

Natural Resources Protective Association

Coalition Against Water Disposal of Contaminated Sediments

Post Office Box 050328 • Staten Island, NY 10305



Established in 1977

In Memory of Edward "Kerry" Sullivan

Winter 2023

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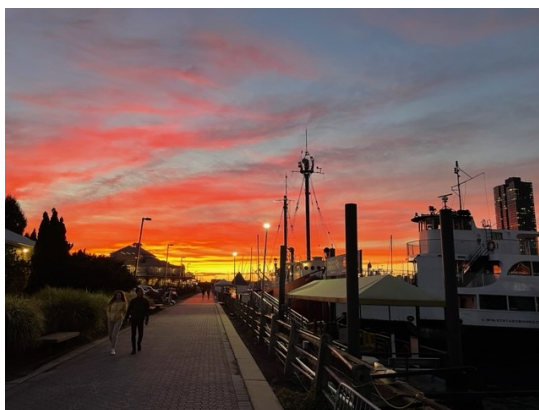
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BAYKEEPER AUTUMN 2022

By Jack Bolembach

On September 29, 2022, NY/NJ Baykeeper held a wonderful celebration at Liberty House, Jersey City, New Jersey. NRPA and Baykeeper have a long history of cooperating to protect our marine environment. The Baykeeper event was held on a Thursday evening. I thought I was going to a small tavern but was surprised to be in such luxurious surroundings. The views of the Manhattan skyline were



spectacular as Nature cooperated, presenting a beautiful sunset. I took many photos.

The cocktail hour was as good as some of the best weddings I have attended. A variety of food and a free bar to boot. So many interesting people involved in the environmental movement attended including a few elected officials.

Jimmy and I spoke to a very nice couple who turned out to be an Assemblyman and his wife representing the Hudson County District of NJ. We did not know he was a politician until he was up at the podium an hour later at the award ceremony.

It was a great evening, the honorees were: Assemblyman Raj Mukherji, Ms. Kim Gaddy - South Ward Environmental Alliance, Dr. Chris Obropta - Rutgers Marine Sciences, Ms. Nicole Miller - Co-chair, Newark DIG.



For the ceremony, which was held in a beautiful hall, we enjoyed the music of a live

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band consisting of seven musicians playing soft music like the *Girl from Ipanema*, etc. Jimmy and I both had



salmon which was delicious. So many young people were being praised for their work protecting the fragile environment along the Passaic River. An older woman who won an award said that the baton can now be passed to the younger generation to continue the fight.

Overall, Baykeeper is responsible for protecting 40 properties consisting of 2,400 acres of wetlands and there are more to be saved. We hope to be as successful at saving wetlands on Staten Island, because a project is currently being planned near Old Mill Creek that will destroy sections of the fragile environment.

I saw how popular NRPA was with many of the guests. NRPA is well respected and Greg Remaud, the Chief Executive Officer of Baykeeper mentioned NRPA during his speech. I was glad to be there to share with Jim and NRPA this wonderful experience.

RICHMOND TERRACE PARK CLEANUP

By Jim Scarcella

On Sunday, October 9th, NRPA teamed up with Port Richmond High School's Green Team, under the leadership of Ms. LaRosa, to clean the Richmond Terrace Park in Mariners Harbor today, we removed approximately 180 plastic bags, 80 plastic bags, 60 cigarettes, cigar and vape packaging, balloons, clothing, tugboat rope, cat litter packaging,

buckets, a chair, seat cushions, 45 straws, and more. In all 150 lbs. removed and 5 lbs. of aluminum and glass recycled.

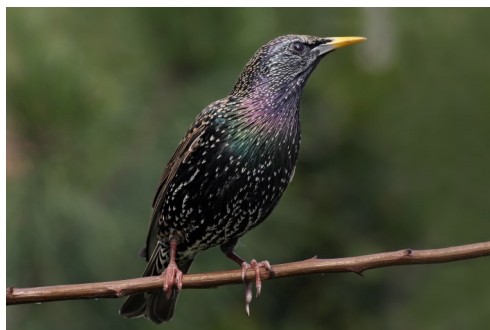


DECLINING BIRD POPULATIONS

By Ida Sanoff

I guess you could say I'm a bird lover and amateur birder.

I'm always aware of birds and I enjoy watching their behavior. It never ceases to amaze me that when I'm walking along 86th St. in Brooklyn and the sun starts to set, all of a sudden, the European Starlings that



hang out underneath the supports of the elevated train tracks suddenly start to sing. I can identify a number of species, but still can't tell one

sparrow from another unless it's been sitting still for at least 15 minutes and I've had the time to flip through the birding app on my phone or grab a guidebook. When I'm in the company of an expert birder, I'm astonished at how many species they can find in a relatively small area.

As you know, I've lived in pretty much the same area on the Brooklyn shoreline for close to half a century and my shoreline walks have been defined by birds. Fifty years ago, the only birds I used to see on the beach here were Herring Gulls and a few Ring Billed Gulls. The first time I saw a Great Black Backed Gull, I couldn't



believe my good fortune and I was delighted when I saw more of them each year. I remember the first time I saw a Glaucous Gull and a Baird's Sandpiper and Sanderlings. Common Loons, Red-breasted Mergansers, Greater Scaups and various ducks and geese swim near the shoreline on quiet winter days. Least Terns fly along the shoreline here in summer and some years, there are flocks of American Oyster Catchers. I sing the praises of



improved water quality because it

allowed these birds to thrive.

