



Department of Environmental Protection

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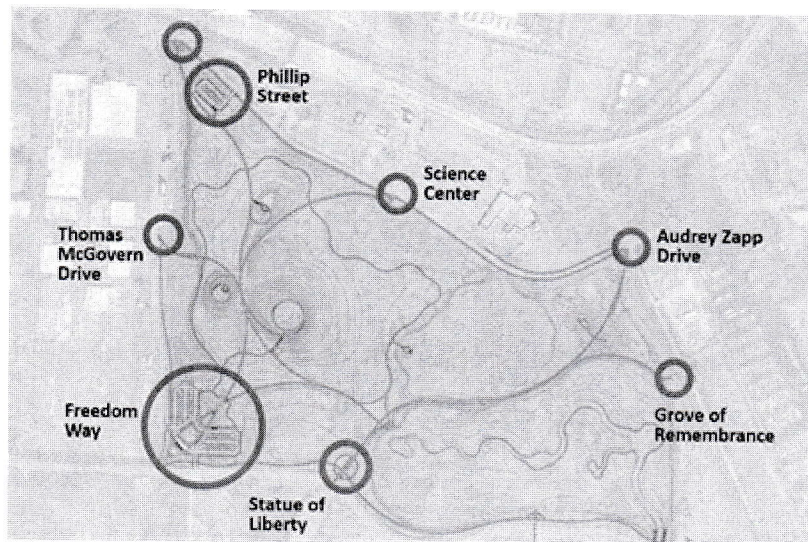
DEP SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON LANDMARK MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT IN LIBERTY STATE PARK; PROPOSED DESIGN RESTORES 234 ACRES OF NATURAL RESOURCES, INCREASES PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY

(20/P037) TRENTON – The Department of Environmental Protection has committed tens of millions of dollars to the ecological restoration of 234 acres of Liberty State Park’s interior, creating knolls with sweeping views of the Jersey City and Manhattan skylines and increasing public accessibility, Governor Murphy and Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe announced today.

Utilizing funds DEP has recovered in lawsuits and settlements for natural resource damages, the proposed design would restore natural resources and create access to the interior of the park that has been off limits to the public for decades due to historic environmental contamination.

Beginning in September, the DEP will engage with elected officials, community leaders and the public on the major design elements of the restoration plans for an area that encompasses approximately 40 percent of the park. The DEP will host a public meeting in late September and make presentation materials available online (<https://nj.gov/dep/nrr/>) to invite comments and suggestions from the public.

“Liberty State Park is a cherished cornerstone of our state that improves the quality of life for New Jerseyans and offer great services and experiences,” said **Governor Murphy**. “Today’s investment will allow us to not only rebuild, but enhance the site while preserving the environment, to provide opportunities for residents to discover and enjoy for generations to come.”



Proposed new access points for Liberty State Park, including parking lots at the Phillip Street and Freedom Way Gateways. The restoration project area has been closed off to the public by a chain-link fence due to contamination from low levels of metals and hydrocarbons. The site was used to deposit soil in the late 1800's and covered tidal wetlands, in more than 70 acres of the area.

As part of the redesign, the contaminated soil will be excavated and then capped with clean soil. The clean soil will then be planted with trees, grass and other vegetation. All other open public areas of Liberty State Park were remediated similarly in the past.

At approximately one-third the size of New York City's Central Park, the proposed natural resources restoration will increase the park's accessible space by 40 percent and will:

- Clean up contamination
- Restore the natural ecosystems
- Create additional access to the park for nearby residents
- Improve water and air quality
- Reduce runoff
- Help mitigate climate change
- Create public-use enhancements

“We are eager to engage the public, stakeholders, and elected officials as we design the restoration of this important part of one of New Jersey’s most unique and treasured parks” **Commissioner McCabe** said. “Liberty State Park offers New Jerseyans, especially the local community, an easy escape to nature in the midst of a densely populated urban center. We look forward to the community’s feedback on the proposed design, and to a productive discussion about how we can continue to enhance park amenities for the benefit of neighboring communities and millions of visitors.”

The draft plan aims to restore several habitat types for a wide variety of species and includes 72 acres of fresh and saltwater wetlands. The proposed design also creates seven miles of additional trails within the park, adds more than 300 new parking spaces, and includes a variety of wildlife viewing, educational, and passive recreational opportunities for visitors. The area will

incorporate several different access points to facilitate usage for all New Jerseyans, including from the surrounding communities in Jersey City, patrons of the Liberty Science Center and other day-use visitors.

In the coming weeks, the DEP's Office of Natural Resource Restoration and State Park Service will schedule meetings to update local officials and the public about plans for restoring this area. The State Park Service will announce public meeting plans in the near future.

"Engaging with and listening to our communities is critical to all of our environmental justice and equity work," said **Olivia Glenn, DEP's Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Justice & Equity**. "The public conversation to come is necessary to ensure that the future of Liberty State Park truly incorporates the needs of its neighbors and the visiting public. We know that improved access to natural landscapes are priorities for our communities, but there are often other community priorities that we can address like reducing flooding and brownfield revitalization, making this conversation critical to the success of the design."

"Liberty State Park is one of our most protected treasures here in Jersey City and it's a welcomed initiative and well-worth celebrating when the State promises actions like this," **Jersey City Mayor Steven M. Fulop** said. "Ensuring that Liberty State Park remains a protected open space for everyone is essential, but by significantly enhancing it by making large areas that currently lie behind chained fences, which were polluted during the past industrial era years ago, now open, cleaned and made safe for the use of residents, and visitors – how do you not applaud this endeavor."

