



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Gateway National Recreation Area

Gateway State of the Park 2005

A celebration of the improvements, successes and changes
that have occurred in this preeminent national park



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*Cover: Dedication of the restored Battery Weed Lighthouse, September 2005
Photo© Keith Beckmann*

Introduction: Gateway NRA

Dawn light captures the flight of a heron against a horizon of skyscrapers and warms massive gray walls that once protected the nation's great city of commerce; a large extended family of newly arrived immigrants picnic between dips in cool ocean waters while a stockbroker-hiker explores trails through a marine forest and a gray-haired yachtsman sets sail with a crew of inner city kids—this is Gateway National Recreation Area, one of America's preeminent national parks.



Like every national park, Gateway is a special place where visitors can experience the heritage of the United States on a first hand basis. Like every other national park, Gateway is managed to protect the unique natural and cultural resources that make it a special place.

What makes this national park different is that Gateway is readily accessible to 16 million people who live in the metropolitan area. Gateway was created to bring the “National Park Service Experience” to these people, many who will never have the means to travel outside the region. Gateway is not the only national park in or around New York Harbor nor is it the best known, but at more than 26,000 acres it is by far the largest park in the area and it contains the most diverse array of natural and cultural features.

Gateway National Recreation Area fills a unique niche as a representative of the National Park System in the nation's most populous urban area. The challenges are great; the opportunities many. Gateway—building a tradition of excellence.

Forward

Welcome to our new format of the State of the Park Report for Gateway National Recreation Area (NRA). This report is part of our effort to showcase the incredible natural, cultural and recreational resources of Gateway NRA and all the contributing efforts of the staff, our volunteers, our friends and our partners who help care for those resources and educate our visitors. The accomplishments of the park in 2005 are impressive, and this document celebrates them. Yet we know that to achieve the potential of one of the greatest national parks in our system we have much to do.

This is my first year as the General Superintendent of the park and I would like to take a few moments to talk about my initial impressions of the park, and then touch on what I believe is our core mission.

In 1972 when the park was created there was much speculation about what an urban recreation area was all about, as Gateway NRA was the first in the National Park System. This is actually my second stay at Gateway NRA; I worked at the Jamaica Bay and Breezy Point Units in those early years, 1978-1980, and thus I came to Gateway in January of 2005 with a recollection of what the park was like during those early years. I vividly recall the day the two high rise condo shells were imploded at Breezy Point, clearly signaling that change was in the wind.

When I arrived this past January, I spent much of the first few months getting to know the resources of the park, our staff and our partners. Some

striking observation: How far the park has come since 1980, the quality of the staff, and the incredible diversity of our nationally/globally important resources.

Thus the core mission for the park must focus on taking care of those resources, protecting them and providing access to them today and for future generations. We all know that we will not be able to do this alone, particularly during this period with competing demands on our nation's fiscal resources. We will need the help and support of our friends and our partners, and thus part of my thrust over the next few years will be "friendship building" with our park visitors, our friends organizations, our partners and connecting with the broad and diverse audiences of the greater NY/NJ metropolitan area.

To that end, you will continue to hear more about the National Parks of NY Harbor, consisting of the four parks, Gateway, the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island, Manhattan Sites and Governors Island and one affiliated area, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, as collectively we look to strengthen the support for national parks within the region.

I thank the staff and our partners who have accomplished so much over this past year. I salute those who work to protect our resources, to educate our visitors, those who put the "polish" on them, and those who provide all the support, so that all of this can happen.



Barry T. Sullivan
General Superintendent

Park Overview—2005



While Gateway is a showcase for the national park system in New York and New Jersey, the park is also part of a network of city, state and federal agencies that offer recreational opportunities for urban residents. The recreational opportunities at Gateway range from simple access to open space and natural areas, to venues for team sports, the arts and outdoor hobbies.

Stewardship and education join recreation as Gateway's three primary park programs. Each program area brings together park staff, park partners and visitors in a variety of activities centered on park resources. Stewardship, for example, is focused on preservation of the park's many historic structures and artifacts as well as conservation of natural areas such as wetlands and dune systems. All national parks afford people an opportunity to experience their heritage; at Gateway the public is encouraged to help care for that heritage.

The educational program at Gateway includes traditional ranger-led interpretive talks, exhibits and curriculum-based learning experiences. In all cases, these activities foster a better understanding of special park features; they help people connect emotionally and intellectually with their heritage.