But on the other hand, I couldn't help but notice that overall, I was seeing fewer birds. When I first moved to my high-rise apartment, I was awakened every morning by a large flock of crows on the roof of the



building across the street. But they disappeared a long time ago. I used to have House Finches picking



through the flowers on my terrace in spring, but I haven't seen any in years. There used to be hundreds of House Sparrows in the shrubs



outside of my building and they used to bathe in the little spray of water from the loose hose connection when the porters washed the sidewalk. Now I'm lucky if I see one or two. There aren't even that many Pigeons or Starlings here anymore, where there used to be huge flocks

of them. And the Red-Tailed Hawks



that used to zoom by occasionally are gone too.

We don't think of densely built urban environments as habitats, but they are, or at least they used to be. A short distance from my building, there used to be several blocks full of small homes. They had tiny front yards and back yards. In early summer, the scent of Honeysuckle perfumed the entire neighborhood and there used to be all sorts of flowering trees and shrubs. But almost every one of the small homes are gone now, replaced by larger, multifamily homes and low-rise apartment building that cover the entire lots. No more front yards and no more backyards and all of the trees, shrubs, and soil where birds found nesting areas, seeds, nectar, and bugs are gone too.

Recently, I read that nationwide, there has been an almost 50% decline in the total number of gulls. And the problem isn't just in North America. I read an article that said that every species of sea gull in Scotland is now listed as species of



conservation concern. The population of Herring Gulls alone has declined by 50%. If sea gulls can't make it anymore, we're in big trouble.

Reports of declining bird populations have been in the news for some time now. In September 2019, there was an Opinion piece in the New York Times, "A Crisis for Birds is a Crisis for Us All". The article started with the staggering statement that populations of wild birds in the U.S. and Canada had declined by almost one third since 1970. A quarter of all Blue Jays have disappeared and



almost half of all Baltimore Orioles.



As it turns out, birds are the canaries in the coal mine. They are extremely sensitive to environmental issues and the decline in their populations is linked to declines in populations of other organisms. For example, the article quotes a German study which found that flying insect populations had declined by over 89% in the last twenty-five years. Birds eat bugs and if there is no food, there are no birds.

A report was just released that confirms the continuing decline in bird populations. The "State of the

Birds Report, United States of America 2022" was put together by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative Committee, which describes itself as "a forum of government agencies, private organizations, and bird initiatives helping partners across the continent meet their common bird conservation objectives." You can download the report at stateofthebirds.org.

The report notes that overall, since 1970, the U.S. and Canada have lost 25% of breeding birds. There's been a 33% decline in the number of shorebirds. The population of eastern forest birds has also declined by 30%. The Great Black Backed Gull, which I was so happy to see, is listed as a "Tipping Point Species," which is expected to lose 50% of its population in the next 50 years. The same fate is predicted for the Least Tern, which has become a regular visitor along the Brooklyn shoreline.

I think that all of us know about habitat loss. We know that precious habitats are bulldozed to create big box stores and shopping malls. And almost every week, the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation's Environmental Notices Bulletin, lists another little sliver of freshwater wetland that will be devoured by yet another mega mansion.

In Brooklyn, no one even mentions the Vandalia Dunes anymore. This Buffer the Bay property was leveled to create the Gateway Mall and everyone is very happy to shop there. Thankfully, what is now Shirley Chisholm State Park is not too far away and provides grassland habitat. But the park has become a very popular place and the birds that are displaced by all of the human activity aren't even an afterthought.

Even a change in the vicinity of a breeding area can destroy it. Four Sparrow Marsh is an undeveloped

piece of land bordering Jamaica Bay, on Flatbush Ave. near the Belt Pkwy. The renowned birders, Ron and Jean Bourque, named it for the four species of sparrows that bred there: Sharptailed, Seaside, Swamp, and Song Sparrows. These species need undisturbed marshland and nest close to the ground. Four Sparrow Marsh was marked by an official Parks Dept. *Forever Wild* sign and everyone thought it was parkland that would remain undisturbed. But then a car dealership was built right next to it and a portion of the marsh became the parking lot for the dealership. We found out that the land had never been zoned as park land, so it was sold to a developer. To make a long story short, the four species of sparrows that the marsh was named for no longer breed there. It's so sad to pass by and see



a few trees planted between the parking spaces. This was supposed to compensate for what was destroyed.

What can we do to preserve and protect bird populations? Limiting development is a no brainer, but there are some other things that can help too. We tend to forget that bugs are bird food and we've become indiscriminate users of pesticides. People are now moving away from mowed green lawns and planting native species instead. It's also important to allow dead leaves to remain in place through the fall and winter, instead of raking them or blowing them away. Many species of caterpillars make their cocoons and chrysalises in dead leaves and emerge in spring as butterflies and

moths. And you don't have to worry that you'll end up devoured by mosquitoes if you don't spray your yard. Dragonflies gobble up adult



mosquitoes and their larvae and they're beautiful to watch too. You may have heard that Monarch butterflies migrate over long distances. Well guess what, dragonflies migrate too! Us beachgoers know that warmer weather will bring several species of dragonflies to our shorelines.

