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Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge © Don Riepe

FIELD REPORT

NORTHEAST REGION

Spring 2008

NEWS

The People's Choice: Ecological Restoration at Gateway

Arielle Schwartz

Many of NPCA's supporters around the country have been closely following the progress of *Envisioning Gateway*, NPCA's campaign to realize the incredible potential of Gateway National Recreation Area in the New York-New Jersey harbor. In January 2007, in partnership with Columbia University and the Van Alen Institute, we launched an international public design competition to elicit ideas for a new vision for the large, urban national park that has suffered from years of under-funding, competing uses, and environmental degradation.

As was mentioned in our last newsletter, in May of 2007 a diverse and distinguished jury reviewed more than 100 submissions from 22 different countries and selected the best entries. "Mapping the Ecotone," a design centered on re-introducing water into the park and enhancing the visitor experience of tidal movement, won first place. But national parks are for all Americans, so NPCA wanted to hear from the public too. From June through December 2007, NPCA invited public feedback on the various

Visitors enjoy fishing, boating, walking, and photography along restored wetlands off Floyd Bennett Field's Northeast Shore in an image from "Reassembling Ecologies," the finalist design that features ecological restoration and protection and consolidates recreation areas.



© Van Alen Institute/2007

design elements portrayed by the finalists' designs. NPCA raised public awareness about the park and the competition using many different strategies including online advertising, our magazine, grassroots distribution of information in communities around Gateway, and postcards mailed to NPCA members around the country. NPCA supporters, NYC residents, and park enthusiasts from around the country went to www.npca.org/gateway to voice their support, vote for their favorite design elements, and provide comments. The voting period officially closed in January, with a final tally of 1,969 votes from around the country.

America responded, and while applauding the design elements of the winning proposal, voters overwhelmingly supported "ecological restoration and protection" as the top priority in redesigning Gateway. So it is not surprising that the public's top choice design is... (Drumroll please!): "Reassembling Ecologies," with 78 percent of the total votes. This design focuses on centralizing "human use in one area, while the rest of the site returns to a more natural and 'wild' state." It includes core recreation areas and an elevated viewing platform where visitors can observe wilderness. The jury's first-place selection, "Mapping the Ecotone," received 20 percent of the votes, making it the public's second choice. "H2grOw," which addresses the issue of severe wetland loss in Jamaica Bay through the use



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NPCA hosted an online voting and comment terminal for 8 months providing the public an opportunity to review the best *Envisioning Gateway* designs, select their favorite design elements, and provide feedback to the National Park Service about their hopes for the future of Gateway National Recreation Area.

of "hydroponic pods," was the public's third choice, receiving 18 percent of the votes.

NPCA is now partnering with the Regional Plan Association, which will conduct an in-depth analysis of the votes and gather some additional feedback before we present both the public's input and the winning designs themselves to the National Park Service for potential inclusion in the next planning phase of Gateway's General Management Plan, scheduled to begin in 2009. To view the designs and learn more about *Envisioning Gateway*, please visit www.npca.org/gateway.

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**Northeast Region
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Spring 2008 Vol. 3 No. 1

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Thank you to our interns, Arielle Schwartz and Morgan Robinson, for their help with this newsletter.

Newsletter production by
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NPCA is America's only private, nonprofit advocacy organization solely dedicated to protecting and enhancing the National Park System. NPCA was founded in 1919 and today has over 340,000 members. Membership benefits include the quarterly *National Parks* magazine and more.

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Regional Director Alexander Brash.

BEING BRASH

Heretics in Rome

Alexander Brash

To celebrate the holidays, my family traveled to Colonial Williamsburg, the wonderfully re-created colonial-era village in Virginia. On evenings just after sunset, cannons roared in the town's commons, fires flickered in baskets along Main Street, and all around wandered ornately garbed "early Americans." After just two days in the village, the family had a much greater appreciation of the differences between colonial life and life today. With the smell of hay and the sounds of horses filling the air, instead of exhaust fumes and

the whine of car engines, our kids came to learn that life was simpler in many ways, but it was also much more difficult. Three hours of nightly homework pales compared to endlessly chopping firewood or rising at dawn to tend the livestock. The experiences of Williamsburg brought home such lessons in a way that no book, television special, or museum visit could have.

