



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gateway National Recreation Area
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Gateway National Recreation Area

2008 Accomplishments

At a Glance

\$24.1 million budget

401 permanent/term/seasonal staff

9,431,021 visitors

(represents the largest year-to-date visitation increase in the National Park System)

3,718/71,102 volunteers/volunteer hours
(savings to the park: \$1.4 million)

\$14.4 million spent by visitors in the park

\$ 30,000 donated

National Park Service Centennial

Enhanced Lifeguard Staff

Using funds provided by the National Park Service Centennial Initiative, the park hired additional lifeguards to expand coverage at the Jacob Riis Park and Sandy Hook swimming beaches. Rigorous testing ensured that a skilled workforce was hired to combat the dangers posed by New York and New Jersey's strong rip currents. In the end, the park had yet another season with no drowning deaths on guarded beaches.

Preserving History

Goats Clear Vegetation from Historic Structures

Visitors to Fort Wadsworth's Endicott Era gun batteries were likely to meet fourteen yearling goats who were recruited to clear vegetation from this historic gun emplacement. They provided a green, cost effective, visitor friendly tool for the preservation of historic structures.

Lighthouse Cleaning

Park maintenance staff cleaned the historic Sandy Hook lighthouse to remove rust stains and biological growth from the painted masonry surface. A low pressure water wash and light scrubbing of the surface with an environmentally friendly detergent removed the stains. Built in 1764, America's oldest lighthouse attracts sixteen thousand visitors each year.

Improving Visitor Experience

Trail Projects

National Trails Day marked the beginning of a season of trail improvements at the Staten Island Unit of the park. Volunteers, staff, and a Student Conservation Association intern sponsored by Lipton's Healthy Parks Healthy Living initiative all participated. Trail heads were cleared, pruned and planted, and new trailhead signage was installed.

Ecology Village Tent Platform Replacement

The park received a Recycling at Work Sustainability Grant from the National Park Foundation and Unilever to improve the Ecology Village Campgrounds at Floyd Bennett Field. The funding enabled the park to replace 24 deteriorated wooden tent platforms and handicap ramps with sustainable, recycled plastic lumber.

Jamaica Bay Odyssey – Outside and In

The new permanent exhibit at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge has officially put out the welcome mat to visitors. Entitled *The Jamaica Bay Odyssey*, the stunning new exhibit takes visitors on a journey to understand the significance of Jamaica Bay and entices them to venture outdoors to learn more. Combining bright, attractive graphics, engaging text, and three dimensional models, the exhibit highlights the rich plant and animal life of Jamaica Bay and explains how people will continue to shape the nature of the bay.

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Working with Communities

Rude Awakenings Anti-Drinking and Driving Program

Sandy Hook's law enforcement rangers took the lead in presenting the 2008 Rude Awakenings anti-drinking and driving program. Almost 1000 high school students participated in the program that included discussions of the personal and legal impacts of drinking and driving. The students also participated in hands-on field activities that included the use of Fatal Vision Goggles to simulate the effects of alcohol, and field sobriety tests. Other participants included local police and fire departments, the New Jersey State Police, the U.S. Coast Guard, and a host of volunteers.

OPEX Milestone

Last fall 35 New York area educators gathered hand lenses, view finders, colored pencils and inquisitive scientific hats to kick off the 33rd season of Operation Explore (OPEX) at Gateway. Since the program's beginning approximately 1,500 fourth through sixth grade teachers, 2,000 parents and 50,000 students have linked traditional classroom science with place-based experiences in the woodland and waterway natural classrooms of Gateway. The park works collaboratively with five other agencies to conduct this year-long, nationally recognized program which has the distinction of being New York City's longest running environmental education programs.

Caring for the Environment

Operation Clean Bay

Operation Clean Bay continues an effort focused on abandoned boats in Jamaica Bay. Gateway's staff spearheaded a multi-agency taskforce that included the New York State DEC, the United States Coast Guard, and three New York City departments: Environmental Protection, Sanitation and the NYPD. Seventy one derelict vessels were removed from Jamaica Bay, boats that could have polluted the bay with fuel left in their rusting tanks. Combined with a new public awareness campaign, the program hopes to finally end this decades-old practice.

Native Plant Corps

For the second consecutive year the Student Conservation Association Native Plant Corps worked at Sandy Hook to remove non-native invasive plants, helping to restore the native coastal beach flora. The team removed hundreds of tree-of-heaven and autumn olive trees and treated five other invasive species, improving over 78 acres. Data on the areas treated, including species, location, and the method of treatment were recorded and entered into the park geographic information system (GIS) database.

Working Smarter

Expanded Children's Programs

The Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge visitor contact station has recently been filled with shouts and giggles and the loud silence of awe. This welcome activity has been the result of the creative efforts of a kindergarten teacher who worked with park interpreters to develop and present four new public programs: "Home Sweet Habitat," "Who's Sleeping at Jamaica Bay," "Planting with Sprouts," and "Beautiful Butterflies." This creative effort enabled the park to expand its public programming and to educate and inspire very young audiences.

Promoting Green Transportation

Gateway was selected as one of 16 national parks to participate in the National Park Foundation's Transportation Interpreter Program, a program that funds interns who work as park interpreters. A Texas A&M student spent her summer at the Jamaica Bay Unit enthusiastically promoting alternative transportation and educating the public about the park's treasured resources. She did this onboard trains, sailboats, canoes, and kayaks, and during bicycle and foot patrols.

Video Podcasts

Working with the NPNH Education Center and Gateway staff, a contractor created a series of nine video podcasts focused on Gateway's resources and programs. These sharp, concise, compelling four-minute videos feature on-camera interviews with 26 NPS employees, volunteers and partners—to tell the stories of our resources in our own words. Videos include: Fort Wadsworth's military history; the use of goats to remove vegetation on historic structures; Jamaica Bay's rich natural resources; citizen science; climate change threats to the salt marsh; natural resources, military history and architecture of Fort Hancock.

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