

Natural Resources Protective Association

Coalition Against Water Disposal of Contaminated Sediments

Post Office Box 050328 • Staten Island, NY 10305



WINTER 2019

In Memory of Edward "Kerry" Sullivan

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NRPA'S 2019 NEW YEAR'S DAY HIKE

by Jim Scarcella

Over 65 people attended the 29th Annual New Year's Day Civic/ Environmental Hike on Tuesday January 1, 2019.

NRPA co-sponsored the hike with Protectors of Pine Oak Woods and the Bay Terrace Beautification Group.

We initially gathered at the Buffalo Street entrance to Gateway Great Kills Park and then carpooled down to the bathhouse. The weather was warm, in great contrast to the frigid temperatures of the 2018 hike.

Jim Scarcella welcomed everyone to the celebration, and we also remembered people such as Dick Buegler, Lou Figurelli, George Pratt, Herman Zagge, Clarence Martino, Dan Whalen, Matt Pavis, Pete Glissman, Richard Manning and Kerry Sullivan, all of whom sacrificed and inspired us to work to protect our rivers, bays and wetlands.

The wind had really pushed out the bay water, exposing the low tide muddy sediment



29th Annual Beach Walk attendees

filled with razor clams, oysters and horseshoe crab and their carcasses. The beach was wind swept and as you can probably guess, this doesn't mean swept-clean. There were dock pieces, straws, refreshment containers of all shapes and sizes, plastic bags, fishing rags, polystyrene pieces, twine, crab pots, beer cans and more. Toys were playfully represented by a plastic rocket with barnacles, a yellowed plastic bathtub tugboat, tennis balls, baseballs, worn out golf balls, a fluorescent Styrofoam ball, a rusted metal Matchbox truck missing two tires, and a baby doll's head.

Out at Crookes Point (which was once known as Crookes Island) we tried to find a 'wind block' to defer the gusts, but no such luck. We passed around cookies, cider, coffee and fruit and celebrated the New Year. We also raised a toast to the new NYC ban on Styrofoam containers and packaging.

We walked west, straight into the steady breeze and my 6 year old nephew, John Scarcella Jr, had a great time finding sea glass and some of the previously mentioned toys. We also noticed that the erosion along the Harbor Channel is very extensive and the stated depth of 10 feet is an aberration, the real depth is 8 feet or even less.

This great park was starting to be affected by the government shutdown. Garbage was accumulating at the Point and back of the harbor. Let's hope the shutdown is resolved soon.

The wildlife observed included Herring Gulls, Brant Geese, Mallards, Buffleheads and Ruddy Ducks.

Special thanks to Eileen Monreale, Elaine Croteau, Cliff Hagen, Frank Arcabasio, The Scarcella's, Tony Rose, Howie, Rob Carrano, Mike and Susanna Aquino, Clay Halvorsen,

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and all who joined us for the fun. It was a fantastic start to the New Year!

Join us for the 30th Annual New Year's Hike in 2020!

MEMBERS POLICE THE POLAR PLUNGE

By Tony Rose

Not only was the day misty and overcast, but there was a steady breeze and the temperature crouched in the low 40's. Bathers lined up in the South Fin Grill, their warm-up suits reflecting their varied origins. Young people from high school swim teams, lacrosse and football squads bumped into college fraternity brothers and parent and child teams looking to bond over doing something silly together.



NYPD's Harbor Unit on station off South Beach

Whiffs of alcohol sometimes wafted through the chill air, indicating some swimmers had sought courage or antifreeze prior to braving the briny deep.

It was Sunday morning and these hundreds of daredevils had all turned out to be participants in the Polar Plunge, a fund-raiser intended to benefit the Special Olympics.

In recognition of the risk/benefit calculus regarding a December dip, adult supervision had turned out in force. The NYPD made an appearance, but were greatly outnumbered by Park Enforcement Police, Parks Department staffers, CERT Team volunteers (Community Emergency Response Team) and members of NYC EMS. The medics were dressed in winter coats or immersion suits reflecting the amphibious nature of the wet/dry operation.

Offshore, members of the NYPD Harbor units manned two boats with zodiacs at the ready. Sandwiched in

between, seated in their kayaks, NRPA members Rich Dewar and Tony Rose bobbed in the swell, maintaining station just beyond the surf zone. Along with them, two other members of Kayak Staten Island, Qui and Nick sat in the surf waiting for something to not happen.