Every year, untold number of migratory birds get killed or injured from collisions with windows. Bird safety can be as simple as putting some stickers on your windows. An internet search will yield numerous solutions. If you do find an injured bird, contact a wildlife rehabber. In NYC, you can contact The Wild Bird Fund (wildbirdfund.org). A friend of mine found an injured duck near her home and they contacted a local rehabber who picked it up. And please keep your cats indoors! Outdoor cats kill large number of birds.

The best thing we can do is to preserve habitat. It's nice to see more street trees and they do help to absorb storm water. But isolated trees aren't the best habitat. Let's do what we can to protect and preserve every last inch of natural areas.

BUSY WEEKEND

By Jack Bolembach

This was a busy weekend. On Friday evening I visited cousins from Arizona and North Dakota who I never met but made contact with on ancestry. There were six of us and

three did not know each other existed until the DNA showed we were related.

After supper, I went to George Bramwell's house to drop off some reports for Serpentine Nature Arts and Commons. He lives on Grymes Hill and I saw this view walking to his house. The moon was full and just being covered by clouds. A planet, possibly Jupiter, is at the 9 o'clock position from the moon.



At the cleanup on Saturday, October 8th, 84 people participated at Oakwood Beach and on Sunday, October 9th, NRPA and a few kids from Port Richmond with their teacher cleaned the shoreline at the Richmond Terrace Park at the foot of Van Pelt Avenue. Photos of the garbage on the shoreline of the park where the cleanup took place - before and after.

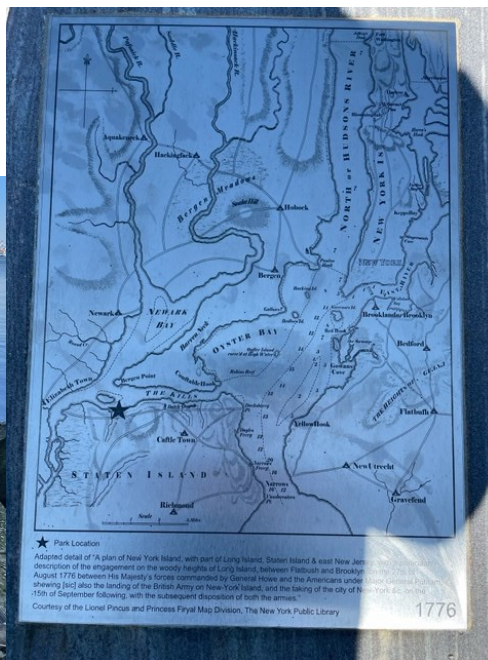


Despite the debris consisting predominately of foam and plastics of all types, the water was very clean and clear. Decades ago, it did not look like this but brown, gray with oil



and it smelled awful. There was no visibility looking into the water.

At the park, I saw two interesting historic maps posted on granite stones. This one below was made by a British officer in the summer of 1776 just after the Battle of Brooklyn.



The star on the map indicates the exact location of this park diagonally opposite Shooters Island and the entrance to Newark Bay.

If you study the map the shoreline has altered in so many locations. On Staten Island there were only a few roads. The population was just 3,000 of which about 500 were slaves. The

modern-day road called Bay Street was the shoreline in 1776 which extended from today's intersection of Victory Blvd. and Bay Street to Edgewater Street.

Everything to the east of Bay Street was filled in land to expand the waterfront for a railroad and shipping ports.

Oyster Bay shown on the map just above modern-day Bayonne no longer exists. It was named Oyster Bay for an obvious reason. The Manhattan shoreline has been altered and much of the hilly terrain flattened. McGowan's Pass shown on the map still exists in Central Park.

In 1776, the City of New York was only at the southern tip of Manhattan and its boundary extended as far north to where City Hall is today. The drinking water came from a source called the Collect Pond, that was located where the Court buildings are today, near Lafayette Street. It became polluted by 1799. Alternate source of water had to be found so Aaron Burr and his business partners won a contract to construct a new water source but instead used the money to create a bank which became Chase Manhattan.

The width of modern-day Manhattan in the financial district between the East and Hudson Rivers is twice what it was when the Dutch and French Huguenots first settled in the 1620s. Pearl Street on the East and Greenwich Street on the West we're the original shoreline. Check out the Manhattan Project to see pre-colonial Manhattan island.

Wildlife was plentiful and one British Army map from around 1777 after the British occupied the city depicted the sea and land wildlife. Mountain Lions were drawn at the site of modern day 125th Street. (I have that map and will search for it.)

After the cleanup at Richmond Terrace, I spoke with my daughter and sitting in the car on Van Name Street saw several squirrels and a large woodchuck cross the road. I did not know they existed in this heavily populated area of Staten Island.

While in the area I stopped at the Lake Cemetery on Willow Brook Road and Forest Avenue. Many Civil War soldiers are buried there including a female Veteran of the war and a black soldier who served in the famous 54th Massachusetts regiment from the movie Glory.

I saw the grave of two Staten Island brothers who lived on Simonsen Avenue near where we did the beach cleanup. Both fought at the Battle of Gettysburg. One was wounded on the second day and the other was killed fighting on the third day at Pickett's Charge.



