



An Intimate Journey Through The Delaware River Region

By Oliver Spellman

I have worked at Northeast Regional Office of NPCA for years helping to expand the range of our programs while staying close to our mission. I have found that one of the best ways to gauge the impact and importance of our programmatic work is to actually spend time in areas adjacent to our national parks and meet local stakeholders.

Recently, I had an opportunity, along with Jim Dion and John Beljean, (of National Geographic and NPCA's Mid-Atlantic region, respectively) to visit the nine counties that border the Delaware River Region in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This area has been chosen as a destination by NPCA's partner, National Geographic's Geo-tourism Project, because it is ecologically and culturally important. This winter, Jim, John, and I drove through mild winter weather to explore the region's character, local communities, and natural resources.

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Happy 100th Birthday to America's National Parks!

On August 25th, 2016 the National Park Service will turn 100 years old. The National Park Service Centennial is a once-in-a-lifetime event, and NPCA's Northeast office has been taking full advantage of this moment in history. Since last year we have been working in New York City and in the region to celebrate this anniversary, include America's veterans, and grow the number of advocates for parks in the Northeast region, encouraging people to "Find Your Voice" for their national parks.

To kick it off, the Northeast office launched its Centennial celebration with a summer 2015 event for veterans at the Jamaica Bay unit of Gateway National Recreation Area. Veterans and their families enjoyed a day of on-water paddling, nature hikes, arts and crafts, and critter tanks. Many of the families had never paddled on the water and had never been to Jamaica Bay before. Not only did we encourage people at this event to "Find Your Voice" for Gateway National Recreation Area, this event is also an example of the Northeast office's commitment to engaging veterans. With more than 21 million veterans in the United States, the majority of whom are post 9/11 veterans, there exists significant opportunity to inspire veterans to become advocates for our national parks.

This Centennial year our engagement and advocacy with new audiences continues.

NPCA will host three signature events at Gateway National Recreation Area and on the Appalachian Trail. One of the events, The Epic Ride After Party is described in the article below.



NPCA will host nearly 100 students this spring from the areas of Brooklyn and Queens that surround Jamaica Bay on a first-time-ever hike on the Appalachian Trail. Leading up to this event, the Northeast office has been working with its partners and the National Park Service to help orient participants to

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Top: Veteran Mark Fox paddles the Mississippi River ©Warrior Paddle Expeditions **Above:** Jamaica Bay Advocates, local Veterans and military families celebrate Flag Day by spending a day paddling the waters of Jamaica Bay at Gateway National Recreation Area. ©Ian Douglas Photography

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Spring/Summer 2016

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Meet an Advocate | John Donovan III

John was first introduced to NPCA last February, when NPCA's Northeast Region teamed up with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) to recruit park advocates at community service events around NYC. He officially joined Jamaica Bay Advocates in April 2015 when he attended NPCA's first Civic Voice Lessons advocacy training in New York City.

As SCA's New York-New Jersey Program Coordinator, John has held many roles throughout the region, most of which lead back to Gateway National Recreation Area (NRA). His passion for Gateway NRA and enthusiasm for protecting Jamaica Bay grew tremendously after Hurricane Sandy ravaged the coasts of New York and New Jersey.

The SCA, under John's management, has deployed teams of interns, volunteers and Sandy Recovery Crews to remove trash, tackle maintenance projects, disperse sand and build protective dunes – all of which are ongoing battles for Jamaica Bay.

For area residents like John Donovan, helping Gateway NRA recover from Hurricane Sandy is a matter of pride.



In August 2015, John helped NPCA reach new advocates by coordinating a private Civic Voice Lessons training for the SCA crews stationed at Gateway NRA. Since then, he has worked with SCA to host a Find Your Park Day of Service at Jamaica Bay and continues to play an integral role for NPCA's Jamaica Bay Advocates.

Join John and the many SCA members who are making a difference at Gateway by becoming a *Jamaica Bay Advocate*! Sign up here: www.npcsa.org/jba. Thank you, John!

“Being from this area myself—I’ve seen it—people wear pride tee shirts ‘Long Island Strong’ that kind of stuff. Hurricane Sandy really hit home for a lot of people, which is why I think the work SCA and NPCA are doing is really important.”

