



PEOPLE MAKING PARKS BETTER

From High School Uniforms to a Ranger Hat



A fresh infusion of youthful energy, drive and fun returned to the National Parks of New York Harbor (NPNH) in the form of the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) employees. Under the direction of Gateway and NPNH staff, 30 high school students from New Jersey and all five New York City boroughs assumed their summer duties at park sites.

Some YCC employees learn about the program from their teachers. Other students came to the YCC through a referral from the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC), which holds a weeklong environmental training institute at Fort Wadsworth for students from all ethnic backgrounds.

Some YCC employees are already thinking about a career in the NPS. Brooklynite Regina Haliburton, who worked at Fort Tilden, part of Gateway's Jamaica Bay Unit, says, "I hope to gain the resources I need to become a park ranger, or park police, or something to

do with the environment, because I didn't have those resources before.”

After a summer with the YCC, what's the next step to a career in the NPS? This year, NPNH sponsored a new program to bridge the gap from high school student to park ranger. Gateway staff supervised four high school students and two incoming college freshmen as the inaugural members of the Youth Intern Program (YIP). This multi-year, multi-level intake program introduces students to NPS careers, resources and policy. Each year NPNH will bring in a new group of students, who will be mentored by the previous year's interns. As college students, YIPs can transition to the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). After college, they can apply for permanent jobs with the NPS.

Volunteering is Always in Fashion



About 35 volunteers from Macy's and the Bank of America celebrated National Park Week by living up to the slogan on the backs of their t-shirts: "Volunteering is Always in Fashion." They made their fashion statements at Frank Charles Park, located in Gateway's Jamaica Bay Unit,

while raking baseball fields and playground areas, bagging leaves and litter from the shore, and painting facilities on the park grounds. The volunteers not only looked their best, but helped the park look its best thanks to their hard work.

"A Million Trees" Takes Root at Gateway

Gateway partnered with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the New York Restoration Project to participate in the MillionTreesNYC Spring Planting Day. Two plantings took place this year, in April and October. More than 325 volunteers participated in the two combined events, planting more than 3,500 trees and 700 shrubs across approximately 5.5 acres in the "North Forty" at Jamaica Bay Unit's Floyd Bennett Field. Volunteers contributed their time to replant a forest. Families and individuals from the New York metropolitan area joined several organizations to plant native species which attract and protect wildlife at Floyd Bennett Field. Previously the area was covered with invasive non-native plants, which spread rapidly and outcompete native vegetation. The event attracted a diverse audience with a common objective: to plant trees in an urban forest, to slow global warming and to "green" New York City.



CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Species Count... and So Did You



Jamaica Bay's third BioBlitz was held June 12-13. More than 100 volunteers from the New York City metropolitan area explored Floyd Bennett Field, Plumb Beach and Dead Horse Bay to document as many living species as possible. Scientists, naturalists and volunteers catalogued 478 animal and plant species. The final species totals during the 24-hour event included 53 bird species, 196 species of marine and terrestrial invertebrates and 199 types of plants, both terrestrial and aquatic. NPS once again partnered with Brooklyn College, part of the City University of New York, to organize the event and bring in talent from over a dozen cooperating organizations. The study sites, all a convenient shuttle ride from "base camp" at Floyd Bennett Field, presented a variety of habitats: sand dunes, shallow bays, salt marshes, grasslands and mixed woodlands. For the first time at a Jamaica Bay BioBlitz, species were plotted onto GIS data layers for interactive

Google Earth mapping. Results can be seen at www.nps.gov/gate/naturescience/bioblitz-2010-species-data.htm. A booklet summarizing photos and results is currently being compiled for publication.

Threatened and Endangered Species and Species of Special Concern



Overall, 2010 was a successful year for Gateway's threatened and endangered species program. Most notably, the piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) thrived at Sandy Hook Unit. The plover is federally listed as a threatened species. A total of 45 pairs fledged 79 chicks. Breezy Point, part of Gateway's Jamaica Bay Unit, experienced a less successful season resulting in only 15 pairs fledging nine chicks. Predation from gulls, feral cats and crows as well as human disturbances contributed to the relatively low success rate.

