Natural Resources Protective Association

Coalition Against Water Disposal of Contaminated Sediments
Post Office Box 050328 - Staten Island, NY 10305



In Memory of Edward "Kerry" Sullivan

SPRING 2018

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Please join or renew your NRPA membership TODAY See page 5

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SEA TURTLES

By Ida Sanoff

For anyone who thinks that climate change is not real, this is a wakeup call. For everyone else, this is a sobering reminder of how human activity impacts marine ecosystems.

An article by Craig Welch, published on January 8, 2018 in National Geographic, provided shocking information about the damaging impacts of climate change on marine animals. The article, entitled "Rising Temperatures Cause Sea Turtles to Turn Female", starts out simply enough. Scientists who studied Pacific green sea turtles were wondering how they were impacted by climate change. The 500 pound turtles nest in only two places in the world, one that is near Australia's Great Barrier Reef and another location several hundred miles away.

The interesting thing about the sea turtles is that the temperature of the sand surrounding the nest will determine the sex of the hatchlings. If the eggs incubate in warmer sand, more of the baby turtles will be female. Scientists initially thought that because of climate change, they might see slightly more females than males. But they were astounded to see that female turtles outnumbered males by 116 to 1. Further studies were even more upsetting. They were able to determine that for at least twenty years, turtles that hatched from eggs at one of the two nesting sites were almost exclusively female.

Then they looked at areas where coral reefs had been destroyed because of higher temperatures. In areas where reefs had bleached, there were far more female turtles than males and in areas where the coral was still in good shape, the turtle ratio was close to normal.

Every species of sea turtle is impacted by

climate change. They are so sensitive to temperature increases that a temperature rise of only a few degrees will eventually result in only females hatching from the eggs. That is, if the eggs hatch at all. If the sand is warm enough, the eggs never hatch; they literally cook inside the nests.

Worldwide, turtles face other threats too. Beach erosion creates cliffs that prevent turtles from getting to nesting areas. Logging may eliminate shade trees from beaches, making the sand even hotter.

You can find the article here: https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/01/australia-green-sea-turtles-turning-female-climate-change-raine-island-sex-temperature/.

It is a wakeup call about the damage that we are doing to our planet.

ATLANTIC DRILLING THREATENS THE OCEANS

By Tony Rose

In December of 2017, word broke that the Trump administration was considering reviving long-dormant plans for exploration of gas and oil off both coasts of the United States. Some drilling had been done ten to twenty years ago, but the results were insubstantial. In the face of a loud public outcry, a moratorium was placed on coastal drilling outside of the Gulf of Mexico, which remains in place.

It has been a long-announced goal of the current administration to expand energy exploration and production in the United States. From "Clean" coal to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Trump administration supports expanding the extraction of these resources. The effort to reduce the size of Bears Ears National Monument was led by lobbyists from the uranium industry. There are over 100 uranium mines surrounding the former boundaries of this public trust

In this Edition

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SEA TURTLES Page 1 Page 5 DEBBIE MANS NOW A DEPUTY COM-ATLANTIC DRILLING THREATENS THE OCEANS Page 1 MISSIONER NRPA LEADS RESPONSE TO ATLANTIC DRILLING Page 2-3 Page 5 VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN BROOKLYN! Page 4 GRANITEVILLE SWAMP PARK CLEANUP Page 6 2017 NRPA, ROSE FOUNDATION, Page 4 \$400,000 ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGES AWARD FOR **BAYKEEPER** CONEY ISLAND CREEK UPCOMING EVENTS Page 6

land, waiting to be remediated and many sites have been identified within the federal preserve. The uranium industry hired a lobbyist who formerly represented coal interests to target the administration and the Department of the Interior.

This successful lobbyist, Andrew Wheeler, is now being considered for Assistant Secretary of the Interior under Ryan Zinke, who spent his career challenging the Environmental Protection Agency and has, since assuming his role in the cabinet, sought to weaken environmental protections and turn publicly-held lands over to use by private corporations.