The trip gave me a chance to ponder our national parks impending centennial. It seems to me that those of us immersed in planning for our national parks in the 21st Century should pause for a moment and listen to the heartbeat of America. Each year, millions of Americans flock to privately run historical sites like Colonial Williamsburg, Sturbridge, and Mystic Seaport, where they can immerse themselves in the lives of those from a different time and place. In addition, if you compare visitation among those national park sites with artifacts and costumed figures and those where velvet ropes restrict us, America's implicit preference is clear: We all enjoy *experiencing* history.

Therefore, as we push toward our National Park System's Centennial in 2016, our parks not only need the funding to be adequately maintained, but they must also come alive. Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, noted as he crossed the High Sierras that our national parks must be protected "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Our national parks were not created to be "preserves," but rather to be open and accessible, to bring the experience of our landscape and history to all Americans.

Occasionally the staff of the National Park Service does something radical, and they have done that in Rome. Nay, not in Italy, but the town in mid-New York that straddles what was one of the most important portages in early American history: the link between a branch of the Hudson River and Oneida Lake. Fort Stanwix, now a National Park site, was built by the British during the Seven Years War to guard this portage. The site was lost to history in the 19th century, and by the 1960s held several tall buildings, forlorn and empty in an era of urban decay. To revive history, the town of Rome joined with New York State and the National Park Service to take a risk. With original British plans in hand and Fort Stanwix's remains located underground, the town and state helped fund the National Park Service's effort to clear the site and confidently rebuild a replica. Today, the wooden breastworks look veritably menacing, and soldiers in period garb roam the grounds. Visitors love it, and I applaud the novel approach to bring this story, once buried, back to life. Indeed, while people often note that "all roads lead to Rome," in the case of our national parks, it is quite possible that Rome might illuminate all roads.

Fort Stanwix stands as an example of successfully making history come alive, illuminating a path beside the traditional singular focus of preservation. So as we look to re-shape and re-invigorate our National Park System for its second hundred years, we need to concentrate on how each story is interpreted and conveyed. Intellectual accessibility is as important as physical and financial accessibility. Each site's story should ring in our ears long after we leave a site. Our parks need firelight dancers, powdered wigs, and booming cannons—we must keep them alive. Through such interpretive accoutrements our parks will draw the pitter-patter of many tiny feet and, in turn, build an even broader constituency of support for generations to come.

The Island at the Center of the World: A New Future for Governors Island

New York City's Inner Harbor, once a site of industrial traffic and pollution, is experiencing a renaissance. Just minutes from Lower Manhattan floats an island with unusual history, a wide-open future, and bursting potential. Governors Island, which for most of its history was inaccessible to the public as an active military site, has received tremendous public attention recently. A national monument occupies 22 acres of Governors Island's 172 acres. Plans for a new park and promenade are now being considered for the remaining 150 acres under the collaborative leadership of Governor Patterson and Mayor Bloomberg. This creative restoration period in the harbor and island's history is the perfect opportunity to focus the spotlight on Governors Island National Monument, a sometimes overlooked but tremendously rich historical asset at the heart of this island, and one which is ripe to experience a renaissance of its own.

The Governors Island National Monument preserves and protects two forts, Castle Williams and Fort Jay. Built in the wake of the Revolutionary War just in time for the War of 1812, the military post remained active until 1996. Today the monument tells the story of the forts' role in the defense of New York Harbor and the nation, and educates the public about the evolution of coastal defense and military communities as well as the harbor's rich history and ecology.

The National Park Service recently released a draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the site, documents that guide the long-term management and use of our national

parks. The first document describes the resource conditions that exist at the national monument, and details a vision for visitor experiences over the next 15 to 20 years, a period of significant anticipated growth for the site and the region. As part of their new vision, park managers hope to develop Castle Williams and Fort Jay as a hub of activities and a jumping-off point for visitors looking to explore the rest of the island.

We have an opportunity now to encourage decision-makers

The Park Service plan explores a new role for the national monument at the heart of the island and may need resources from the private sector as well as the public. "The enormous potential of Governors Island is more than matched by the dedication of all of our partners, planners and friends, not to mention the general public, who are working with us to turn this vision into a reality," says Superintendent Linda Neal.

Public support for the General Management Plan's success is critical for the progress of the harbor's revitalization. We have an opportunity now to encourage decision-makers to prioritize the reinvigoration of Governors Island. The Park Service is ready to take action, and forge a new future for the "island at the center of the world"—let's help them do just that.