I was disappointed to see the condition of this historic yet beautiful little cemetery. Garbage was illegally dumped almost everywhere. I cleared some of it from Veterans graves. There was nowhere to dispose of it. I saw catering trays, plastic utensils, and liquor bottles scattered about the cemetery. Garbage dumped in piles. I suspect a caterer is dumping some of the trash. There is no security and no cameras on site. I plan to contact the Friends of Abandoned Cemetery's to let them know.

I saw a little memorial for Ringo Reilly, a Veteran, who with others, helped protect this cemetery died in 2013. One gravesite was of five children who all died before age four. I can't imagine the pain the parents endured.

On Friday I received word from Joe McAllister; the president of South Beach Civic Association, that the piece of metal he found in his backyard fell from the sky and recorded on his security camera. Commercial planes fly over the communities of New Dorp Beach, Midland Beach, Dongan Hills, Arrochar and Fort Wadsworth at low altitude creating unnecessary noise

and covering cars and homes with particles from the engine exhausts.

The solution is simple but the FAA refuses to do it. The planes come up on a flight path out of the southwest heading toward La Guardia Airport. I watched them many times walking the shoreline. Instead of maintaining a course over the Lower Bay, they veer over Staten Island around New Dorp Beach and fly over residential homes until they pass over the Fort Wadsworth neighborhood at the Narrows and into the Upper Bay.

To remedy the problem simply have the planes maintain a course over the Lower Bay to the Upper Bay avoiding residential neighborhoods. Imagine a child or adult being struck by this piece of metal which to me looks like a piece of a plane's turbine. It has to be analyzed.

Another unpleasant incident happened Saturday after the Oakwood Beach cleanup. I went at 12:30 to help prepare for the children's event at the Olmsted House in Eltingville. When I arrived, I was shown hate words and obscene images painted on the side of this historic home owned once by Frederick Olmsted who designed Central Park.



Park Police arrived and we took photos. I will be contacting District Attorney McMahon to report the crime his office. The N word was written and a penis was drawn. Windows were broken and spray paint was on the foundation that was built in 1685. There must be security cameras installed and lights that switch on sensing when someone approaches.

Staten Island has so much beauty and people who care about the



quality of life. There has been great progress protecting nature and historic sites which will continue despite ongoing battles with over developers.

Unfortunately, a minority of the population feel it's proper to dump garbage on private property and streets. Others feel it's okay to commit hate crimes while some take the opportunity to steal what is not theirs.

GATEWAY CROOKES POINT 2022

By Jim Scarcella

In late September, NRPA teamed up with the National Park Service to clean up the beach at Great Kills Park, Crookes Point. The date commemorated National Public Lands Day. Rangers Kathy Garofalo and Logan met with us at the beach house, we set up the sign in sheets, equipment, gloves, bags, and grabbers.

It was a little breezy, but we had a great crew with Cathie Infuso,



Johnny Benedetto, Nicole Doz (Pizzarella), Howie, Vince the Rock, Captain Chuck Perry, Roy Fischman, and Linda Cohen. We started with a ride along the gravel road out to the Crookes Point parking lot. Howie and I have the parking permit pass to access these areas for fishing, it costs \$50 per year and it's good until March 2023.



We picked up a large piece of floating dock, it was made of Styrofoam.

Some anglers were trying their luck, but they gave up after a while, no fish were close to the beach. They left behind Atlantic Silversides, a product of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. I gave these to the Herring Gulls on the beach.

The plastic debris was blown up the beach, it included bags, single use gloves, plastic refreshment containers, oral hygiene products, feminine hygiene products, fishing line, sneakers, and other items. There was also sailing rope, broken lunch boxes, Modelo, and Truly beverage cans, and Heineken bottles. I was able to recycle about 6 lbs. of aluminum and glass.

Roy and Linda found a large piece of plastic sheeting half buried in the beach sand. After some digging and significant effort, we pulled the sheeting off the beach, it was rectangular, 14 feet wide by 22 feet long. The wind grabbed it and sent it back to the bay, but we persevered and brought it to NPS Operations for disposal. Kathy gave me the sharps

container and we added four 'sharps' to the container. There were vape and CBD products disposed on the beach, we picked that up, also. Add in sporting equipment and cups from Dunkin and Starbucks.

Overall, we cleaned up over 300 lbs. of garbage! Special thanks to NPS, Kathy Garofalo, Roy, Linda, Chuck, John, Nicole, Cathie Infuso, Howie, and Vince. See you soon for another great cleanup!

SNOW CRAB POPULATIONS PLUMMET

By Ida Sanoff

Just when you thought you'd heard all of the bad news about climate change, another problem has surfaced. It's not just birds that are disappearing, it's crabs too!

People are eating more seafood than ever and that includes crabs. Most of us are familiar with our local Blue Claw Crabs, which can be found all



along the East Coast. But many other types of crab find their way to our dinner tables, including Dungeness Crab (native to the West Coast) Jonah Crab (an East Coast species) and of course Alaskan King



Crab.



But there is another popular North Atlantic species and that's Snow Crab. Snow Crabs are much smaller than King Crabs and their meat is more fibrous and milder in taste. Plus, they are much cheaper. The nomenclature for these crabs can be confusing. They're also known as Tanner, Opilio and Baiardi Crabs. The Baiardi Crab is sometimes called a Southern Tanner Crab and is somewhat larger. Regardless of what they are called, there are two species of snow crabs (*Chionoecetes baiardi* and *Chionoecetes opilio*) that are difficult to tell apart and frequently interbreed. They are the most abundant species of crabs in the Bering Sea, which is where most of them are harvested, though there are a few other fisheries in the northern Pacific.