Government support for the energy extraction industry did not start with The Bush admin-Donald Trump. "adopted Texan" istration, with George Bush, was a friend to Oil and Gas long before he occupied the White House. Haliburton, the oilindustry support services corporation, was led by VP Dick Cheney prior to his ascension to public service. Halliburton made multiple billions (yes, with a 'B') providing support services to America's military during our longest (and ongoing) war in American history in the Middle East.

The law which exempts the oil industry from disclosing the list of contaminants injected into the ground (and sometimes the water table) under great pressure during hydraulic fracturing (or "fracking") is called the Haliburton Exemption. This 'processed water' is infused into rock faults at up to 3,000 PSI to break the rock, expand the faults and allow access to previously inaccessible oil and gas resources.

Some of this water is recovered during the drilling process, but it poses a hazard above the surface of the ground in addition to when it intrudes into the layers of subterranean Processed water contains lubricants and surfactants, which are compounds that lower surface tension between two dissimilar liquids or between a solid and a liquid to help them mix together. A surfactant may act as a detergent or an emulsifier and can include carcinogens like benzene, as well as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which

known endocrine disruptors. The precise formula of this cocktail is protected as 'proprietary information' and withheld from the public as well as from industry competitors.

As much as he was reviled by the energy industry, President Obama was Frack Fan Number One during his tenure. It is easy to understand his drive to encourage America's energy independence. While America produces much coal, oil and gas, our appetite for energy is prodigious. We continued to import oil from the Middle East and Venezuela while also using our own resources. "Cheap Oil: How We Got Here and Will It Last," is a two-part history of the Oil and Gas industry detailed in NRPA newsletters (Winter 2014 and Spring 2015) available on our web-"Cheap Oil" begins in the 1830's in Titusville Pennsylvania with Edwin Drake and the first commercial oil well and takes us up to the strategic geopolitical considerations involving decisions by the Saudis to continue to lift large amounts of petroleum in the face of diminishing prices. (Spoiler alert: Being a 'swing producer' and keeping prices low prevented resurgent Iraq from gaining the capital it needed to become a serious competitor. It kept currency from flowing to Russia in an attempt to limit their political and military movements into the Middle East and kept independent American frackers on the sidelines. Hydraulic Fracturing is an intense, expensive endeavor and only profitable in an environment of relatively higher prices.).

Oil at the wellhead has been inexpensive for the past 4-5 years which saved industry and consumers a lot of money as gasoline prices dropped to two dollars per gallon at one point. Prior to that, Americans had been paying over four dollars per gallon, with prices threatening to climb to



Miss Staten Island 2018, NRPA member, volunteer and sanitation worker, Nicole Doz, at the February 2018 NRPA meeting.

five, before the cycle of boom and bust familiar to the oil industry kicked in.

Gas has only recently begun to increase in price as the world begins to burn through the surpluses that the industry and speculators stashed away years ago. So there is little reason to increase exploration and production at this time, something that even industry experts question.

There are clear economic and environmental threats posed by this initiative. In the wake of the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe, lessons were learned which led to recommendations to prevent a repeat of the nightmare which left a dozen oil workers dead, drastic losses in state revenue due to reductions in tourism and numerous shrimp beds which will never recover. Oil flow was stemmed just in time to prevent fouling of the famous Florida beaches. But the Trump administration is currently working to reverse those commonsense regulations prior to commencing drilling on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Florida has been exempted from this impending initiative.

The NRPA is very concerned about the possibility of irreversible damage to our ecosystems and is working with all concerned to address this issue.

NRPA LEADS RESPONSE TO ATLANTIC DRILLING

By Tony Rose

With the Trump administration seeking to open both coasts of America to oil and gas exploration, there is a scramble on all sides to respond to this initiative. Some in the oil industry believe that there is little need to look off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Florida received an exemption without even asking for one, prior to the announcement.