The least tern (*Sterna antillarum*) produced a combined total of 475 adults and nearly 100 fledglings at Sandy Hook and Jamaica Bay. The American oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) has experienced recent population declines for Atlantic coast populations, but not at Gateway. Approximately 40 nesting pairs were observed on Gateway beaches this year.

Black skimmers (*Rynchops niger*) at Sandy Hook yielded 91 chicks from 35 pairs this season. Sandy Hook osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), a New York Species of Special Concern, also had a successful year, fledging 16 chicks from 10 pairs.

Significant numbers of seabeach amaranth (*Amaranthus pumilus*) were observed in 2010. Nearly 1,000 plants were reported at Sandy Hook, representing more than 90% of New Jersey's total population. Approximately 200 plants were observed at Breezy Point.

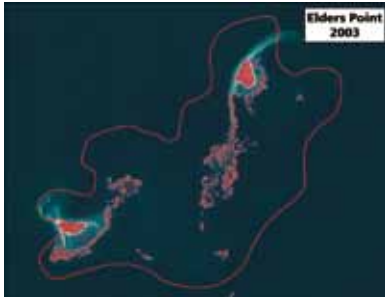
Rare Plants Discovered



Rare plants were discovered at two of Gateway's units this year. Rangers exploring a small wet meadow along the edge of Jamaica Bay discovered a small colony of the rare fen orchid (*Liparis loeselii*) under a tangle of marsh plants and poison ivy. This delicate wetland plant was last recorded on western Long Island in 1896, 114 years ago. The entire plant generally measures less than six inches tall, with small green flowers. The smooth cliff brake fern (*Pellaea glabella ssp. glabella*) was found growing at Fort Wadsworth in full

sunlight near one of the historic fortifications. A plant listed as threatened by the New York State Natural Heritage program, it measures just a few inches tall and can be observed in only a handful of places in New York State.

Jamaica Bay Marshland Restoration



Extensive progress has continued on the restoration of Elder's Point (East) salt marsh in Jamaica Bay. With sand placement now complete, the majority of the 60-acre new marsh surface has been planted with saltmarsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*). A mixture of salt hay (*Spartina patens*), spike grass (*Distichlis spicata*), and saltmarsh cordgrass have been planted in lower elevations at the site. More than 700,000 plants have been successfully established.



The National Park Service, in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation,

New York City Department of Environmental Protection and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey developed a five-year monitoring and adaptive management plan. This plan will assess the overall restoration efforts and the achievement of acceptable standards of salt marsh structure and function.

Marine Protected Area Status Achieved

This year, Gateway was added to the National System of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). A joint effort between the U.S. Departments of Interior and Commerce, the National System of Marine Protected Areas coordinates MPAs managed by diverse agencies to work more effectively on issues of common concern. Joining the national system does not restrict or require changes affecting management of existing MPAs. MPAs are defined areas where natural or cultural resources are given greater protection than in the surrounding waters. In the U.S., these areas may span a range of habitats including the open ocean, coastal areas, intertidal zones, estuaries, and the Great Lakes. Gateway is a multiple-use MPA where fishing, along with other extractive activities, are permitted. Inclusion in the system does not affect fishing regulations or other activities in the park.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Family Fun at Sandy Hook



Weekend events in late spring and early fall celebrated both the natural and historic charms of Sandy Hook Unit, drawing a combined total of more than 3,000 visitors.

Coastal Defense Day and *Ocean Fun Day* took place on May 23, thanks to the collaboration of several partners: the Sandy Hook Foundation, the New Jersey Marine Science Consortium, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association and the Army Ground Forces Association (AGFA). More than 2,000 visitors chose from a variety of activities. The Foundation hosted a “Sandy Stamp” program, where visitors collected stamps and received Frisbees and sand buckets if they visited all six locations within historic Fort Hancock. The Foundation sponsored a trolley, providing a green alternative for families wishing to visit each site.

Fort Hancock Days took place from October 22-24, celebrating the anniversary of the founding of Fort Hancock. More than 1,000 visitors attended events that included a lantern tour of Fort Hancock with AGFA, afternoon tours through areas rarely open to the public

and loading a 1903 six-inch coastal artillery gun at Battery Gunnison.