At Gateway, this heritage consists of natural and cultural resources associated with four themes: flight, the American Odyssey, creation of the modern world, and the wonders of an urban estuary.

Established on October 27, 1972, Gateway National Recreation Area is a relatively young park that is still in the process of reaching its intended potential. Beginning in 2004, the Gateway senior management team adopted five **primary goals** that have been used to set priorities and guide activity in all areas of park operations. They include:

1. Reverse deterioration of all primary park resources
2. Provide basic conditions necessary for enjoyable park visits
3. Update and revitalize interpretive and educational programs
4. Expand our capacity to carry out park programs
5. Improve our image and identity as part of the National Park System

Much remains to be done, but progress is being made on a steady basis. Some of the park's more recent accomplishments are highlighted on the following pages. Collectively, these benchmarks are both a measure of success and evidence of a commitment to continual improvement.

Billy G. Garrett
Deputy General Superintendent

Primary Goals

GOAL 1: REVERSE DETERIORATION OF ALL PRIMARY PARK RESOURCES

Preservation of Historic Hangar Row Floyd Bennett Field

Two separate and significant projects were underway during the past year to stabilize and rehabilitate Hangar Row. The first was a \$2.1 million Line Item Construction project to stabilize Hangars 3 and 4. Due to the extreme deterioration of the masonry elements, stabilization was limited mostly to the extreme brickwork and some roof stabilization.

The second project involved awarding a concession for Hangars 5-8 to Aviator Sports to adaptively reuse these structures as a public sports facility. This year major progress was achieved by the concessionaire, including the replacement of the roofs, the lean-to buildings and center hangar buildings. All masonry repairs have also been completed. The project exterior is scheduled to be completed by December with an anticipated public opening of the facility in spring 2006. When the project is completed, the concessionaire will have invested \$30 million to rehabilitate and adaptively reuse these four historic hangars, creating a new facility that will provide unmatched recreational opportunities for the residents of Brooklyn and Queens.



In 2005 the park received \$192,600 to begin a multi-year project to restore the landscape and to bring back this major character-defining feature of the site.

The Frederic Law Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation provided technical assistance and expertise, including a landscape treatment plan based on sustainable horticultural practices. By the end of the fall, Jacob Riis Park will have 300 new trees planted, over 800 diseased trees removed, and the landscape will be much closer to its former grandeur.

Jacob Riis Park Landscape Restoration

The once magnificent landscape of historic Jacob Riis Park had seriously deteriorated due to natural senescence and insect and fungal disease. Original plantings that once lined walkways, defined formal spaces and accented the architectural features of the landmark bathhouse were dead or dying.

Jacob Riis Park Bathhouse

The fourth and final phase of a multi-year effort to rehabilitate the Jacob Riis Park Bathhouse has been completed. Rehabilitating mechanical, electrical and other systems opened more of the facility to the public, spreading use into the spring and fall seasons.



Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Bathhouse consists of four independent structures – two restroom buildings, an Entry Pavilion, and a Beach Pavilion framing a large outdoor courtyard.

Previous rehabilitation phases stabilized the buildings. This project developed the Entry Pavilion and courtyard as a public space for meetings, interpretive displays, dining, exhibits and performances. Circulation improvements include a link between the Entry Pavilion and the Beach Pavilion. Beach Pavilion work provided more “storefront” space and other ground level improvements.

Keeping the Bathhouse occupied and an active part of the community will help revitalize and preserve this historic facility for the future.

Jamaica Bay Marshland Restoration

A multi-agency effort is underway to restore 60 acres of marshland in Jamaica Bay where an estimated 50 acres disappear on an annual basis. Gateway NRA, the lead steward of Jamaica Bay, has been involved in a variety of efforts to identify the causes of marsh loss and implement measures to restore deteriorated areas.

The Elders Point marsh restoration project is a \$15 million effort. The majority of the funds are provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection provide the balance. During winter 2006, 315,000 cubic yards of sand dredged from the Rockaway Inlet and the Ambrose Channel will be used to restore the elevation to the island. In spring, the island will be planted with 200,000 saltmarsh cordgrass plugs.