Kayak Staten Island and NRPA members stand watch during the Polar Plunge

A power rake manned by a Parks Department staffer combed the beach repeatedly, looking for the stray piece of broken glass bottle or syringe washed up on the shore.

The first wave into the water were the organizers with a contingent of Special Olympics athletes. In and out. That was to be the pattern.

The first group was sedate and quick. The following groups; not so much. The Parks staffers let groups of forty to fifty participants at a time roar down the beach, howling like Vikings and into the water. The first few batches were uneventful. Crowds of mostly young people ran down into the water, jumped up and down in water up to their knees and ran out. Others on the beach, like Rocky's brother-in-law Pauly, stood waiting with towels and a bathrobe to take their kids home for steak and eggs.

And so, it went for a while. The wind would blow us in to the surf and we would back-paddle before the wind and waves tipped us over.

Then, one group went in and a crowd gathered in the shallows. A few men held a young man's head above the water. They tried to help him up but that wasn't happening. We started paddling toward shore, but they lifted him by the arms and carried him to the beach. EMS had already starting to move towards the commotion. His limbs flopped freely as they secured his head and neck and moved him to a longboard on his back.

Blankets applied, the victim was placed on a motorized cart and taken away.

Qui yelled to me, "Tony, you ARE the medical response right now!"

Looking along the shore, we saw that every medical responder had left the beach to accompany the evacuation from the beach. I nudged the automated external defibrillator in the dry bag at my feet.

News reports later indicated that the victim suffered two fractured vertebrae in his neck. They were stabilized during a procedure at Staten Island University Hospital where he regained sensation and motion shortly thereafter. There has been a GoFundMe account started to assist this student athlete from St Peter's High School. You can find it by a little research on SILive.

It appears he was off balance, hit by a wave and then trampled by subsequent participants. Later groups were somewhat more subdued. They could feel confident, though, that legions of first responders were ready to assist them. Finishing with no further casualties,



EMS workers tend to an injured swimmer on the shore

the harbor unit sailed away and we paddled back to our entry point having fulfilled our responsibility without our getting wet.

STATEN ISLAND VIDEOS OF 2018

By Charlie Olson

Here are some of the 2018 videos that were made on SI, either in the studios and that were made on SI either in the studios of Community TV of Staten Island on Pat Brady's Environmental Issues show or on site by The Environment TV. They all can be viewed by using the links included or by going to: www.theenvironmenttv.com OR

(continued next page)

Youtube's [TheEnvironmentTV](#)

1 - Environmental Issue's *Ghost Fleet of Staten Island* with Tony Rose as guest and Pat Brady Host/Producer; Charlie Olson is one of the volunteers on camera, and put this on YouTube and the web site.

[Control/click here for video](#)

2 - *Atlantic Drilling - The Environmental Response* with Tony Rose again, among others, as guest and Pat Brady Host/Producer; Charlie Olson is one of the volunteers on camera, and put this on YouTube and the web site.

[Control/click here for video](#)

3 - *North Shore Wetlands Last Stand* with Jack Bolembach, Kathy Romanelli, Mark Blazejeski, Saul Porter and Ton Rose as guest and Pat Brady Host/Producer; Charlie Olson is one of the volunteers on camera, and put this on YouTube and the web site.

[Control/click here for video](#)

4 - *Staten Island Student Summit* with SI High School Students, teachers, SI and NJ environmental groups learning at the beaches and shores of Great Kills Park. Edited by Tony Rose and The Environment TV.

[Control/click here for video](#)

5 - *Bike Rally At New Springville Greenway*, Staten Island Bike protestors rally about traffic problems for SI pedestrians and bikers on a busy SI street by the SI Mall. Cameras, etc., by The Environment TV.

[Control/click here for video](#)

6 - *It's My Park Event at Graniteville* with Jim Scarcella at a SI cleanup explaining the what and why for this area of SI. Cameras, etc., by The Environment TV.

[Control/click here for video](#)

7 - *Staten Island's North Shore Community Supported Agriculture Group* with Lenny Librizzi and The Environment TV explaining about participating in farmer fresh produce brought to SI areas throughout most of the year.