The Natural Resources Protective Administration, long-pledged to "Fighting to protect our marine environment," looked for ways and allies to resist this activity.

Clean Ocean Action (COA), an alliance of numerous shore and environmental groups in New Jersey, asked if a meeting could be set up with Staten Island's Congressman Dan Donovan to discuss this important issue.

Cindy Zipf, COA's Executive Director supplied an agenda. Two current initiatives are particularly offensive: The SEA act seeks to alter the Marine Mammal Protection Act and reduce public input on the permitting process to enhance oil production. The second issue is the new leasing plan which covers 90 percent of America's coastline.

The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill catastrophe was on the minds of many of us. It was the largest marine oil spill in history and it despoiled many areas of the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to the damage caused by 90 days of uncontrolled petroleum flow, the dispersant used to control the escaped oil did even more damage in some areas. The dispersant joined with the oil and chelated, or solidified. The resulting chunky stuff is known to be an endocrine disruptor. That means that it interferes with the way that hormones function in marine animals. Some shrimp beds will never recover; some have seen shrimp born with no eyes. This material has covered some wetland areas and prevented the growth of sea grasses which stabilize the marshland that protects the shore from flooding and helps breaks down pollutants.

After numerous attempts to schedule a meeting with the Congressman, a sit-down with his local office manager was arranged. We hoped that this introductory meeting to frame the discussion and pass on information would result in a follow-up meeting with the Congressman.

Tony Rose was the representative from the NRPA and scheduled the sit -down. Cindy Zipf represented Clean Ocean Action. Matt Gove, from Brooklyn, represented Surfriders, an ocean advocacy group that began with environmentally inclined surfers and now includes many other ocean protectors. Paul Sieswerda, the Director of Gotham Whale completed the group.

Drilling in the New York area would be preceded by seismic testing conducted by air cannons firing around the clock, with blasts that check in at 250 decibels. Rock concerts register 90 to 110 decibels and standing near a jet engine produces a noise of 125 decibels. Needless to say, this sound would be deafening to humans, let alone to animals with more sensitive hearing.

There is now a resident pod of humpback whales just outside New York Harbor, where they have not been seen for the past two to three hundred years. Gotham Whale runs whale-watching tours twice weekly out of Brooklyn's Sheepshead Bay. These whale enthusiasts are identifying individual animals from markings on their flukes. They are also seeking reports from fisherman, divers and boaters who have seen and photographed the whales in or near the harbor. The seismic testing clearly would kill or at least drive away these cetaceans.

Cindy laid out the agenda and told Pat Ryan, Congressman Donovan's representative that numerous New Jersey members of Congress were circulating a letter opposing the drilling initiative.

Tony explained that there was little need for new oil exploration. Gasoline prices have remained low for the past three years because of a worldwide glut of oil caused by uncontrolled drilling during the last boom. All land-based storage was full and there were over a dozen leased tankers in the Gulf of Mexico serving as impromptu storage depots while speculators waited for prices to come back.

In addition, there are "Shut-ins" -



Cindy Zipf, Clean Ocean Action, Tony Rose, NRPA, Lorraine Perazzo, Gotham Whale Congressman Donovan, Matt Gove, Surfrider, Brian Langloss, Oceana

wells that were producing oil which have temporarily ceased operations due to low prices in hope that creating a shortage would raise the price per barrel. There are also "DUC's" - "Drilled-but-Uncompleted" wells that were put into the ground, because the operators had leases, permits, and contractors in place and paid for, but never produced oil because of the low prices at the pump. There are thousands of shut-ins and DUC's just waiting to go into operation.

Matt explained how drilling endangered jobs, should a spill affect the shorefront industry. Tourism is a multi-billion dollar industry in New York. Eco-tourism is poised to leap into the economy.

Paul added that, surprisingly, most of the whale-watch passengers are European. He invited the Congressman and his staff on a Gotham outing.