"I welcome today's announcement about reaching a new milestone for the Liberty State Park interior restoration project, which will ultimately benefit Jersey City's children," said **Senator Sandra Cunningham**. "Years from now, this will draw visitors from Jersey City, New Jersey and around the world, and it starts with important conversations with the park's neighbors and community members. I look forward to working with both the DEP and my constituents in the next steps of the project design to create a beautiful, vibrant space for the public for decades to come."

"We are deeply appreciative to Governor Murphy and Commissioner McCabe for investing in Liberty State Park, which is a national treasure and the keeper of this country's diverse, rich history with markers that have guided generations of citizens and attracted people from all over the world," said **Assemblyman Raj Mukherji of Jersey City**, Chairman of the Assembly Judiciary Committee and a longtime champion of Liberty State Park. Mukherji added, "Today's announcement will help future generations better enjoy this rare open space jewel, in a densely populated urban county and one of only two places in the world from which Ellis Island and Lady Liberty can be accessed."

In addition to this notable natural resource restoration project, Governor Murphy and the DEP are also continuing to pursue additional recreational and public use enhancements throughout Liberty State Park. Based on community input, plans are already underway to enhance active recreational facilities, such as athletic facilities, and improve food services to better serve the public.

The restoration project is funded primarily through Natural Resource Damages (NRD) settlements. NRD settlements use compensation from polluters who have caused environmental harm to fund projects that restore injuries to New Jersey’s natural resources, like the forests and wetlands proposed in Liberty State Park.

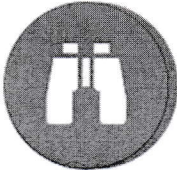
The NRD program has settled approximately 7,500 sites, recovering approximately \$800 million for the state. These settlements have resulted in the protection of more than 6,000 acres of aquifer recharge and wildlife habitat restoration, with existing plans to begin constructing another 900 acres of habitat restoration, as well as other restoration and public access enhancements.

About Liberty State Park and the New Jersey DEP

Liberty State Park first opened on July 4, 1976 as New Jersey’s gift to the nation for the Bicentennial.

Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2020, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is dedicated to protecting New Jersey’s environment and public health. The agency prioritizes addressing climate change, protecting New Jersey’s water, revitalizing its communities and managing and promoting its natural and historic resources.

For the most recent information about the DEP, follow its Twitter feed at [@NewJerseyDEP](https://twitter.com/NewJerseyDEP) or visit www.nj.gov/dep.



Several wildlife viewing areas



Elevated plateaus and overlook areas



Bicycling



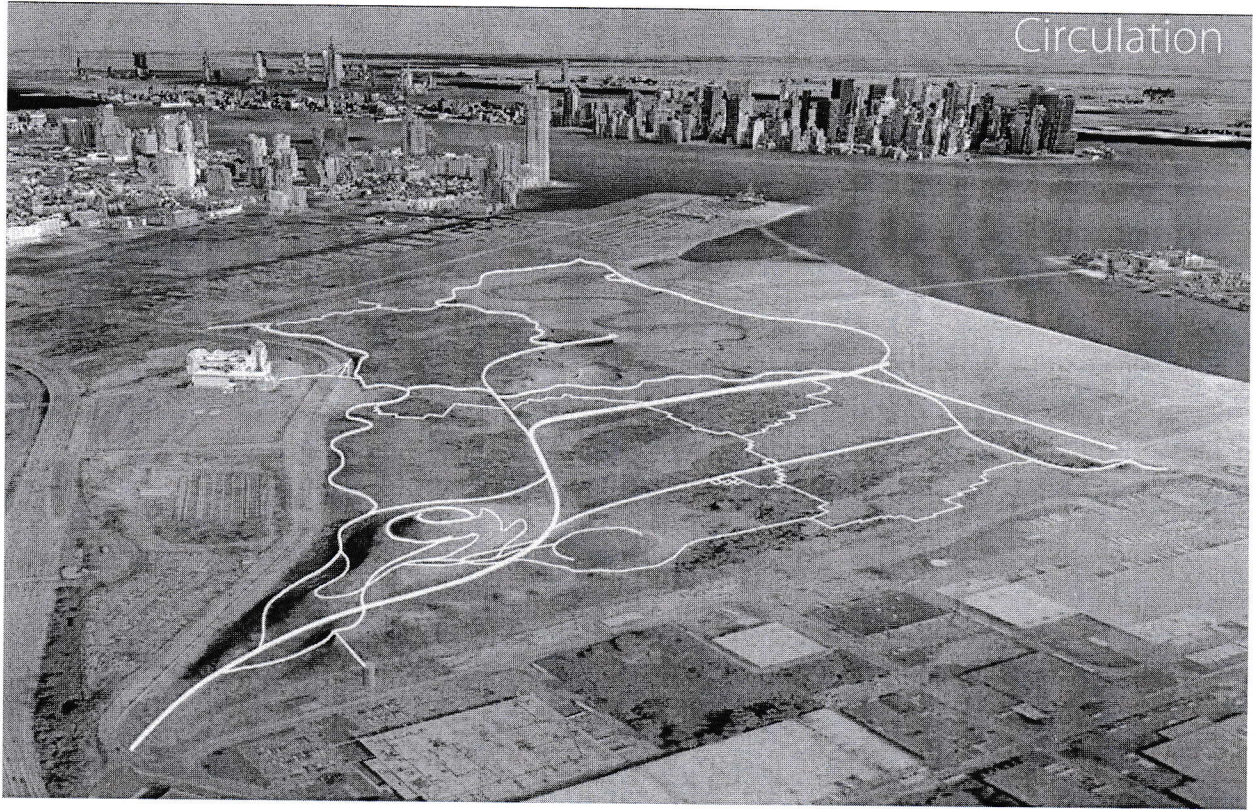
Restrooms



7 miles of new paths, trails, and sidewalks



341 Parking spaces



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