[Control/click here for video](#)

8 - "It's Not Over" Flying Graniteville Staten Island with Residents rallying for their wetlands and forest area by The Environment TV

[Control/click here for video](#)

9 - *Saving Graniteville Wetlands and Forests* narrated by Jack Bolembach with Jack, Gabriella Velardi-Ward explaining the problems facing the wetlands and forest of their area. Videoing, etc., by The Environment TV.

[Control/click here for video](#)

2018 STATEN ISLAND STUDENT SUMMIT

By Tony Rose

The weather was fine and the mood was finer at the 2018 Staten Island Student Summit. This event hosted by the National Park Service at Great Kills Park was an inspiring day. The second edition of this annual affair was bigger and better than the preceding one. Last year's Summit, a pilot program introduced sixty middle-school students and a half-dozen teachers to the joys of the shore.



Newcomers to the shore show off their treasures

ing paddles wildly in the air in a presentation on small boats and other topics. The rest of the participants meanwhile attended a series



Howie Fishbein and friends teach the world to fish

of six flash-learning stations on topics such as fresh-water wetlands, horseshoe crabs, non-point source pollution, local animals presented by the SI Zoo, and oyster restoration in the harbor. After a brief break, the cohorts swapped roles; the beach trippers attended the round-robin learning stations and the second group headed to the shore.



Students gather for 2018 Student Summit

This is a recurring program presented by the NRPA and Clean Ocean Action and the 2018 version was host to 140 students and twenty instructors who reveled in the programs offered. Half the group attended one of six shoreline field trips like salt-water fishing, a beach clean-up, an orientation to SCUBA, seining for local sea life, Jim Scarcella wav-



Rich Dewar and Joe Schiavone explained what lies beneath the waves

Presentations were well-received and the teachers enjoyed the day as much as the kids. All the schools asked to keep in touch and hoped to attend NRPA clean-ups in the spring.

Charlie Olson of TheEnvironmentTV.com added to the video library of Summit archives. A video presentation of the event is in the offing. Post-event production is a massive undertaking and we are



Clean Ocean Action's diorama shows the effects of non-point source pollution.



Chuck Perry preps a presentation

looking forward to an extended presentation. To view a four-minute video on last year's event, type, "Staten Island Student Summit" on your computer's browser. Charlie and I are seeking to establish an Environmental Communication Group and are looking for people who might be interested in learning how to produce professional videos focusing on these issues. There is an extended explanation elsewhere in this newsletter.



Tony Rose gives the kids the info on local invertebrates

Support was provided by a number of organizations such as the AARP, the Zoo and a grant from the Borough President's office. The soul of the program, COA's Amanda Wheeler said farewell as she is retiring from Clean Ocean Action at the end of 2018. She will be sorely missed.

Each student received a drawstring backpack and an insulated drinking bottle to introduce 'Reduce/Re-use/Recycle and lessen the proliferation of single-use plastic products. These complimentary items contained the names and web addresses of the sponsoring organizations in hopes of creating sustained interest in our mission and our activities.

Be ready next fall, we'll be looking for your help in 2019.

Visit us at www.nrpa.com
Like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/nrpa)

SOUTHEAST RARITAN BAY

by Jim Scarcella

Down by Tottenville, there is a "resort by the beach" known as Conference House Park. It's located at the southernmost tip of New York State and many people have never heard of it. It boasts stunning water views, beautiful hiking trails and four historic buildings. There is an old Lenape burial ground there too.

The namesake of the park is The Conference House, which dates to 1680 and was the location of an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate an end to the Revolutionary War. The other three buildings located there include the Rutan-Beckett House, named for Assemblyman William Henry Rutan, which dates to 1850, the Ward House which dates to 1830 and the Biddle House which dates to around 1845. Today, these historic homes are museums and provide a fascinating glimpse into the lives of their prior residents.

The park stretches along Satterlee Street, Hylan Boulevard, Surf Avenue, and Page Avenue. At the bottom of Page Avenue, the Parks Department accommodates Kayak Staten Island, an amazing group lead by Jackie, with help from Tony Rose, Rob Carrano, Bill Fitzgerald, Rey and his family and NRPA folks including myself, Howie and Maryellen Fishbein, Chuck Perry and Ray Matarazzo. The park itself is cared for by John Kilcullen and his team.