Preservation of Fort Hancock Structures

The park has been working diligently to preserve 37 unused and unneeded National Historic Landmark buildings in the Fort Hancock district using the NPS leasing authority. Through a comprehensive solicitation process, Sandy Hook Partners and the American Littoral Society were selected to rehabilitate and adaptively use the buildings. Unfortunately progress on helping restore and maintain these historic structures has been delayed pending the outcome of a court decision.

Anticipating harsh winter weather, the park's maintenance division moved forward with emergency stabilization work on twenty two of these buildings, with the goal of protecting these historic structures from further damage by the elements. The work included sealing windows and doors, installation of temporary support walls to shore up weak structures, roof and masonry repairs and removal of three chimneys that were beyond repair.

Stabilization of Gun Batteries and the Nike Barracks

Park staff have made substantial progress in stabilizing four historic gun batteries. The work has included repair and painting of ironwork, vegetation clearing and improved security.

The Nike Launch and Radar sites are important elements in the continuum of military history at Sandy Hook. This year six severely deteriorated sheet metal barracks were stabilized to prevent further deterioration and to allow for safe visitor access.



Migratory Bird Habitat Restoration

Restoration of Sandy Hook's overflow beach parking area (Lot K) began this spring. The north half of the field, approximately 3 acres in size, was permanently closed to vehicle use and planted with a native seed mix that included little blue stem, switchgrass, Atlantic coastal panicgrass, partridge pea and black eyed Susan. The new growth was limited by dry summer conditions, but staff at the Natural Resource Conservation Service predict that the upcoming winter weather will provide the conditions needed to germinate the seeds. Plans for additional native plantings and the continued removal of invasive exotic plants are in place for 2006.





GOAL 2: PROVIDE BASIC CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR ENJOYABLE PARK VISITS

Safe Beaches

Gateway finished yet another year with no drowning deaths at any of the park's lifeguard-protected areas. This outcome reflects the dedicated service provided by the park's lifeguard staff, which this year totaled 127. This also reflects the emphasis that Gateway places on preventive rather than reactive measures in lifeguarding, as well as the care taken to ensure that lifeguard applicants meet nationally recognized physical fitness standards and receive adequate in-service training.

Lifeguard Tournament

A total of 181 outstanding female competitors representing 23 lifeguard services from the east coast of the United States participated in the 21st annual All-Women Lifeguard Tournament. The tournament remains the largest of its kind in the United States.

This annual competition is part of Gateway's continuing surf-lifeguard Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program effort. The tournament serves to showcase the high level of fitness and skill women bring to surf-lifeguarding—and thus provide impressive role models that will encourage others to consider this nontraditional line of work for women.

Functional Facilities

New Visitor Contact Station

Construction of a new visitor contact station is underway, with sustainability a key feature in the building's dramatic re-design and construction. Renewable or recycled materials have been incorporated into structural, functional, and decorative elements of the building, green technologies will provide power, and wildlife friendly plantings will shade the structure while providing food for local wildlife. Additionally, the design of the building dramatically increases available public space but does not expand on the previous building's footprint.



Accessibility

Sandy Hook's visitor center at the landmark Spermaceti Cove Life Saving Station was rehabilitated and made accessible by reorientation of the facility and installation of a handicapped access ramp. The reorientation now brings all visitors through an accessible entrance to the boat house, something that allowed for the reestablishment of the historic porch, reorganization of exhibits and relocation of the Eastern National sales facility.

Bird Blind

Through a generous donation from the Sandy Hook Foundation, a wildlife viewing platform was constructed at Nike Pond to aid in the viewing of migratory birds and wildlife. The bird blind will help ensure that the public can enjoy this valuable resource while not disturbing wildlife or vegetation.