There have been warning signs about a decreasing population for quite a while and there were sporadic attempts to control overfishing. But now, for the first time that anyone can remember, the Alaskan Snow Crab fishery has been completely shut down. There will be no commercial harvesting this year.

There has been a substantial decrease in the numbers of both adult crabs and juveniles.

While the reason given for the shutdown was overfishing, it looks like climate change is really behind this collapse. Snow crabs live and breed in really cold water and the temperature in the Arctic has increased four times faster than other places on Earth. The good news is that small numbers of juvenile crabs are starting to show up. It is hoped that the population can rebound a bit. But unless water temperatures miraculously drop, no one is expecting to see a quick turnaround.

OAKWOOD BEACH AUTUMN 2022

By Jim Scarcella

In October 2022, NRPA joined forces with NYCH2O, Councilmember Carr and Boro President Fossella to clean a quarter mile of Oakwood Beach Park. Katie, Megan, Juan, and Marissa from H2O set up tent and tables, and we were off to the races, signing folks up, distributing gloves bags and equipment, and picking up trash.

One of the first things we saw was an old television and dishwasher on the beach. These appliances do NOT float! We dumped the sand out and dragged them over the berm. Additional dumped debris included



plaster, gypsum wallboard compound buckets, cementitious interlocking yard pavers, a 'Home Goods' double decker shopping cart, a 12 foot long, three-inch wide piece of tugboat rope, a busted plastic 50-gallon drum, a 30-gallon trash bag of Corona Beer bottles, a beat-up rectangular barbecue grill, busted chairs, a multitude of plastic straws and single use plastic bags and much more.

The beach debris also had balloons, cellophane wrappers, cigarette butts, tampons, oral hygiene picks, and other discarded material. Marisa, Megan and Katie and the guys from Farrell HS Marine Biology Society also brought in more bags of garbage and dumped clothing.

We thank Jennifer Frydberg and Msgr. Farrell High School Marine Society, Councilmember Carr, Howie, Robb T, Karen Lund, Joy Cutie, Jack Bolembach, Katie, Megan, Marisa, and Juan, it was a great effort, we collected over 800 lbs. of trash, collected 12 lbs. of aluminum and glass that was recycled. We celebrated with watermelon and refreshments!



Thank you, everyone!

WOLFES POND PARK IS 7

By Jim Scarcella

Hi everyone in October, NYCH2O, NRPA and the I. S. 7 Elias Bernstein

Green Team had a beach cleanup at Wolfes Pond Park, Huguenot. The theme of the learning experience was 'Human Impacts on the Environment'.



The kids were energized, they walked a half mile from their school on Huguenot Avenue, along Hylan Boulevard, and then up Cornelia Street into the park. The students



were led by instructors Etan Goldberg and Gerianne Dalton. H2O folks Matt, Katie Stromme and Tony. Armed with data sheets, gloves, bags, reachers and some parental chaperones, the kids hit the beach.



Matt and Tony set the seine net off the shore and captured some silversides that were quickly viewed and released. There were also some waterfowl in the pond itself. After about 30 minutes, the kids came back to base, with broken fishing gear, plastic straws, bags, bottles, hygiene products, cellophane wrappers, masks, gloves, beer and



soda cans, and two well oxidized steel signposts.

I had the privilege of addressing the students for a few minutes, asking them to discuss the most interesting thing they found. The most interesting responses were prophylactic (condom) and feminine hygiene inserts (tampons). We also discussed that our purchases directly affect our environment, every action we take needs to be responsible to this fact. We urged the kids to think for themselves, use their bicycles or walk to the store or school if possible. The excess plastic garbage bags were combined to reuse ones that were only partially full.

This event marked the fifth consecutive year that NRPA and NYCH2O have done events with I. S 7.

Special thanks to Tony Rose, Matt Malina, Etan Goldberg, Katie Stromme, Howie Fishbein, Councilman Borelli, and the students of Elias Bernstein, IS 7, Huguenot Avenue.

Let's keep it going!!!

THE CONEY ISLAND FERRY DEBACLE

By Ida Sanoff

I've told parts of this story before, but now it has all come together. Ferry service will not be coming to Coney Island. It's over. Finished. Done. Not happening.

We know that NYC sure can waste taxpayer money. But sometimes they waste money in such complex, incompetent ways, that you can't even begin to process it. This is a screwup the likes of which we have

never seen before.

Welcome to the Coney Island Ferry Debacle!

In 2011, NYC put out its Comprehensive Citywide Ferry Study. The lead agency was the NYC Economic Development Agency (EDC). The 2009 rezoning of Coney Island, which was to revitalize the amusement area and construct more housing, was briefly mentioned as a reason to consider future ferry service.

The Environmental Impact Statement for what was now called the Citywide Ferry Service came out in 2015 and the first terminals were built and began service in 2017.

From the beginning, there were questions about the costs of the new ferry system. There was an article by Patrick McGeehan in the April 17, 2019, issue of the New York Times, *A Ferry Subsidy of \$24.75 a Ride? New York City's Costs Are Ballooning*, which said that the costs of the ferry system had almost doubled. The article said that the proposed new route that would go from Coney Island to Pier 11 at Wall Street would require an eye-popping subsidy of, "\$24.75 for every passenger". The article also noted that there were complaints that, "the service caters mainly to higher-earning residents at a time when the subways are still in need of repair and state officials are preparing to charge drivers to enter Manhattan's busiest areas."