—John Donovan III, NY-NJ Program Coordinator for the Student Conservation Association

Find out what else SCA is doing to celebrate the National Park Centennial across the country. Visit www.thesca.org/findyourpark.



Top: SCA's John Donovan enjoys his Spring Break by helping others build a community garden. ©NPCA
Above: Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge ©Stubblefieldphoto | Dreamstime

HAVE A PHOTO OR COMMENT TO SHARE? We welcome photos from members enjoying national parks, particularly those in the Northeast region. We also appreciate feedback on our Field Report. Share your digital photos, comments, and ideas with us via email: tleonard@npcsa.org

A National Park for Stonewall

At a press conference in front of Stonewall Inn on September 20, 2015, NPCA formally launched a campaign for a *National Park for Stonewall*, to create a national monument in New York City for Stonewall Inn, in Greenwich Village. This would be first national park site dedicated to telling the story of LGBT history in America. Stonewall Inn was the site of the 1969 uprisings that catalyzed the modern movement for LGBT civil rights and human rights. NPCA's Northeast office started the campaign in the summer of 2014 by meeting with local LGBT activists to build local, grassroots support. Once local support had grown to a strong movement for the park, NPCA formally launched the campaign at the September 2016 press conference.

New York's Senator Kristen Gillibrand and Congressman Jerold Nadler urged support of a national park for Stonewall at the event and introduced legislation in congress earlier

this year. The campaign has grown to over 18,000 supporters, along with widespread support from local and federal officials, influential LGBT organizations, and celebrity endorsements. NPCA's goal is to encourage President Obama to designate the park through the use of the Antiquities Act by June 2016, and we're moving quickly to garner

additional support for the project. Join our cause by signing the online petition here: www.npca.org/natlparkforstonewall. Share the link with your friends and family members to create a #NatlParkForStonewall!

Below: US Senator, Kirstin Gillibrand of New York at NPCA's Stonewall press conference ©Ian Douglas Photography



Happy 100th Birthday to America's National Parks!

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hiking basics such as what kind of shoes to wear, snacks to have handy, and what to expect in the event of rain.

We will co-host the 3rd Annual Trail Day with the Harlem Valley Appalachian Trail Community (HVATC) this fall to recognize the growing success of the Veteran-led organization, Warrior Hike, and commemorate the hiking veterans who used the Appalachian Trail to 'walk off the war' and transition back to civilian life after combat.

Long after the Centennial we want everyone to get their hands dirty volunteering in a park, participate in a Civic Voice Lessons advocacy training, or join the conversation online at #FindYourVoice. Everyone can do their part to ensure our nation's most treasured parks are protected, restored and funded well into their second century.

The Find Your Voice initiative will span over the next five years, reaching its peak in 2019 when NPCA celebrates its own 100th

anniversary. Learn more at FindYourVoice.camp and join the conversation online #FindYourVoice.



For more information about our advocacy in Jamaica Bay and to receive monthly newsletters about Jamaica Bay and our work in Gateway National Recreation Area, please contact Lauren Cosgrove at lcosgrove@npca.org.

Below: Acadia National Park at Bar Harbor, Maine United States ©Luckydoor | Dreamstime



Saving Jamaica Bay, Narrated by Susan Sarandon

Saving Jamaica Bay, the first ever feature documentary about the battle to save one of New York City's most remarkable and important natural resources—told through the stories of the people who call it home—premiered at two major film festivals this Spring.

The film is narrated by Susan Sarandon, written and produced by Daniel Hendrick and directed by David Sigal, the award-winning director of films screened at the Tribeca Film Festival and at Cannes. *Saving Jamaica Bay* was shot across five years beginning in 2011. It traces Jamaica Bay's decline, rebirth, the destruction of Hurricane Sandy and the long rebuilding process since.

Saving Jamaica Bay tells how the Bay's neighbors of working-class Brooklyn and Queens have developed and nurtured a close relationship with the body of water that has defined and threatened their lives and livelihoods. In the process of rediscovering their relationship to the water and nature of Jamaica Bay, residents have been transformed into urban environmentalists,

struggling to preserve this priceless resource and their way of life.