The Page Avenue parking lot was recently reconstructed, and will hopefully be open in early 2019. In the meantime, Kayak SI and NRPA teamwork cleaned the beach in early October.

We set out to the south west towards Surf and Manhattan Avenues. This is adjacent to the Governor's Office of



The Conference House

Join NRPA Today
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Storm Recovery (GOSR) Living Breakwaters project, where oyster reefs constructed by NY/NJ Baykeeper and the Billion Oyster project are to be placed in the bay waters. The resulting reefs will provide habitat, disperse wave energy, and be an educational workshop for decades to come. Construction is slated to start in Summer 2019.

There wasn't an overwhelming amount of trash, but we still collected more than 200 lbs. of garbage.

The Conference House Park and beach are a treasure! Please join us to clean up the shoreline adjacent to Conference House itself, at Satterlee Street and Hylan Boulevard on Saturday May 4, 2019. An Ecology Day with NRPA and NYC H2O led by Matt Malina are also part of the days event and several middle schools and high schools are expected to participate.

Special thanks to Councilman Joe Borelli for supporting this event!

RIDGEWOOD RESERVOIR HAS BEEN SAVED!

by Ida Sanoff

About ten years ago, we heard about a weird place called Ridgewood Reservoir. It was located along the Brooklyn/Queens border and not too many people knew about it. To neighborhood residents, it was a wild, overgrown place that hugged the Jackie Robinson Parkway and a cemetery. But those who really knew it talked about it like it was some sort of magical realm. It was supposed to be incredible habitat loaded with all sorts of rare birds, plants and reptiles. And unfortunately, like other incredible habitats, there were plans to fill and pave over part of it to create some sort of recreational complex.

In the 19th century, New York City residents got their water from various reservoirs. The Ridgewood Reservoir was far out in the farmland of what would become Queens. By 1859, several rivers that flowed through Queens, as well as others that flowed through what would be-

(continued next page)

come Nassau and Suffolk counties, had been dammed and their water flow was directed through a twelve mile long conduit to a series of pumps. The water was pumped into the reservoir basin and then distributed to a large part of what was then the City of Brooklyn. The reservoir was eventually expanded to three large basins and in the early 1900's Highland Park was created on the land that surrounded the original reservoir basin.

The reservoir became obsolete when Brooklyn was incorporated into the City of New York and water started to be pumped into the city from upstate. Gradually, the three large basins returned to nature.

There are some disputes as to when the plans to fill the basins began, but the idea really took hold about twenty years ago. First there were plans to fill one basin and create 20 acres of ballfields. Then there were secret plans to drain all three of the basins because they were considered to be dams that could potentially spring a leak and cause flooding. It was said that the cost of maintaining the basins and ensuring public safety would be enormous. But someone finally figured out that you would need about THREE FEET of rain before the basins would fail. At some point, the NYC Parks Dept. decided it would be best to create a breach in each basin and construct roads between them which would also destroy the wetland and other habitats. But people who knew the area documented that there were at most, a couple of feet of water in the basins, so there was no danger of a breach. The arguments went back and forth for a long time while everyone feared that in a moment, the magical place would vanish. The Highland Park/Ridgewood Reservoir Alliance formed and vowed to preserve the reservoirs. NYC H2O got involved



Ridgewood Reservoir gets protected status from the state after years of activism

too.

The NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was asked to come in and officially map the wetlands. This was needed to start the habitat preservation process, but DEC said that did not have the resources to do the mapping. But people were determined to protect this incredible resource and they wouldn't take no for an answer. So they hired their own wetlands delineator as well as an attorney. The battle raged on for years.

Well, to make a long story short, a dream has come true! In October 2018, NYSDEC designated the area a Class I Freshwater Wetland. It boasts 175 species of plants, at least 160 species of birds and several species of animals and reptiles. The 50 acre reservoir complex was also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This amazing, irreplaceable place has been protected and preserved!

Our heartfelt thanks to all who worked to make this happen.

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Inc.**

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ALICE AUSTEN HOUSE PARK CLEANUP

by *Jim Scarcella*

In November 2018, NRPA teamed up with students from University of Charleston and the NYPD Explorers Club to clean the Alice Austen House Park, in Rosebank, Staten Island.