When a ferry for Coney Island was first proposed, many people felt that the terminal should go near the amusement area on the ocean side of the Coney peninsula. At the end of the 19th century, there were several ferry piers there, but only Steeplechase Pier now remained. It had been reconstructed by the Army Corps of Engineers after the

Nor'easter of 1992 and had been designed so that it could accommodate ferry service in the future. In fact, when EDC made their very first pitch to the community, they said that an ocean side ferry landing was the "preferred location," although two alternative locations were proposed for the bay side of the peninsula, in Coney Island Creek.

But in all of the studies released by EDC, there appeared to be significant problems with every one of the proposed locations. At Steeplechase Pier, the water might be too rough to safely dock a vessel. This was difficult to understand, given that ferries had docked on the ocean side up until 1964, but perhaps it was related to the type of ships that NYC Ferry used. This would also be the only ferry terminal in NYC that would be smack in the middle of a very popular public beach, where huge numbers of people were in the water. EDC seemed to be totally clueless about potential hazards to swimmers.

On the other side of the peninsula, putting a landing at Coney Island Creek would be even more complex. The ocean side beaches had been made wider in 1994 as part of a storm protection project and since then, sand had been migrating around the tip of the peninsula into Coney Island Creek. This was not a little bit of sand. Dunes thirty to forty feet high had formed where before there had been nothing but exposed seabed. A large sand spit had also formed near Kaiser Park on West



32nd St. EDC considered two possible locations, one east of the sand spit and one west of it. They documented the sand accumulation problem in several studies, as well as concerns about possible rough weather, high winds, and fog. You would think that someone, somewhere might say, "Hmmm, maybe putting a ferry here isn't such a good idea." But a famous name developer who was building market rate high rise buildings in Coney Island, hired a high-priced lobbying firm to push for a ferry terminal in Coney Island Creek. It would be a great amenity for the residents of his new building. In just minutes, a private shuttle would whisk them to a ferry terminal where they could enjoy a brief, scenic ride to their financial district offices.

The end result was that the Steeplechase Pier location was rejected because of rough water and the western Coney Island Creek location was rejected for other reasons. This left only one location, east of the sand spit in Coney Island Creek.

EDC decided that they were going with this site, which was in Kaiser Park. They said it was sheltered and the water was calm plus it was within a city park. But they flat out ignored several things. The most obvious was the sand accretion problem. The next thing was that the Creek has a lot of legacy toxins from previous industrial uses. In fact, Coney Island Creek is currently in the process of being evaluated for Superfund status. In addition, the northern shore of the Creek, Calvert Vaux Park, is composed of uncontrolled fill and sits right on top of the old Sarnelli Dump. This 83-acre toxic dump and landfill operated from 1954 to 1966. But either EDC didn't know about the old dump within spitting distance of where they would build their new terminal or they didn't want to know about it. When their

contractor, McLaren Engineering filled out the permit application for the ferry site, they checked "NO" for this question: *Has the site of the proposed action or an adjoining property been the location of an active or closed solid waste management facility?*

The ferry terminal would be composed of three sections – a landside canopied terminal, a spud barge, and a gangway. We got some documentation via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and here's what it cost: Mobilization, Upland Trenching & Site Work - \$748,750. Steel barge - \$1,000,000. Yes, a million bucks just for the *custom-made* spud barge. The other work involved: Gangway & piles, Construction equipment, Fenders, Canopy, Gate, Dredge, and other expenses came to \$4,958,000. So, it cost \$6,706,750 just to build the terminal. Of course, this does not include the cost of sediment sampling & dredge disposal would easily be several hundred thousand dollars or more.

The terminal was to be attached to an existing, decrepit fishing pier. The fishing pier was to be fixed up and lighting installed as a community benefit. I have no idea how much was spent on it.

Now we're getting to the juicy part.

Of course, they had to do some dredging to ensure that there would be sufficient depth for the ferry. They got a dredging permit from the Army Corps of Engineers for a total of 19,600 cubic yards, an area of approximately 4.48 acres. The permit allowed them to dredge again three times within the span of the ten-year permit. They planned to dredge two areas, a smaller, relatively clean area just outside of the sand spit and a larger, far more contaminated area, slightly to the east and bordering Calvert Vaux Park.



As I mentioned before, the Creek has legacy toxins from past industrial uses as well as a major sand accretion problem. Now when you want to clean up a toxic site you can do it in a couple of ways. You can dig out all of the bad stuff, cover it with a plastic liner and cover the liner with sand. Or you can just cover it up with a lot of sand, forming a natural "cap." In fact, the latter process has been going on for years now, as a remedy for the old 16-acre Mud Dump Site (a.k.a. Historic Area Remediation Site or HARS) off the coast of NJ. Basically, Mother Nature is saving taxpayers millions of bucks by beginning the capping process of the toxins in Coney Island Creek – for free. Except whenever EDC would have to dredge, they would be removing the sand cap and re-exposing the toxins, again and again. And there were concerns that backwash from propellers would resuspend toxic sediments too. This was not good for the ecology of the Creek.



