

Community Update

Spring Creek Park

November 2022

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Interior Region 1

Gateway National Recreation Area



SITE BACKGROUND

Spring Creek Park (SCP), located in the Borough of Queens, New York City, NY, is a 237-acre area managed by the National Park Service (NPS) as part of the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area (Gateway NRA). The entirety of SCP (the “Site”) includes filled/reclaimed land composed of dredged material, waste fill, and ash that was deposited from 1948 to the early 1960s as part of “land modification” projects and when the Site was owned and operated by the City of New York as a waste disposal area. Most of the waste filling by the City occurred between 1949 and 1957. From the late-1950s to the late-1960s/mid-1970s, sewage sludge was mixed with clay and used as a soil amendment (artificial topsoil) to cover the ground surface after the completion of waste disposal activities. In the



early 1970s, the Site was transferred from the City to the United States for inclusion within the NPS, Gateway National Recreation Area. Previous investigations conducted at the Site by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as part of planning for possible habitat restoration and coastal storm risk management projects identified chemical contaminants in Site soils including pesticides, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and various metals. In December 2017, as a public safety measure, NPS conducted a limited gamma radiation walkover survey of NPS-maintained park fire roads that allow for pedestrian access. The survey was conducted due to the historical similarities of the Site with that of the Great Kills Park Site, a site within Gateway NRA where radiological contamination was found and determined to be associated with waste disposal operations analogous to those conducted at SCP. The survey identified elevated levels of radiation, including five man-made radiological artifacts that were recovered and removed from the Site.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

In 2017, NPS initiated response actions pursuant to its cleanup authority under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also referred to as Superfund, to investigate the nature and extent of contamination resulting from the City’s historical sanitation operations at the Site. As the CERCLA “lead agency” at the Site, NPS plans the Site investigation and cleanup activities. Since 2017, NPS has initiated and completed several CERCLA investigations at the Site. Based on these investigations, NPS determined in the fall of 2020 that it was necessary to initiate CERCLA remedial actions at the Site, specifically a Remedial Investigation (RI), to address data gaps not addressed in prior investigations.

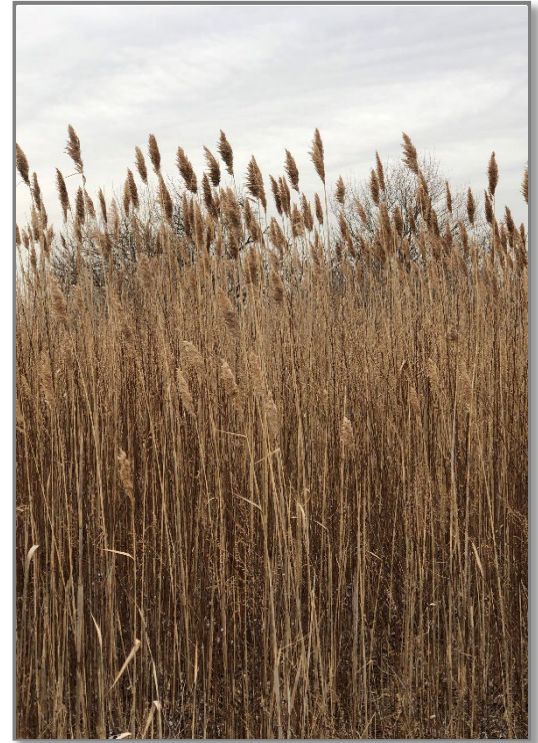
In February 2022, limited gamma surveys were performed at the Site in areas that had been opened after NPS cleared vegetation to maintain fire roads. Three radiological hotspots of concern were identified within the

cleared area. As a protective measure, NPS immediately placed steel plates over the hotspots, which reduced radiation exposure rates to background levels at each location.

NEXT STEPS – SCP RI FIELD INVESTIGATIONS AND SITE CLOSURE

NPS is planning to conduct field investigation activities, including both drive over and walkover gamma surveys, in the winter of 2022/2023 in support of the SCP Site RI. To effectively conduct the gamma surveys, over 70, one-acre grids spread across the entire Site will be cleared of vegetation, dominated by the invasive Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). Survey data will be used to generate a map showing surface radiation levels. Areas with elevated readings will be further evaluated with specialized equipment to inform the sources of any elevated readings. From start to finish, this field investigation is anticipated to be completed within about 30 days.

In advance of field activities, the SCP Site will be closed to visitors for their safety. The operation of heavy equipment needed to clear the dense vegetation at the Site presents a physical hazard to visitors. Also, vegetation clearing will open large areas of the Site, increasing the potential for visitors to come in direct contact with radiological contamination. As further investigations proceed, NPS will continue to evaluate data on the nature and extent of contamination at the Site to inform future management decisions, including public access.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement is an important part of the NPS CERCLA process. NPS has established an information repository at the location identified below, which houses a copy of the SCP Administrative Record File (SCP AR File). CERCLA administrative record files consist of those documents that form the basis for the selection of site cleanup actions. The SCP AR File currently includes documents associated with Site historical information and prior environmental investigations. The SCP AR File will be updated periodically as new information and reports are finalized, including a revision to the Site Community Involvement Plan.

The public can view a copy of the SCP AR File at the Queens Library – Howard Beach Branch. To view the SCP AR File, see library staff at the Reference Desk, who will provide you with a USB flash drive containing the SCP AR File that can be viewed on library computers.

Queens Library – Howard Beach Branch	
Location 92-06 156 Avenue Howard Beach, NY 11414 Phone: (718) 641-7086	Hours of Operation Monday and Friday 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Tuesday 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Wednesday 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Thursday 12:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sunday Closed

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please email any questions you have concerning the information contained in this Community Update to: gate_springcreekcleanupproject@nps.gov or call our Public Affairs Office at (718) 815-3651. Additional information and project updates are available through the Gateway Remediation Environmental Cleanup link on the Park's website ([Gateway National Recreation Area \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/gateway)).