Ryan was open to the information and explained that Congressman Donovan was very busy in DC, but hoped they could arrange a follow-up meeting with the Congressman.

A week later, an email arrived asking if the group would be free to meet the next Friday with the Congressman when he was back in the district. The group made plans for the meeting. Paul (in Boston) and Gotham would be represented by Lorraine Perazzo and Brian Langblum, the area rep for Oceana, a national advocacy group for the seas, would also come.

Congressman Donovan was very gracious, explaining that much of his job involved listening to constituents. The group was buoyed by the fact that the Congressman had signed on to a letter signed by a dozen other Republican congressmen asking the administration to prevent drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve.

Tony offered, "You can do no less for Midland Beach."

Between the first and second meetings, a Global Energy Utilization Audit was released by Spencer Dale, chief economist for British Petroleum. In it, he posits that energy use around the world has been slowing in recent years and fossil fuels which

were seen as a scarce resource will not be treated as such in the future. Most of the currently identified oil will probably remain in the ground. Tony discussed this paradigm shift in energy use and provided information about how to access this brief to the Congressman's staff.

We appreciate that the Congressman took the time to meet with us about this important issue that will have long term impacts on the health and welfare of our waterways and coastlines. We will continue to monitor this issue and provide more information as it becomes available.

We urge all shoreline residents to contact their local elected officials to discuss the serious impacts that Atlantic drilling will have on our marine ecosystem.

GRANITEVILLE SWAMP PARK CLEANUP

By Jim Scarcella

In January, NRPA continued our efforts at the first ever Friends of Graniteville Swamp Park cleanup. The Park, which provides a sanctuary for people and wildlife on the North Shore is bounded by Goethals Service Road North, Morrow Street and Forest Avenue.

Graniteville Swamp Park has a wide variety of habitat, where the salt marsh creek of Old Place meets the mostly oak forest. The forest will be affected in a negative way by South Avenue Retail, a misguided development adjacent to the park, although we have assurance from City Planning and our Councilperson that a retail project enhances the site. Block 1717, Lot 95 (Private property) would make a great addition to the Swamp Park.

The illegal dumping in the park along Morrow Street at Elizabeth Grove (yes, named for Queen Elizabeth) is a mess. There were many examples of debris left behind by litter jerks, including the office files of a talent management company from 1978 to 1982, typewriter ribbons, pencils, blank CD's, an aluminum stepladder, utility knife, auto parts, oxygen tanks, welding gauges, plumbing parts, luncheon garbage, five gallon buckets, auto tires, deteriorated wood, a toaster, printer parts, license plates,



Volunteers at the Graniteville Swamp Cleanup on Jan. 20, 2018



markers, vehicle pads, beverage containers and more.

Wildlife was amazing, a great Blue Heron flew overhead and a downy Woodpecker stayed near us, knocking a beat on a partially hollowed tree.

All in all, 9 volunteers helped out. We removed over 300 lbs. of debris and recycled another 10 lbs. of glass and aluminum.

NRPA will continue to protect our parks and wild areas.

Our next event will be the Oakwood Beach clean up on Saturday March 31st at 9 AM. Please join us!

\$400,000 ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGES AWARD FOR CONEY ISLAND CREEK

By Ida Sanoff

About a year and a half ago, we got tired of the stench that surrounded Brooklyn's Coney Island Creek. We knew that a combined sewer outfall entered the Creek, so it wasn't surprising that it smelled after a heavy rain. But it was stinking virtually nonstop and it was really, really bad! So NRPA contacted the Interstate Environmental Commission and their scientists came down, did some water testing and discovered that bacterial counts were off the charts near a storm water outfall. This indicated that somehow, sewage was getting into a storm water line. And it was an awful lot of sewage.