One more interesting thing about Coney Island Creek. People swim there. A lot of people. It's not an official NYC public beach so there are no lifeguards, but people are still in the water. It's also a popular location for group baptisms. And since there's a fishing pier, there's a lot of fishing going on too.

Let's take a step back. It's not like EDC didn't know about any of this. They documented the sand accretion problem in several of their studies. You could see the rapidly elongating sand spit, the people in the water and the people who were fishing. Lots of public comments were submitted detailing this and more. Of course, NRPA submitted comments too. And we sent emails and made phone calls to EDC, the Army Corps, and the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation. But no one gave a damn. We asked for a public hearing, but it was denied.

Construction began in the fall of 2021. The three components of the new ferry terminal – the canopy, barge and gangway were towed into place and connected. The smaller, cleaner, eastern area was dredged. But neighborhood residents saw and documented numerous violations of safe dredging practices. The NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation ultimately fined EDC and their contractors \$70,000 for twenty-one violations of safety protocols mandated in the dredging permit.

In December 2021, EDC informed the community that dredging of the second, more contaminated area would resume in the summer of 2022, after Winter Flounder breeding restrictions were over. Ferry service was to begin in late 2022.

But in March 2022, a friend of mine happened to be near Coney Island Creek. He called me and said, "I think they have a problem." EDC was doing a test run for the ferry. But

my friend said that it looked like the ferry had hit a sand bar and had to really gun the engines to get moving again.

Shortly thereafter, EDC admitted that there indeed was a problem: All of the sand – and more – that they had dredged out only a few months prior had come back! They then applied for a permit to dredge an even larger area near the northern shore of the Creek, adjacent to Calvert Vaux Park. But would removing such a large area destabilize the already eroding shoreline of the park and cause it to collapse? And would the remnants of the old Sarnelli Dump be exposed?

Some locals said that EDC should take another look at Steeplechase Pier. EDC agreed to do a study over the summer and present their findings in the fall.

As promised, in late October, EDC came before Brooklyn Community Board 13. Their team did not look happy.

EDC said it was not safe for their ships to board or unload passengers if waves are higher than two feet. Yes, two feet. So that ruled out using Steeplechase Pier unless they built a breakwater that would have to be more than 1,000 feet long. If they built it out of riprap, it would cost \$200 to \$250 million and would require lower maintenance, but it would be difficult to get permits for such a structure. If they built the breakwater out of sheet piles, it would cost \$85-95 million, but would require more maintenance and there would be "visual impacts".

Then they revisited building a landing west of the sand spit in Coney Island Creek. They would have to tow their million-dollar, custom made barge from its current location and construct a pier "two football fields" in length (a football

field is 360 feet long) so that it would extend into water that was deep enough for the ferry to access. The long pier would also block the navigation channel, so recreational boaters would not be able to get further into Coney Island Creek. It would also be an awfully long distance for commuters to walk on the long pier, over the open water, in wind, rain and snow. Plus, it would cost \$25 to \$30 million. Also, it would probably never meet the criteria to get the needed permits.

Then they got to the star of the show, the ferry terminal that they had already built, east of the sand spit. The one that they had spent over \$6.7 million just to build, not counting what they had spent on dredging related costs, etc.

In order to safely operate the ferry, they would need an open water area about a hundred feet wide so that recreational boats could get by and water that was ten feet deep. But they also finally woke up and realized that there are people on the shoreline and in the water. For safety, the channel would have to be pretty far from the beach and the shallow water where people were swimming. When they took all of this into account, they would need a channel 180 feet wide. It would also provide a wide enough area for the ship to turn and maneuver. However, the Creek was only sixty-five feet wide now, because of the sand buildup and it would become at least six feet narrower every year. So, they would have to dredge to make the opening wider.

But the sand was building up faster than they had calculated. They had received permits to dredge a total of 19,600 cubic yards of material. The maintenance dredging that would be done after construction was estimated to be roughly 10,000 cubic yards. Whoops! They underestimated how fast the sand

came in there! They would actually have to dredge 45,000 cubic yards of material, an amount four times more than what they had planned for.

They finally admitted that there was critical habitat there that could be impacted. Along this journey, we discovered that when this ferry terminal was first proposed, the Parks Departments scientific experts said that there would be significant environmental impacts if this area was dredged and the ferry became operational. Several hundred species of birds have been recorded in and around Coney Island Creek, more than in Central Park or Prospect Park, including national rarities like the Western Reef Heron. Horseshoe Crabs and other species breed there and it can get loaded with Striped Bass, Tautog and other fish. And after all this, there was still no guarantee that they would have to frequently dredge because of how fast the sand built up. They estimated the dredging costs at a whopping \$35-40 million! Of course, dredging this much more material in a much wider area would require a new EIS, new sampling, new studies, a new permitting procedure, etc. The design, EIS and permit process would take two to three years.

The conclusion was that the costs to operate a ferry terminal at any of these three locations was "very high relative to any other ferry facility." In short, it was a Money Pit.

So, after they spent several years and millions of dollars to do an EIS, sediment testing, design and construct the ferry terminal, do some initial dredging, pay for disposal or processing of the dredge material, do additional studies to look at all of the proposed locations again, etc. they will now take apart the brand new, never used ferry terminal and get it out of here.