Complementary Concessions

New Docks for the Gateway Marina

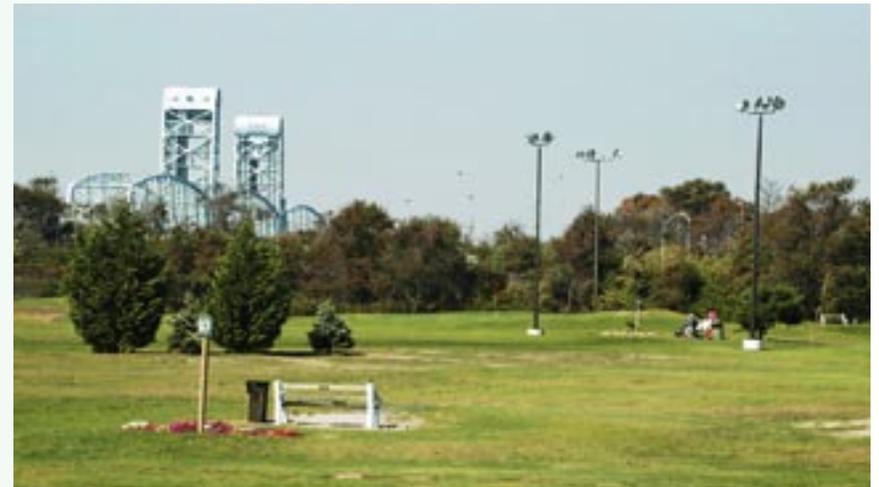
The concessionaire installed new docks and fingers and completely rehabilitated the electric and water service for the individual boat slips. The docks are a state-of-the-art design constructed with lumber made from recycled plastic, making this the largest marina in New York City using recycled products.

New Concessionaire for Staten Island

A new concessionaire was selected this year to provide food services at Great Kills Park and Miller Field. The new concessionaire immediately upgraded the facility at the Great Kills Park Beach Center and purchased new mobile trucks to service other areas. Cleaning and maintenance of the public restroom at the Beach Center is now the responsibility of the concessionaire.

Improved Golf Facilities

Since being awarded their contract, the concessionaire has made significant facility improvements, including a new lighting system that allows for evening play. The concessionaire has also developed plans to construct a new clubhouse with offices, a pro shop, handicap accessible restrooms, snack bar and classrooms by next summer.





Enhanced Access

Multi-use path at Sandy Hook

Phase one of the Sandy Hook Multi-use Path was completed. This five mile paved trail begins at the entrance of the park and extends to the ferry dock in historic Fort Hancock. The path passes through dunes, maritime forests, alongside saltmarshes, ocean beaches, bayside waters and historic sites.

Traffic Study

The NPS and the Federal Highway Administration completed the first phase of planning for several transportation enhancement projects in the Jamaica Bay Unit. Alternative plans have been prepared for each site.

Floyd Bennett Field: improve access to and circulation within the field while reducing or eliminating conflicts among pedestrians, vehicles and visitor activities.

Jacob Riis Park: reduce outside traffic through bordering neighborhoods while improving access to the site for visitors.

Riis Landing: considering its use as a ferry terminal and ground transportation hub, plans include expansion of parking, internal circulation, access to and from Rockaway Point Boulevard, and shuttle service to remote parking areas.



Ferry Service

Summer ferry service to Sandy Hook, first offered in 1997, has continued on weekends from mid-June through Labor Day. Although ridership has steadily increased every year, it saw a dramatic 67% increase in 2005.

Reliable Utilities

Upgrade of Electrical Switch Gear

The final phase of a long-term project to improve the electrical switch gear at Floyd Bennett Field was completed. The new gear was put in service in late July and should bring the park closer to the goal of providing reliable and adequate electric power to the NPS and its tenants.

GOAL 3: UPDATE AND REVITALIZE INTERPRETIVE AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Education Center

The NPNH Education Center project achieved major milestones over the past year with the continued dedication and support of the Northeast Center for Education Services (NCES).

On October 19, 2004 the Center celebrated the establishment of a formal partnership with Brooklyn College and the College of Staten Island of the City University of New York (CUNY) at a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Funding for the Center's operation continues to be provided by Gateway NRA. Additional funds from the NCES supported the partnership's initial efforts and projects.

CUNY-NPS partner accomplishments

- established vision and mission goals for the Center
- presented a formal proposal for educational services to the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE)

Education Center - NYC DOE involvement:

- member of the DOE Science Task Force
- negotiated future of the Gateway Environmental Study Center at Floyd Bennett Field
- provided multi-faceted education services to Region 7, the largest of the city's school districts with over 145,000 students

Facility, programs and service accomplishments include:

- presented curriculum based programs to 2000 students and teachers
- cataloged all library materials into the NPS library system database
- produced a Teacher Guide on Sustainability
- pilot tested NPS module for middle schools; pilot tested an educational Travel Trunk
- developed new outreach activity



Park Connections

Making National Parks Relevant to Changing Populations

As the park continues to build on its Junior Ranger and Parks as Classrooms programs we are looking at ways to make all of our programs connect with the changing populations of the region. These initiatives include partnerships with CUNY and the College of Staten Island, review of our curriculums and programs for our on-site and off-site programming, multilingual signing and a commitment to having our staff reflect the diversity of our visitors.

