



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Fire Island National Seashore News Release

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Fire Island National Seashore Facilities Open for Season Watch Hill Restaurant to Reopen by Early June, 2007

Patchogue, NY—Fire Island National Seashore has opened its public marinas and its campground at Watch Hill for the kick-off of the season. Ferry service to Watch Hill and Sailors Haven will be expanded over the Memorial Day weekend; the spring ferry schedules will then resume until summer hours start in late June. “We look forward to another great summer,” stated Superintendent Mike Reynolds, “and encourage all to enjoy the park safely. Be sure to catch a special ranger program or see a new area of Fire Island you’ve never visited.”

Visitor centers at Wilderness, Watch Hill, and Sailors Haven will be staffed on weekends until late June. Sunken Forest Tours have begun on weekends at Sailors Haven. Lifeguarded beaches will be open at Sailors Haven and Watch Hill on weekends from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., starting Memorial Day weekend. Additional summer activities and daily lifeguard protection at Watch Hill and Sailors Haven beaches will begin on June 24, 2007. The snack bars and stores at both Sailors Haven and Watch Hill are now open on their spring schedule through June 21. The elegantly renovated new Watch Hill restaurant is expected to reopen by early June.

On the mainland, the William Floyd Estate will open its gates this weekend, and is gearing up for six new programs that will start on June 1. These special programs—by reservation only—are in addition to the standard *Old Mastic House Tours*, which are offered every half-hour, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Friday through Sunday and holidays.

Pets are not permitted on most beaches within Fire Island National Seashore or in the federal wilderness area from March 15 through Labor Day, due to the increase in piping plover nesting activity. Your understanding of restrictions and support for the threatened and endangered species program are greatly appreciated.

For more information about Fire Island National Seashore, visit the park’s website at www.nps.gov/fiis. Enjoy your summer on Fire Island.

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The **William Floyd Estate** is a detached unit of Fire Island National Seashore, located in Mastic Beach. This historic site interprets the history of one of Long Island's earliest American patriot families and their descendants. The William Floyd Estate grounds are open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday – Sunday and holiday Mondays, and the “Old Mastic House” is open 11:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Friday – Sunday and holidays, May 26 through October 8, 2007. Free guided tours are offered every half- hour. A host of intriguing new programs this summer will help you learn even more. Reservations are required for these special programs, and space is limited. Call 631- 399- 2030 *on Friday or Saturday, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.* for more information or to make your reservations. You can find out more at the park’s web page: www.nps.gov/fiis/planyourvisit/williamfloydestate.htm.

At the southernmost end of William Floyd Parkway, you’ll find Fire Island National Seashore’s **Wilderness Visitor Center**. This is one of two points on Fire Island that you can reach by car. You'll need to park at Smith Point County Park (*fee charged*) and walk to the visitor center. The visitor center is open Friday through Sunday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., until June 24. From June 27 through September 3, the facility will be open Wednesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and Friday through Sunday, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. In July and August, the *Junior Ranger: Path to Discovery* program is offered at 2 p.m. on Fridays. A mid- morning stroll will be conducted every Saturday at 10 a.m., and *Children’s Hour: Seaside Stories and Crafts* will be held on Saturdays at 2 p.m. A variety of additional programs will be offered every Saturday at 4 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. A new program for summer 2007 is *Art in the Park*, a hands- on demonstration to help you discover the beauty of the wilderness. The **Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness** is the only federally designated wilderness in the state of New York, and one of the smallest wilderness areas in the country. Its value is immense, however, since it is so close to so many people who may otherwise never have the opportunity to experience the values of untrammled land preserved as wilderness. A universally accessible boardwalk helps you explore about a half- mile of the dune and swale communities behind the primary dune line. You may then venture beyond the facilities into the primitive Fire Island Wilderness or out to a quiet stretch of shoreline for serendipitous beachcombing.

On the western terminus of the Fire Island Wilderness lies **Watch Hill**. This is Fire Island National Seashore’s largest area developed for recreation. The Watch Hill Marina has 183 boat slips and the campground includes 26 walk- in sites, both under the management of Fire Island Concessions, LLC. Watch Hill’s boardwalk through the nature trail was rerouted and resurfaced in 2006. You’ll probably notice additional improvements that have been made to the facility infrastructure this year. The largest attraction will be the reopening of the Watch Hill restaurant. Closed since 2000, the new dining establishment will be fully open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, beginning early- June. The sheltered coves and extensive salt marsh at Watch Hill beckon your exploration of the more primitive side of Fire Island. National Park Service- conducted guided canoe programs will help get you there. Free canoe programs are offered at 11 a.m. on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, starting July 1 through Labor Day. The *Junior Ranger: Path to Discovery* program will be conducted at Watch Hill on Friday afternoons at 2 p.m. *Children’s Seaside Stories and Crafts* will be presented on Saturday afternoons at 2 p.m. Plan to get your feet wet when you join us for *Catch of the Day: Seining in the Great South Bay*, offered every other Sunday at 2 p.m. The Watch Hill Visitor Center is open daily, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., with longer hours of operation on weekends. Daily lifeguard service resumes on June 24.