A Full Menu of Programs



Ranger-led environmental boat tours of Jamaica Bay drew visitors from across the metropolitan area to discover this sometimes vigorous, sometimes fragile ecosystem. Sandy Hook’s menu of popular standards like lighthouse tours and history walks included new programs such as *Junior-Junior Rangers* for very young outdoor enthusiasts. *Crustacean of the Day* at Sandy

Hook and *Seine and Search* at North Channel Bridge introduced casual beach visitors to local marine life. Roving rangers at Breezy Point offered information to anglers and other beach users about birds that nest at the beach and the importance of protecting their habitat.

Staten Island interpretive staff welcomed hundreds of visitors at their open houses, tours of the “secret places” at Fort Wadsworth and the ever-popular performances by Staten Island OutLOUD. Sandy Hook staff brought back some old favorites, including *Beach Apparatus Drill*, *Lighthouse to Lighthouse* and *Fort Hancock Days*. Rangers also offered special programs such as *A Day in the Life of the Hudson*, when students test the waters of the river from Troy, New York to the Narrows. *Junior Rangerpalooza*, held at the Great Kills Education Field Station, included bird watching, making crafts using recycled materials, face painting and making bird silhouettes to prevent collisions with field station windows.

Gateway’s recreational kayaking program allowed more than 1,500 paddlers this summer to feel the drift of the tide, the push of the wind and the spray of the water off their bow. Rangers provided interpretive context to the recreational kayaking program offered at Gateway’s Jamaica Bay Unit. Before embarking on the water, participants learned how the bay had been set aside as park land, ultimately becoming part of the National Park system. During the paddle, the group discovered the plant and animal life of Jamaica Bay and considered the critical resource issues in the bay.

Teacher-Ranger-Teacher



Interpretive staff at Gateway's Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge hosted a Teacher-Ranger-Teacher this summer. Nena Shaheed, a science teacher at Pacific High School in Brooklyn, worked with rangers, naturalists and research scientists to discover the natural environment here in the boroughs of New York City. In turn, she

shared with park staff ways that they can connect with urban youth. Shaheed plans to bring her students to Gateway during the school year to experience Gateway's great outdoors.

Protecting Your Turf



A team of NPS landscape maintenance field staff from across the United States renovated 6,000 square feet of soccer fields at Miller Field, part of Gateway's Staten Island Unit. The team worked alongside park staff, roto-tilling the recreational fields to reduce compaction in

areas where the turf was no longer growing. In addition, four other fields were aerated to help improve turf conditions. The project was the focus of a training session at Gateway conducted by the Landscape Maintenance Skills Development Program and coordinated through the NPS Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation (OCLP).

New York City Marathon



More than 45,000 runners from around the world gathered at Fort Wadsworth, part of Gateway's Staten Island Unit, on November 7 for the start of the New York City Marathon. Beginning in 1970 with only 127 runners, it is now the largest participatory sports event in the United States and continues to grow in size.

Bike New York Tour



The 33rd annual Five Boro Bike tour of New York City took place this spring. More than 30,000 cyclists rode 42 miles through the city's five boroughs, ending at Fort Wadsworth on Staten Island. There riders were treated to music, food and a view of New York Harbor from the Overlook at Fort Wadsworth.

Surf's Up!

The 26th annual All-Women Lifeguard Tournament took place at Gateway's Sandy Hook Unit. In July, 216 surf-lifeguards traveled from four states to compete in 10 contests. Events included the run-swim-run, where women run the length of a football field, swim the length of three football fields, then run the length of another football field to the finish.



Photo: Mary DiBiase Blach



GATEWAY: ONE PARK, MANY PLACES TO VISIT

Nearly nine million visitors a year experience the natural wonders, recreational opportunities and historic treasures Gateway National Recreation Area has to offer. Gateway's 26,000 acres span two states and three New York City boroughs. Before you visit, learn more at www.nps.gov/gate/ to find out what you can do at each of the park's three units: Jamaica Bay, Staten Island and Sandy Hook.

*For more information,
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