A Heritage of Flight

Expanding Interpretive Programs

Staff from the Jamaica Bay Unit, with assistance from the Floyd Bennett Field Task Force and WASO's Teaching with Historic Places staff, developed the web-based lesson: *Floyd Bennett Field: Naval Aviation's Home in Brooklyn*. The lesson uses the history and structures of Floyd Bennett Field to teach history, social studies, math and science.



Weekly tours of the Ryan Visitor Center and the Historic Aircraft Restoration Project (HARP) were added as program offerings, along with a new education program about the physics of flight. Additionally, many of the tours are led by HARP volunteers. Over 30 items were added to the museum collection, including historic photos and an artifact from the field's 1931 dedication.

Jamaica Bay Unit expanded its work with its “partners in flight” – the New York City Audubon Society and park volunteers. Members of the NYC Audubon offered quarterly birding programs free to the public and volunteer-led tours included monthly bird walks throughout the unit.

The Wonders, Dynamics & Challenges Of An Urban Estuary

Turtles at the Wildlife Refuge

In August, seventeen mud turtles were released in Big John's Pond at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. The turtles, raised at Cold Spring Harbor Fish Hatchery, represent the culmination of many years of reptile conservation, study, and re-introduction. Between 1994 and 2005 approximately eighty-three mud turtle hatchlings have been reared by Cold Spring Harbor and released in the park wetlands. The mud turtle is a threatened species in New York State.

Researchers from Hofstra University have also recently discovered that the refuge hosts the largest population of diamondback terrapins on the east coast. The interaction between this native species and one of its many predators, the raccoon, is presently being studied. Though native to New York City, increasing numbers of raccoons at the refuge may be having significant impact on terrapin nesting success in Jamaica Bay.



Shaping The Modern World

Lighthouse Keepers Quarters Rehabilitation

The Sandy Hook Foundation has raised \$450,000 for the rehabilitation of the Lighthouse Keepers Quarters and establishment of the New Jersey Lighthouse Museum. Rehabilitation is well underway with completion of exterior repairs and painting and replacement of windows with historically accurate reproductions. Installation of a code compliant fire suppression system has been completed. All other mechanical work is proceeding. The New Jersey Lighthouse Society has funded and contracted for exhibit design.



The Changing Nature Of National Defense

Nike Missile Acquisition for Fort Hancock

Two decommissioned Nike Ajax missiles were acquired from the Department of Defense for exhibit at the park's Nike missile launch site. The missiles, now being restored, were transported to the park from Cape Canaveral Air and Space Museum at Patrick Air Force Base. The project was made possible through a grant from the Sandy Hook Foundation and with the assistance of the superintendent and staff of Cape Canaveral National Seashore.

Fort Wadsworth Lantern Tour

Fort Wadsworth's most popular tour, lantern tours of the fort started in 1997. The evening tour explores the old fort by lantern light and evokes the feeling of being at Fort Wadsworth long before the age of electricity. Visitors often sign-up for these tours months in advance, including special Halloween and winter lantern tours.





GOAL 4: EXPAND OUR CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT PARK PROGRAMS

Volunteers

Fort Wadsworth Lighthouse Restoration

A wonderful example of co-operation between the community and the National Park Service, a group of volunteers spent three years restoring the 1903 lighthouse atop Battery Weed, and on September 24th the light went back on. Amid the cheers of hundreds of spectators the switch was thrown that brought the lighthouse back to life, ending over 40 years of darkness. As FDNY fireboats saluted with plumes of water, the light shown bright and clear. A ceremony honored and recognized all those who took part in this outstanding achievement.

Coastal Cleanup

Gateway joined the American Littoral Society in the 20th Annual International Coastal Cleanup, an event at which shoreline debris is collected and documented in over 100 participating countries. At 20 Gateway sites in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island, 450 volunteers collected 15,000 pounds of debris. The data will be analyzed by the Ocean Conservancy to identify the activities and sources of the debris, as well as educate the public, industry, and government about its consequences.