Here is the takeaway: This is a wake-up call for the agencies. Just because a project looks good on paper doesn't mean that it will make sense in the real world. EDC knew there were problems and figured they could work around them. Warnings about loss of critical habitat were ignored. Most importantly, the people who live in the community and who know their shoreline were completely disregarded. And it ended up as a huge fiasco and waste of taxpayer dollars.

Hello agencies: Next time we tell you something, it's in your best interests to listen to us.

Join NRPA Today

LETTER TO DEC

By Jim Scarcella

Advanced Notice Proposed Rule Making
Saline waters reclassification

October 29, 2022

NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation
Division of Water
625 Broadway, 4th Floor
Albany, NY 12233-3500

Dear Ms. Tompkins and Mr. Jason Fagel:

Thank you and DEC for reaching out to get public input on the ANPRM saltwater primary and secondary contact. Please note, as constant users of the marine waters (Staten Island is fully surrounded by saline waters) we are fully opposed to proposed changes that would allow more enterococcus and bacteria to our waters.

The fact sheet supplied with the notice speaks of no immersion bet. May and October, but please note, many people swim all year long at Fort Wadsworth, Miller Field, and Great Kills Park, Gateway NPS.

We are a consortium of outdoor

fishing, diving, kayaking, swimming, paddle boarding beach cleaning and exploring shoreline of over 400 members.

The waters heal us, whether we are swimming almost every day, regardless of air or saline waters temperature. We do not swim after CSO events because of the danger to our health and lives.

Enclosed please find various newsletter articles and pictures:

- Cleanup at Bentley Street beach, Tottenville, on the Arthur Kill (with swimming)
- Cleanup at Oakwood Beach Tarlton Street on Lower NY Bay
- Cleanup at Conference house park beach Raritan Bay
- Cleanup at Great Kills Park beach Fishing exploits
- Shoreline cleanup at Alice Austen Park beach lower NY bay.
- Cleanup at Snug Harbor shore of Kill van Kull River.
- And more information on fish kills caused by bacteria.
- Total of 40 documents outlining beach cleanups, canoeing, kayaking, swimming.

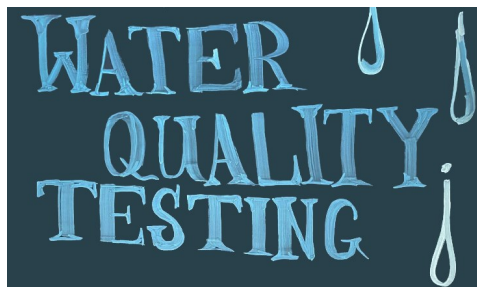
We fully oppose any weakening of the standard; we need DEC to strengthen the Laws regarding acceptable amount of sewage and bacteria in our waters, not to weaken standards to allow more pollution discharge.

The courtesy of an acknowledgment of receipt is requested.

Please keep us informed as ANPRM saline waters contact regulation moves forward.

Thank you.

James Scarcella NRPA
400 Delaware Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10305
nrpa2@aol.com 718-873-4291



Schedule of Events:

NRPA Calendar All events, including *face to face* monthly meetings are **TENATIVE** due to **COVID-19**, please call to confirm Jim Scarcella to confirm - 718-873-4291

Tuesday, December 6, 2022, NRPA Holiday Gathering with Friends of Blue Heron Park at Blue Heron Park Visitors Center at 7:00 PM. Info Jim 718-873-4291.

Sunday, January 1, 2023, 33rd Annual New Year's Day Beach walk from 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM at Gateway NRA Great Kills Park. Info Jim 718-873-4291. Join us to welcome 2023! with Protectors of Pine Oak Woods and Bay Terrace Improvement group.

Tuesday, December 6, 2022, 7:00 PM - NRPA Holiday Gathering with Friends of Blue Heron Park. Location to be determined.

Sunday, January 1, 2023, 12 PM to 2:00 PM - New Year's Day Beach walk at Great Kills Park (33rd annual event) meet at Buffalo Street entrance to Gateway NPS Great Kills, info Jim 718-873-4291, nrpa2@aol.com or Cliff Hagen 718-313-8591, chagen72@gmail.com. Bring a snack or beverage to share.

Tuesday, January 3, 2023, 7:30 PM - NRPA monthly meeting at SIUH Regina McGuinn center, **or** Zoom call in, info will be sent by email one week before the meeting.

Tuesday, February 7, 2023 - 7:30 PM - NRPA monthly meeting at SIUH Regina McGuinn center, **or** Zoom call in, info will be sent by email one week before the meeting.

Tuesday, March 7, 2023 - 7:30 PM - NRPA monthly meeting at SIUH Regina McGuinn center, **or** Zoom call in, info will be sent by email one week before the meeting.

Saturday, March 25, 2023, 9 AM to 12 PM - Oakwood Beach, Tarlton Street cleanup with NYCH2O and Councilmember David Carr, gloves, bags, refreshments, provided, community service certified. Info Jim 718-873-4291

Tuesday April 4, 2023, 7:30 PM - NRPA monthly meeting at SIUH Regina McGuinn center, **or** Zoom call in, info will be sent by email one week before the meeting.

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 **NEW** 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 a Lifetime member)

YES! I/We want to join the fight!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Mail to: Natural Resources Protective Association
 C/O Richard Chan, Treasurer
 Post Office Box 050328
 Staten Island, NY 10305

Join NRPA today