The Park Service is no longer accepting comments on the draft management plan, but public involvement remains important, so if you'd like to review the proposal, visit <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. To send a letter encouraging Department of Interior and Congressional support for the proposal, contact Oliver Spellman at ospellman@npca.org.

Aerial view of Governors Island, located in the Inner New York Harbor.



Park visitors head towards Fort Jay at Governors Island National Monument, a former military base and current national park just minutes from lower Manhattan.

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ACTION ITEM

Support Women's History!

NPCA supports the Women's Rights History Project Act, a bill sponsored by U.S. Representative Louise Slaughter, which has companion legislation in the Senate sponsored by Senator Hillary Clinton. If passed, this bill would establish the Votes



Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony

© United States Library of Congress

for Women Trail along the corridor between the Eastern border of New York State and the Niagara frontier and provide support for the Park Service to better tell the stories of the suffrage movement. Stops along this trail would include the Susan B. Anthony home, Women's Rights National Historical Site (Seneca, NY), and other sites pertaining to the 72-year fight for women's suffrage. The passage of this bill would underscore the historical significance of the Upstate New York region for the suffrage movement, which was instrumental in the 1920 passage of the Nineteenth Amendment which granted women the right to vote.

Help the Park Service tell these important stories! Contact your elected representatives in the House and Senate at 202.224.3121 and ask them to support women's history by co-sponsoring these important and timely bills. *For more information, contact Oliver Spellman at ospellman@npca.org.*



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PROFILE

NPS Northeast Regional Director Dennis Reidenbach

Parks for the People

By Arielle Schwartz

It is our national parks' connection to us as Americans — to our diverse and united cultures and to our shared heritage — that give our parks their unique significance in a rapidly developing world. It was this connection that first drew Dennis Reidenbach, the Park Service's newly appointed Northeast Regional Director, to the national parks when he was in college. Although Dennis has long participated in outdoor activities ranging from canoeing to caving, he says that his attraction to the national parks was born from his interest in politics and government.

Dennis began working for the National Park Service's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office in 1983. In 1988 he moved to Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia, a park that preserves Revolutionary War sites, the Liberty Bell, and Independence Hall. Dennis served there as Deputy



© NPS

Dennis Reidenbach, new National Park Service Northeast Regional Director

Superintendent and then rose to Superintendent. In his new position as Northeast Regional Director, he oversees more than half of America's national heritage areas and almost half of the national historic landmarks.

No doubt, to move from supervising a specific park to an entire region entails a broader range of responsibilities and park issues. Managing parks in 13 states means "there's always an important issue or challenge going on somewhere in the region," Dennis says. But his position as regional director also provides exciting new and varied opportunities to engage directly with the public across the region, from "hiking in Acadia to visiting the Booker T. Washington National Memorial and everything in between." The region provides a tremendous diversity of national park units, including "seashore areas, river areas, and some of the key historical resources and icons in our country."

NEWS

A Spectacular Night on the Town: NPCA's New York Gala

On October 25, 2007, NPCA hosted its biennial New York Gala to raise support for our work protecting and enhancing national parks around the country. This year's benefit, *Our Urban National Parks: The Most Inspiring Classrooms*, highlighted the educational value of our urban national parks and showcased the winning entries from the *Envisioning Gateway* design competition as well as beautiful photographs of other urban national parks. Held at the "Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center"



© NPCA / 2007

overlooking Columbus Circle and Central Park, the gala raised \$1.5 million, and was attended by more than 400 guests, including public officials, National Park Service leaders, and a great number of friends of our national parks. Guests saw New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg introduce and honor Congressman Charles B. Rangel for supporting the restoration of Hamilton Grange National Memorial, and enjoyed a performance by eight-time Grammy® Award Winner Natalie Cole. We thank our Gala Chairs, the Dennings, Overlocks, Paulsons, Secundas, and Sykeses for their leadership in making this a spectacular evening. *For information on our upcoming Annual Gala in Washington, DC, see page 6.*

NPCA President Tom Kiernan and New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg present Congressman Charles B. Rangel with an award for his work restoring Hamilton Grange National Memorial.

Dennis' excitement about the possibilities inherent in his new post grows out of his long-standing interest in people. He believes the Park System represents a large part of the American population, and recognizes that the Park Service has an important opportunity for outreach to a wide range of communities. Dennis is most eager to help connect the national parks to "youth and communities who may not have felt the national parks belonged to them [before]."