Historic Aircraft Restoration Program (HARP)

The HARP program continues to add significantly to the park's efforts to interpret the aviation history of Floyd Bennett Field. Several years into the program park staff now directly manage the volunteer effort to restore and interpret military and civilian aircraft. Over the past year, progress has been made to restore several planes, including the Grumman Goose, the A4 Skyhawk, the C45 and the Stearman Biplane.

A recent grant from the National Park Foundation provided the seed money needed to build a scale model of Wiley Post's *Winnie Mae*, commemorating several around-the-world and solo flight records from the 1930's.



Partnerships

Coastal America Partnership Award

NPS Director Fran P. Mainella presented the Coastal America Partnership Award on behalf of President George W. Bush to members of the Gateway National Recreation Area who contributed to the restoration effort at the Big Egg Marsh in Jamaica Bay. Sixteen partner groups who participated in the effort were also recognized.

Partnership with Friends Organizations

An initiative to revitalize the partner organizations of the park is underway, including a broad assortment of groups that range from larger partner organizations to smaller clubs and groups that use the park. The initiative is intended to affiliate these groups to provide more focused support for the park from a larger partner base. Initial meetings and workshops, such as the Friends of Gateway NRA reception at the Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace, have been very successful and show promise for future success.

Healthy Parks

Gateway's proposal for a "Healthy Parks - Healthy Living" project was funded under a grant from Lipton Tea. Working with Lipton, an NPS Proud Partner, the park developed and implemented a program to highlight the vitality, wellness and recreational benefits inherent in Gateway. Events included tennis and golf clinics, a series of "Yoga on the Beach" sessions, and a beach volleyball tournament. The project will also fund the construction of Life Trail Outdoor Wellness Stations for active adults.

Student Conservation Interns

Working in three units of the National Parks of New York Harbor, eight Student Conservation Association Interns from the United States and Canada began working in the park in late summer. In the course of their 12 week stay they have monitored Jamaica Bay saltmarsh restoration sites, participated in exotic invasive vegetation control, conducted vegetation surveys for rare and/or threatened and endangered plants, provided support for GIS activities and immigration history research, and conducting bird surveys.

Jamaica Bay Sailing Program

This past summer saw a record number of visitors take advantage of the Jamaica Bay Sailing Program. Conducted in partnership with the Deep Creek, Rockaway Point, Mira Mar, and Sheepshead Bay Yacht Clubs, 1500 combined volunteer hours were contributed to the program. Participants, including 600 children from area youth groups, enjoyed day sailings or multiple-day instruction on the basics of sailing.

Leasing

NJ Marine Science Consortium

The NPS executed a long term lease with the New Jersey Marine Science Consortium. The Consortium has been a tenant at Fort Hancock for over thirty years and provides marine science classes for 1800 elementary through college level students each year. The lease has enabled the Consortium to obtain grant money from the New Jersey Historic Trust for rehabilitation of Barracks 22. We anticipate a total investment of approximately \$1.7 million in the landmark building.





Park Service, including the performance work statement, the most efficient organization and corresponding cost estimates. The Director can accept the plan as submitted, ask for modifications or request a full “A-76” study. If the Director accepts the plan the park will move to the final implementation phase.

NPNH Administrative Review and Resource Sharing Strategy

The parks within the NPNH Subcluster initiated a review of administrative services, including an evaluation of administrative requirements and the development of a proposed resource sharing plan. The primary purpose of an administrative resource sharing strategy is to address immediate and critical administrative needs throughout the Subcluster; to seek opportunities to share resources in order to maximize operational and fiscal efficiencies; to foster accountability; to develop a succession plan and to initiate long-range planning to assure that a long-term administrative strategy is in place for the future needs of the NPNH Subcluster parks.

With ever increasing and complex workloads, new and advancing technology, changing skill sets and intense operating pressures on park staffs, it is essential to reexamine what parks do and how they do it. Rethinking and reengineering new ways of “doing business” efficiently is critical in the face of rapidly declining human and financial resources.



Operational Efficiency

Competitive Review of Maintenance Operations

The park has participated in the Preliminary Planning Effort (PPE) for the competitive review of maintenance operations at the National Parks of New York Harbor. The process began with the Performance Work Statement (PWS) team developing the PWS for each of the respective parks. (The PWS describes all of the maintenance work that is currently done.) The Most Efficient Organization (MEO) team then began the next phase by reviewing the draft PWS workload and work hours, developing an analysis of the work hours and identifying possible efficiencies and potential organization alternatives. The MEO team presented draft MEO alternatives to the park superintendents.