The Commission then contacted the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) which began the laborious process of tracking the sewage back to its source. It turned out that there was a blocked sewer line at a sixteen building apartment complex several blocks away and instead of repairing the line, workers just diverted the sewage into the storm water pipe. Approximately 200,000 gallons of raw sewage from nine hundred apartments had been flowing into Coney Island Creek every single day, for months.

At some point, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) became involved, because environmental damage had been done. A negotiation process ensued and the apartment complex was fined \$400,000.

On the one hand, \$400,000 sounds like an awful lot of money. It was certainly the largest sum in memory that was going towards the Creek. But on the other hand, it didn't seem like much. After all, this was a lot of sewage and the problem went on for many months, perhaps more than a year. And despite all of the fish and wildlife in and around Coney Island Creek, it has suffered many insults over the decades and has numerous issues that need to be addressed. The Coney Island community wanted to see some or even all of the money directed to local projects that would benefit Coney Island Creek.

A few weeks ago, a meeting was held in a local high school to determine what would be done with the \$400,000. We learned why the penalty amount was determined through a negotiation process. Since court cases can take many, many years to resolve and can be very, very expensive, negotiation is the fastest way to obtain the largest possible settlement. Mr. Stephen Zahn, the Director of NYS DEC Region 2, explained that as part of the settlement, the apartment complex was required to institute measures that would prevent this from happening again. This included color coding pipes and traps and installing a sensor system that would set off alarms if there were any future problems.

Then we learned how the environmental damages funds would be used: \$50,000 will go to NYS DEC for habitat creation, marine education and related items. The American Littoral Society (ALS) would receive \$50,000 to plant beach grass and other shrubbery along the Creek that would minimize the shifting and loss of sand. The plants selected would not only be attractive, but they would provide bird habitat and nectar for migrating butterflies. Local high school and college students will be hired for paid summer jobs to do the The ALS was a great planting. choice, since their Restoration Corps has done remarkable work planting marshes throughout Jamaica Bay.

The remaining \$300,000 will be distributed via the National Fish and Wildlife Service (NFWS), which will basically act as a grant administrator. They will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) and interested groups will have to submit projects. Projects will be selected on the basis of how they address water quality issues, waterfront access, storm water management, green jobs training, storm water management, NFWS will hold several "how to apply" seminars and provide assistance to help people get through the RFP process. Once all the proposals are submitted, there will be a technical review by a team of scientists, who will then give recommendations to DEC about projects that meet the criteria. A final decision on the grant recipients is expected by the autumn of 2018.

This is exciting news for Coney Island Creek and we are looking forward to the improvements that will come from the environmental benefits funding.

DEBBIE MANS NOW A DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

By Jim Scarcella

It is with great pride that we congratulate Debbie Mans, Executive Director of NY/NJ Baykeeper, on her new appointment as Deputy Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), effective February 5, 2018.



As Executive Director of NY/NJ Baykeeper, Ms. Mans and her team have had some remarkable achievements. She lead the fight to prevent private development at Liberty State Park and under her leadership, Baykeeper has made impressive gains in returning oysters to local waterways. Her efforts to upgrade municipal water treatment plants to reduce sewage discharges are well known and she also was involved in securing \$1.4 billion from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to begin the long overdue cleanup of the Passaic River.

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Prior to taking over the reins at Baykeeper from founder Andy Willner, Debbie was a policy advisor to former New Jersey Governor John Corzine.

Debbie and Staten Island Borough President James Oddo were honored by NRPA at our "40 Years of Blue" celebration at Li Greci's Statten in April 2017.

We are sure that in her new position at NJDEP, Debbie will continue her great work, advocating for our waterways and water quality improvements.

We have great faith in her and wish her much success. Congratulations, Debbie!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN BROOKLYN!

By Ida Sanoff

If you've walked the Brighton Beach/ Coney Island Boardwalk, you may have noticed that in places, there was just as much sand on the boardwalk as there was on the beach. It's impossible to stop shoreline erosion, but it's really frustrating to see beach erosion on the street side too. Tons of precious sand are blowing off the boardwalk and are lost forever.

