

Liberty State Park Revitalization Program Update from DEP Commissioner

January 29, 2024

https://www.folsp.org/about/commissioner_1_29_24_letter.pdf

-1/29/24 NJDEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette great 11-page Revitalization Program Update response to the heads of the Assembly and Senate who wrote a letter critical of the Revitalization process based on misinformation from lobbyists of Paul Fireman and his surrogates who are again pushing for an exclusionary Sports and Entertainment Complex to replace the science-based flood resiliency spectacular habitats plans.

Page 6 “The January 26, 2024 legislative letter presents questions about the LSP-Interior that DEP is happy to resolve. Respectfully, DEP notes that the letter inaccurately states that the Department made a “decision to flood 170 acres in the center of LSP.” While it is not clear why the Legislature would believe this, DEP is aware of certain private interests and individuals who have been knowingly and purposefully circulating misinformation along these very same lines”.

Page 7 DEP Explanation of the science-based flood resiliency habitats:

The LSP-Interior (Phase 1A) Will Reduce, Not Exacerbate Local Flooding

As reflected on the publicly accessible plans for Phase 1A, the Interior restoration and resilience elements include less than seven acres of open water and will reintroduce native ecological features once present at LSP before the park lands and waters were used for dumping and industrial activities. These ecological features are known for their demonstrated flood mitigation properties and are also referred to as “nature-based solutions” to flooding, urban stormwater runoff, and climate change risks. Portions of LSP-Interior will be lowered to create tidal and freshwater wetlands areas. Wetlands are not always permanently inundated features, and one of their greatest values, especially within this densely developed urban area, are resiliency and storm surge attenuation during storm events. In such events, these nature-based flood and climate resilience features act as an energy dissipator while also offering additional flood storage capacity during weather events.

Additionally, a berm within the center-west of the interior has been designed and will be constructed to keep the freshwater wetlands from being intruded with salt and tidal water. The top of the berm will be at 10 foot elevation. The freshwater wetland area is designed to capture storm water runoff from the developed upstream drainage areas west of the park. This provides additional flood storage, beyond the existing conditions, for the upstream drainage area for rain derived flooding events. Furthermore, by lowering the elevation on the eastern portion of the interior, earth will be relocated and mounded to the west, i.e., closer to the community, thereby adding more protection for the community from coastal flooding.

Furthermore, due in part to its specifically designed tidal channel network, the interior project will reduce the area of inundation associated with both 100- and 500-year storm events. On-site storage for both tidal and rainfall events will also be increased, thereby reducing nuisance flooding and storm-induced flooding in surrounding areas. The interior project is also anticipated to decrease the inland extent of the “Limit of Moderate Wave Action.” This reduction of wave energy will benefit inland infrastructure and development, including the Liberty Science Center and the SciTech Scity currently in development.

In short, through the aforementioned features, together with other grading and vegetation improvements, the project will afford surrounding inland properties a degree of protection that they do not have presently. The benefits of this protection will be real and tangible for the surrounding residents and businesses, as well as for newly developed features of the park itself.

Page 8 of 11 Summary of LSP Interior (Phase 1A) Features

Other highlights of the interior project, a video demonstration of which is publicly accessible on the LSP Revitalization website <https://dep.nj.gov/revitalizelsp/cleanup-restoration-resilience/> , include:

- **Cleanup of areas long closed to the public due to legacy industrial contamination.**
- **Ecological restoration and construction of nature-based solutions that serve critical flooding and climate resilience functions for the community and promote ecological uplift that serves native fish and wildlife species.**
- **Creation of multiple hilltop scenic overlooks with dramatic views of the NJ/NY harbor and skylines.**
- **Reintroduction of native vegetation, meadows, and urban forested areas that will reduce heat island affects associated with climate change.**
- **Development of outdoor classroom and environmental education programming.**
- **All features bound together in a 5.6 mile walking and running trail network.**