Watch Hill is one of the entry points into the federally designated wilderness area. A limited number of overnight backcountry camping permits are issued from the visitor center. You can get to Watch Hill directly from Patchogue via the Watch Hill Ferry, or enjoy the 1- mile stroll and longer ferry service hours by taking the Davis Park Ferry from Sandspit Marina in Patchogue.

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Barrett Beach/Talisman continues to be a favorite beach, where smaller boats regularly anchor offshore. There is a floating dock for the drop-off of passengers on private vessels and water taxis. Groups may arrange for charter service to Barrett Beach from Patchogue (call Davis Park Ferry Company at 631- 475- 1665). Facilities include bayside restrooms and picnic tables, and a quiet stretch of ocean and bay beach. This is the narrowest part of Fire Island, and the widest section of the Great South Bay. New for Barrett Beach/Talisman in 2007 are two special demonstration weekends: July 21 - 22 and August 18 - 19. Lifeguards and snack bar service will await passengers on round-trip ferry service from the Watch Hill Ferry Terminal in Patchogue, leaving at 9:15 a.m. and returning to Patchogue at 4 p.m.

Regulars may notice a few changes at **Sailors Haven** this year, as facilities have been receiving a little “face-lift.” The Sailors Haven Visitor Center has been spruced up inside and out. The Sunken Forest boardwalk is expected to be resurfaced this fall with recycled plastic lumber. The visitor center will be open on weekends through June, then daily through Labor Day. Sunken Forest Tours are now offered on weekends at 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. During the summer, tours will be available daily at 11 a.m., with additional afternoon tours on Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. From July 1 through September 3, additional tours and other ranger-conducted activities are planned. The *Junior Ranger: Path to Discovery* program will be conducted at Sailors Haven on Friday afternoons at 2 p.m. *Children’s Seaside Stories and Crafts* will be presented on Saturday afternoons at 2 p.m. Plan to get your feet wet when you join us for *Catch of the Day: Seining in the Great South Bay*, offered every other Sunday at 2 p.m. One new program for summer 2007 is *Art in the Park*, a hands-on demonstration to help you discover the beauty of the maritime forest. A special boat tour from Sayville across the Great South Bay, followed by an *Enchanted Evening in the Sunken Forest*, will be offered on Tuesdays by reservation only for groups of 50 or more. The visitor center is open daily, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., with longer hours of operation on weekends. Daily lifeguard service resumes on June 24. You can get to Sailors Haven directly from Sayville via the Sailors Haven/Sunken Forest Ferry, or enjoy the 1-mile stroll and longer ferry service hours by taking the Cherry Grove Ferry from Sayville.

While ferries can transport you from Patchogue, Sayville or Bay Shore to Fire Island, you may also get from site to site via water taxi. Fire Island Water Taxi is authorized to provide access from the communities to the Fire Island Lighthouse, one of the tallest in the country. The **Fire Island Lighthouse** and museum is open year-round, with extended hours in the summer (9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.). Guided tower tours are offered every hour. You may reach the lighthouse by walking the 0.7-mile boardwalk from Robert Moses State Park, Field 5 (*fee charged for parking*).

The Fire Island Trek, a three-day 21-mile guided excursion, is offered twice this year: June 27-29 and September 7-9, 2007. This program includes special tours and hiking from the Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness area to the Fire Island Lighthouse. You must provide your own transportation and pay for meals, and a fee is charged for some overnight accommodations. Spaces are limited. You may get details on the park’s website at www.nps.gov/fiis/fire-island-trek.htm or call 631- 687- 4765.

Fire Island National Seashore continues the process of developing a new General Management Plan (GMP) for the park. You can stay abreast of the planning steps by visiting the park’s web site, or by signing up for an e-newsletter. “We value your opinions and input at every step of the way as we go through the GMP process,” stated Superintendent Reynolds. “With your support and input, we can all watch Fire Island National Seashore develop to its full potential as a unit of the great nationwide system of National Park Service sites.” For more information about Fire Island National Seashore, visit the park’s website at www.nps.gov/fiis.

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