As we move toward our Park System's second century, Dennis emphasizes that community engagement will be the issue that most shapes the future of the National Park System. "Having the American public engaged in the national parks, seeing the relevancy of the national parks to them as individuals is the key to having the support necessary to the right science, the right preservation actions."

"The key is to make sure that the parks are always relevant to the public," he says. "Everything else flows from that."

NEWS

Meet Our Intern:



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Katie Magiera, NPCA's Outreach Intern, Summer 2007.

Much of the public outreach about *Envisioning Gateway* was done by NPCA summer intern Katie Magiera, a junior at Barnard College,

Columbia University, majoring in Urban Studies and Economics. Katie brought strong research and community outreach skills to her internship with NPCA's Northeast office, having previously participated in a number of nonprofit, fundraising, and community building efforts throughout New York City, including The Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, Brooklyn Parents for Peace, and The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation through Columbia University's Annual Dance Marathon. She also works as Assistant to the Manager at the Barnard Bartending Agency and enjoys exploring New York City. Katie plans to eventually earn a master's degree in Architecture and Urban Design.

Know someone who might like to intern or volunteer in the Northeast Regional office? We can always use an extra pair of hands. Contact dshiber-knowles@npca.org.

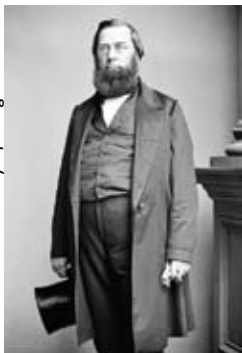
Generations of Preservation: Lessons for Today's World

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

By Arielle Schwartz

Far removed from everything, quietly nestled into the pastoral landscape of Woodstock, Vermont, you'll find an unexpected collection of radical conservation stories and historic features that comprise the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.

The park's story begins in 19th-century Vermont, when new settlers flocked to America. Although there was plenty of space for the new residents in verdant Vermont, the landscape began to suffer dramatically from the rapid development of new towns. As residents chopped down trees from the Green Mountains to build homes, flooding and erosion became commonplace. One of the first to observe the consequences of this development was George Perkins Marsh, an American diplomat and linguist, considered by many to be the first American environmentalist.



© United States Library of Congress

In 1864, Marsh wrote *Man and Nature*, one of the first American works to document the danger of human destruction of the environment. In it, Marsh argued that “the operation of causes set in action by man has brought

the face of the Earth to a desolation almost as complete as that of the moon.” Not only was the book well-received by the public, but in the decades after its publication, it led many Americans to take responsibility for protecting America's forests, and is today considered one of the founding works of the conservation movement.

Frederick Billings was deeply moved by Marsh's seminal book. Like Marsh, Billings grew disheartened at the sight of widespread deforestation of Vermont, his homeland. In 1869, Billings purchased the Marsh family farm with the intention of creating a model of stewardship based on Marsh's warnings about environmental destruction. Behind the Marsh Mansion were the barren slopes of Mount Tom, forestland destroyed

by farming, fire, and timbering. Billings began to reforest the land using methods considered very progressive at the time and he included a system of trails and carriage roads through the woodlands.

With the help of the following three generations of female family members, Billings fulfilled his model of sustainable farming and timber harvest, which remained strong by the time his granddaughter, Mary French, married Laurance S. Rockefeller in 1934. Rockefeller was also a conservationist, influenced by the philosophy of George Perkins Marsh and the work of his wife's grandfather. The couple inherited the estate when Mary French Rockefeller's mother died in 1951, and in 1992 donated the whole of the property to the National Park Service, establishing Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller as Vermont's first national park. Their generosity continued the legacy of preservation and conservation.

Today the public can tour the beautifully preserved, memorable Billings Estate year-round, but the surrounding forests are particularly stunning in the fall. The Park Service offers a variety of programs to visitors, such as the September Forest Festival Weekend and the Forest Quest program for kids, but the most inspiring program at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller often takes place in local classrooms. Launched in 2002 in partnership with several nonprofits, *A Forest for Every Classroom* provides local teachers with the opportunity to learn more about ecology, conservation, and a sense of “place” within the environment. The hope is that teachers who complete the program will encourage students to develop personal appreciation for public lands by modifying their curriculum to include concepts of ecology, sense of place, stewardship, and civics.

The Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller site not only contains great historical, cultural, and educational assets, but also serves as a thought leader on conservation issues today, as the Conservation Study Institute (CSI) is headquartered at the park. The



© Katie Magiera / NPCA

The historic Billings Farm in the foothills of Vermont's Green Mountains.

CSI was founded in 1998 by the National Park Service to help keep its personnel up to date on conservation issues. CSI approaches conservation through collaborative and community-based leadership and supports and sponsors partnerships among NPS staff and academic, government, and nonprofit institutions. CSI provides a forum for discussion on issues of conservation between the Park Service, the conservation community, and the public.

...a park that reminds us of our daily connection and responsibility to our land.

With a rich environmentalist history, cultural relevance, and sprawling green pastures and forests, there is a lot to love about the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. It is a park that tells a story of generations of conservation, reminding us of our daily connection and responsibility to our land. And with the Conservation Study Institute imbedded in the fabric of the park's contemporary work and future, it is a living story, moving the National Park Service forward into what conservation will mean for the generations to come.

For more information on Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Historic National Park, visit www.nps.gov/mabi. Special thanks to NPCA intern Katie Magiera, who helped research and write this article.

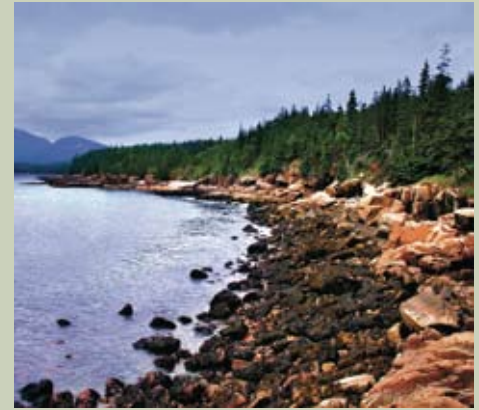
COMING UP

**NPCA ANNUAL GALA
WASHINGTON, DC**

The NPCA Annual Dinner is fast approaching! The dinner will be held on Wednesday, April 16th, 2008 at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. This year's "Salute to the Parks" will honor biologist and conservationist E.O. Wilson with the Robin W. Winks Award for Enhancing Public Understanding of National Parks, and the Honorable Nick Rahall, West Virginia Congressman, with the William Penn Mott Jr. Park Leadership Award. To purchase tickets, make a donation, or get more information, please contact Elizabeth Jordan, Manager of Special Events at ejordan@npca.org or 202.454.3341.

MAINE COAST ADVENTURE

Discover a whole new way to enjoy the dramatic coastline of Acadia National Park and Mt. Desert Island this summer on a family adventure offered by NPCA's *ParkScapes* travel program. Glide past wildlife along the beauty of Acadia's rocky coast in a sea kayak, and bike over miles of rolling carriage roads to explore the natural splendor of Acadia's interior. From August 7-13, 2008, this family-friendly adventure will provide exclusive experiences within the parks and special access to our National Park Service. All of NPCA's unique *ParkScapes* Travel Collection tours are designed to offer our members the best itineraries in adventure, educational travel, and exploration to national parks.



Jordan Pond in Acadia National Park

© Coleong/Dreamstime

For more information on *ParkScapes* tours and on the *Maine Coast Adventure*, please call 800.488.4080 or go to www.npcapark.org/travel.



Monarch Butterfly on Goldenrod, Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City.

© Alexander Brash / NPCA

RESOURCES

Natural History of New York City's Parks and Great Gull Island

NPCA is pleased to announce the release of *Natural History of New York City's Parks and Great Gull Island*, the collaborative book written and published by NPCA, the Linnaean Society of New York, and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. This volume contains detailed research on the ecological assets of the city's parks, reflects on the natural beauty inherent in the resources of the region, and highlights the resilience of the flora and fauna. At the dawn of the 21st century, this metropolis of 9 million people is still home to many of the same species that thrived hundreds of years ago, including a colony of endangered piping plovers at Rockaway Beach and 76 species of butterflies on Staten Island alone. The 320-page book stands as a reminder of the importance and impact of preserving critical elements of our ecosystems, both within national parks and the smaller city parks that enhance our daily lives. It should be an inspirational resource for the nature enthusiast and history buff alike. *For copies of the book, contact Darcy Shiber-Knowles at 212.617.2771.*

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**Inside:
The People's Choice
for Gateway!**

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