

The Jersey City Times by Mark Bloomberg August 29, 2025

Op-Ed: A Sketchy Deal Will Put a Monstrous Boat Shed in Liberty State Park

New Jersey residents must organize and protect Liberty State Park from over development. We all need to tell the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to stay true to its mission and reject a newly proposed lease for Suntex marina and negotiate an agreement that is better for taxpayers and park visitors. The proposed terms of the lease are a terrible arrangement and the planned massive warehouse is an unsuitable structure that has no business being in New Jersey's premier State Park.

Extending the existing lease to 60 years and the proposed financials are a bad deal. The proposal that has been shared with the public is missing details, purporting to guarantee a minimum \$800K annual rent which would increase by 10% every five years, while also including "percentage rent requirements tied to various revenue streams." That last bit needs to be clarified, and the proposed increases aren't guaranteed to outpace inflation. Will those payments help fund replacement of the deteriorating bulkhead? Sure, but it's not clear that the state will come out ahead in the long run.

The DEP must solicit other operators to better understand the worth of the marina, identify a reasonable term and ensure that rent increases, at a bare minimum, keep pace with inflation and the future value of the land. Without the exact terms of the lease and competitive perspectives, for all we know DEP is accepting a fool's bargain that will disproportionately benefit Suntex for three generations of NJ residents!

The proposed 500-boat storage warehouse, covering three acres and standing 75 feet tall, is absurd. The south entrance already "greet" visitors with dilapidated buildings. While the proposed warehouse is more aesthetically designed, it would be a monstrous eyesore that has no business being at a main entry point of the park. There's a reason why the National Park Service ruled that structures in the park shouldn't exceed a half acre; this structure would cover six times more space. Why is the DEP considering ignoring this guideline? And that doesn't even touch on the height which would rise multiple stories above the tree line. Given its size and purpose, is anyone considering how much noise will be generated from warehouse machinery and vehicles and its impact on visitors' enjoyment of the park? Suntex should find another location or scale down the size.

Its incredibly disappointing that the lease includes scant detail on the revenue stream or the warehouse's size and that the scope was only discovered by reading the fine print. It's deceptive, insulting and raises concerns whether DEP is being transparent on the details. The federal DEP has abandoned its purpose and now serves corporations. Is NJDEP's mission still "[d]edicated to improving and protecting public health and the environment we share...?"

Please help oppose the proposed lease by sending comments to Jocelyn.Gulla@dep.nj.gov by Sept. 18 and/or remotely attending a public hearing on Sept. 4 at 2pm. Links and dial-in numbers can be found at <https://dep.nj.gov/otpla/LLM-Lease/> under the section titled, "Second Public Hearing".