The day was cloudy with light rain, but our spirits were lifted by all us working together. After a brief introduction, we broke out into teams and walked east toward the US Coast Guard marina. The rocks were slick



Volunteers at the Alice Austen House cleanup

with Sea Lettuce and bladder wrack, two food staples of 'dabbler' waterfowl. These ducks place their heads underneath the surface of the water to find this delicious vegetation.

The debris was numerous and varied, the usual plastic containers were present, but this location had shipping and boating garbage, along with fast food packaging and refreshments. We lifted about 300 pounds of driftwood from the Matthew Buono (he was a Vietnam Veteran) memorial bench area, path, and decorative wall. The wood stair assembly platform was initially covered with sand, straws, cigarette packaging, and Styrofoam, but the students and Police Athletic League kids used shovels, brooms and their bare hands to clean the platform. The young persons were enrolled in the School of Civic Leadership, and it was great to see people of multiple cultures coming together to make our NYC park a better place.

An added bonus was a garter snake that had set up home in a polyurethane container with leaves and moist compost. Many of the youth had never seen or touched a snake, so with some encouragement they let the snake wiggle from hand to arm, all the while the snake gave numerous flicks of its tongue.

Special thanks to Rob, Richie, Howie, Jack Bolembach, Adriano and Ms. Brenda Curry.

The NRPA will hopefully clean Alice Austen Park again in autumn 2019.

FORT WADSWORTH PARK

by *Jim Scarcella*

Perhaps the best park on Staten Island is part of the iconic Gateway National Recreation Area. It's Fort Wadsworth, which is located on our

north east shore.

Before it closed in 1994, Fort Wadsworth was the longest continuously staffed military installation in the country. Its history dates back to the mid 1600's and at various times, it passed through Dutch, British and American control. It was actually a complex of several smaller forts. It has also had numerous other incarcerations: Brewery, hotel, casino, armory, factory, officers' quarters, military outpost, training center, Coast Guard residential neighborhood, and more.

In the early 1960's, the tie-back tensioning cables for the Verrazano-

Narrows bridge were installed here,



one of the marvels of civil engineering.

The best part of the park is the diversity of the forest, the tidal wetlands and the beach, where a variety of wildlife can be found. Many species of birds, including House Sparrows, Juncos, Northern Cardinals, and many waterfowl including Brant Geese and Bufflehead Ducks are here in the autumn and winter.

The Gateway National Parks, created by an act of Congress in 1972, are treasures that deserve our support. I urge you to take the time to enjoy Fort Wadsworth, which is truly deserving of its national recognition.

Upcoming Events:

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW MEETING LOCATION at the **Regina M. McGinn, MD Medical Education Center** at Staten Island University Hospital 2nd floor, 475 Seaview Ave, Staten Island, NY 10305

Tuesday, February 5, 2019 NRPA monthly meeting

Tuesday, March 5, 2019 NRPA monthly meeting

Saturday, March 23, 2019 - NRPA beach cleanup at Oakwood Beach at Tarlton Street

Tuesday, April 2, 2019 NRPA monthly meeting

Saturday, April 23, 2019 – NRPA beach cleanup at New Dorp Beach

Saturday, May 4, 2019 – NRPA Beach cleanup with NYC H2O at Conference House Park

Tuesday, May 7, 2019 NRPA monthly meeting

Saturday, May 18, 2019 – NRPA beach cleanup at Oakwood Beach

Saturday, June 1, 2019 – NRPA beach cleanup with Urban Park Ranger at Lemon Creek Park, Sharrott Avenue Pier

Tuesday, June 4, 2019 NRPA monthly meeting

Saturday, June 15, 2019 – NRPA beach cleanup with Staten Island Zoo at Lemon Creek Park at Seguire Avenue

Dedicated to preserving the marine environment, the Natural Resources Protective Association is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

All memberships expire on December 31, so please renew NOW!

(All memberships paid after October 1 will also receive credit for the upcoming year)

Are You A Member? Have You Renewed? Please Join Us NOW!

- \$15.00 Individual**
 \$25.00 Organization
 \$500.00 Lifetime Member

- \$20.00 Family**
 \$100.00 Sponsor (after 5 payments you become Lifetime member)

YES! I/We want to join the fight!

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Mail to: Natural Resources Protective Association
 C/O Richard Chan, Treasurer
 Post Office Box 050328
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Join NRPA today