The NYC Parks Department is now trying to address this by planting some badly needed beach grass and we need YOUR help! The roots of beach grasses trap sand and if the test areas are successful in keeping sand off the boardwalk, we are hopeful that more areas will be planted in the future.

Info is below. THIS EVENT IS RAIN OR SHINE AND PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. Please wear warm, comfortable clothing and sturdy shoes. Gloves and tools will be provided.

Date: March 10, 2018

Locations:

Boardwalk and W 5th Street Boardwalk and W 27th Street Time: 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Contact: Camille Griffith phone: 718-965-8976

email:

Bkspecialevents@parks.nyc.gov

2017 NRPA, ROSE FOUNDA-TION. BAYKEEPER

By Jim Scarcella

In 2017, the NRPA was even more active than in usual! In addition to our ongoing cleanup program, we did a marine conservation and education event, enabled by a grant from NY/NJ Baykeeper, via The Rose Foundation.

In Early September we cleaned Oakwood Beach and removed 600 lbs. of debris and restored the area by cutting back invasive species. We were able to help the ecosystem by removing a plastic entanglement of monofilament fishing line and hazardous single use needles.

In September 2017, we joined forces with NYC H2O, Councilmember Borelli and six public and private schools, to remove 2000 lbs. of garbage, including abandoned homeless encampments, dog poop, cat litter, plastic bags, straws, cigarette butts and auto parts from Lemon Creek/Lou Figurelli Park in Princes

Bay. We also rescued spider crabs entangled in fishing line that were left to strangulate. A seine net exploration revealed spider crabs, red beard sponges and juvenile summer flounder.

In early October, we cleaned Conference House Beach Park, thanks to Rose Foundation support. The 70 plastic bags we removed could have been ingested by marine mammals or strangled sea birds. We also recycled 25 pounds of aluminum and glass. A vernal tidal pool had filled up with mummichog and they were suffocating due to rising temperatures and a lack of oxygen. Two NRPA members used a seine net, trudging thru hypoxic mud, to rescue the fish. This was near the site of the "Living Breakwaters" Rebuild by Design oyster restoration project.

In October 2017, after months of planning, NRPA in conjunction with Clean Ocean Action, held a "Student Summit", which included several educational stations. The Summit took place at Gateway NRA, Great Kills

Park. There were presentations on geology, water quality, fishing, anadromous fish, horseshoe crabs and debris removal. The event was attended by a multitude of students and teachers. All participants received a steel multi temperature beverage bottle. Although a beverage bottle seems like a little thing, a lot of discussion went into this keepsake. NRPA wanted to literally deliver a message to participants that there are ecologically sound alternatives to single use plastic items. Special thanks to Amanda, Tory and Cindy at Clean Ocean Action, Tony Rose, John Malizia, Howie Fishbein, Linda Cohen, Ed Burke from the Staten Island Borough President's office, Carl Alderson of NOAA, and Clay Woolney of the Staten Island Academy.

And a great thank you to Baykeeper and the Rose Foundation for underwriting the grant that enabled the event to go forth.

Visit us at www.nrpa.com Like us on Facebook

Upcoming Events:

- Saturday, March 31, 2018 NRPA beach cleanup at Oakwood Beach from 9 AM to 12 PM
- Tuesday, April 3, 2018 NRPA monthly meeting at the Blue Heron Nature Center at 7:30 PM
- Saturday, April 21, 2018 NRPA beach cleanup at Conference House Park Beach from 9 AM to 12 PM
- Saturday, April 28, 2018 NRPA beach cleanup at Sharrot Avenue Fishing Pier from 9 AM to 12 PM
- Tuesday, May 1, 2018 NRPA monthly meeting at the Blue Heron Nature Center at 7:30 PM

Associa	ation is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organiz All memberships expire on Decer	also receive credit for the upcoming year)
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