Upon selection of an MEO alternative, a contractor will prepare a cost estimate of the new organization. A final report will be submitted to the Director of the National

Environmental Management

Environmental Management System

The park is moving forward on the effort to develop an Environmental Management System. An Environmental Protection Specialist position has been created and a two-day EMS workshop was held at Gateway, led by a contractor and two EMS pilot parks, Acadia National Park and Cape Cod National Seashore.

Using resources developed in the workshop, the park produced an Environmental Management Standard Operating Procedure and appointed environmental management teams at both the unit and headquarters level to oversee the direction and focus of the program.

Hybrid Vehicles

The Ford Motor Company, through the National Park Foundation, donated 12 Ford Escape hybrid electric vehicles to eight national parks. Gateway NRA received two of these vehicles for use in the Jamaica Bay Unit. Offering an environmentally sustainable alternative to convention vehicles, the hybrids saw extensive use in support of ranger activities at Floyd Bennett Field and Jacob Riis Park.



GOAL 5: IMPROVE OUR IMAGE AND IDENTITY AS PART OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

Signage

New Signage

A new welcome banner and entrance sign now clearly mark Fort Wadsworth as part of the Gateway National Recreation Area. Since the site was a military base for almost 200 years, many area residents are still unsure if Fort Wadsworth is an active military base or a national park site. Hopefully the new signage will “put out the welcome mat,” inviting visitors to explore the park’s resources and learn about its important place in American history.

Communications

Gateway continues to enhance both internal and external communications. Externally, the three units prepare a quarterly visitor program guide that is distributed in the visitor centers and by direct mail. A more feature-laden “Gateway Journal” was also prepared last year.

Moving beyond traditional printed materials, the park continues to enhance the content of its website, expanding beyond the basic templates. Members of the park staff are currently preparing for the transition to the new CommonSpot Web Content Management System, with the expectation of further enhancing web content to better meet the changing needs of our visitors.

Using the resources of the Gateway Public Affairs Office, the park has received significant coverage of events and issues by print and electronic media outlets. Gateway has been covered in the New York Times, New York Daily News, New York Post, Newsday, Star Ledger, Asbury Park Press, The Record, and several weekly newspapers in New York and New Jersey. Time Out New York, along with numerous national and local television and radio stations, have all covered events in the park.

Internally, employees receive frequent e-mail messages with important park news, including an expanded version of the park’s Monthly Report and distilled minutes of the monthly Senior Managers Team meeting.

Community Relations

Wounded Warriors

The Jamaica Bay Unit co-sponsored the “Wounded Warriors” event on our beaches at the Rockaway Inlet in July. The event helps wounded veterans overcome the challenges of disability. Organized by Disabled Sports USA, NYC firefighters were trained as water ski instructors to teach skiing to the disabled. Thirty returning veterans of the Iraq War, all amputees, were taught skiing, wakeboarding and fishing. Corporate donations included boats and equipment. Local residents housed the veterans and their families, restaurants donated food, and two parades were held to celebrate the courage of the participants.

Five Boro Bike Tour

Fort Wadsworth is the end-point for the NYC Five Boro Bike Tour. As thousands of cyclists end their journey, they are greeted by music, food and a National Park Service living history program. Interpretive materials are distributed with the goal of increasing community interest in the site’s many resources.

New York City Marathon

Each fall 36,000 runners gather at Fort Wadsworth to prepare for the start of the New York City Marathon. As a nationally televised event, the marathon brings significant exposure to Gateway. Park staff are working with the New York Road Runners Club, the event’s organizer, to increase awareness of the NPS presence with both participants and the television audience.



Service to Our Visitors

During 2005 the visitation of Gateway National Recreation Area reached almost 10 million, making it the 4th most visited park in the National Park System. Our visitors experienced and enjoyed our resources in variety of ways, including:

Swimming, sailing, surfing and fishing; learning about ecosystems and their relationships with city life; restoration of historic aircraft and touring historic fortifications; gardening, photography and poetry readings; plays, folk singing, kite flying and multi-cultural festivals; cricket, tennis and soccer matches; star gazing, bird watching, beach clean-ups and nature talks; archery, camping, cycling and...sunset walks.



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