The film debuted at the Queens World Film Festival in New York City on March 17, at the Environmental Film Festival in Washington, D.C. on March 24, and at the

Palm Beach International Film Festival in Florida this past April.

Below: Members of the Saving Jamaica Bay crew at Breezy Point, Queens, part of the National Park Service's Gateway National Recreation Area ©Don Riepe



Watch the Saving Jamaica Bay trailer at savingjamaicabay.com

Friends Groups Unite!

On a cold October weekend in 2015, the Northeast office of NPCA hosted the first annual Northeast Friends Convention to a packed crowd of friends groups, national park staff, superintendents, and community groups. Over 34 official friends groups and community organizations that support national parks of the Northeast were in attendance.

The event provided the first ever opportunity in the Northeast for small and midsize friends groups and park supporters to come together as a constituency. Participants shared advice and best practices, discussed the challenges surrounding their partnerships with the National Park Service, and found out how much they have in common.

The feedback NPCA received was that the weekend was an outstanding hit, providing people with a newfound sense of their fundamental connection to each other, their parks, and to NPCA.



Out of many highlights, a two hour break out session on the challenges of partnerships allowed NPS staff and friends groups to speak in-depth about the nature of their partnerships, what works and doesn't work. In other sessions, NPCA and speakers worked to dispel the myth that friends groups cannot advocate, and described the nature of nonprofit advocacy.

NPCA plans to host this event annually to continue to inspire friends groups to become more of a constituency for each other, for NPCA, and for all of our national parks.

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

The 2016 Northeast Friends Convention will be held in Paterson, New Jersey at Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, October 14-16.

If you are a member of a local friends group and are interested in attending, please contact tleonard@npca.org for more information.

Above: Attendees at the 2015 Northeast Friends Convention in front of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Hartford, CT ©NPCA

Jamaica Bay StoryMap: New York City's Wildlife Gem Will Be Online!

Most New Yorkers in need of an immediate nature fix head to Central Park, but there is another option. The beaches, wetlands, and upland islands of Jamaica Bay, part of Gateway National Recreation Area (NRA), are home to rare wildlife including more than 325 species of birds (about 100 more than Central Park) and 100 species of fish. The best part? It's only a subway ride away! And now, thanks to powerful online resources, you can discover Jamaica Bay's wildlife at home, in school or on-the-go with the Northeast office's new, mobile friendly Jamaica Bay StoryMap.

Jamaica Bay is an essential asset of New York City—it offers unparalleled access to outdoor recreation in an increasingly crowded urban environment. Yet few people understand or have access to information about its wildlife. That's why NPCA's Northeast office has been working for over a year to develop an online educational tool. The Jamaica Bay StoryMap will bring the sights, sounds and narrative of Jamaica Bay's wildlife to everyone.

This online map with embedded, photos and videos, will give educators, schools, advocates, and decision makers Jamaica Bay wildlife information at their fingertips. We will release the Jamaica Bay StoryMap this summer and work with our partners to continuously improve it with more content and more resources far into the future. Contact Lauren Cosgrove at lcosgrove@npca.org for more information and to receive the link to the Jamaica Bay StoryMap upon its release.



Above: Black-crowned night-heron in Jamaica Bay, New York ©Francoisroux | Dreamstime

Revolutionary War National Park Sites at Risk



Did you know that the infamous Paul Revere was known to local Bostonians not just for the “midnight ride” but also because he was the local dentist? Neither did the five children featured in NPCA's Northeast office's recently released video that highlights Revolutionary War national parks in the region. For the last year, the Northeast office worked with a production company to create a video that highlights the repair and maintenance backlogs affecting Revolutionary War units.

The video sends the message that we are losing our ability to teach place-based history to the next generation because we are failing to protect cultural and historic resources. Rolling out this video is the Northeast office's first step in launching a broader campaign to attack the maintenance backlog that threatens cultural and historic parks in the Northeast.

Neglecting annual maintenance, no matter how small a problem might be, puts some of our oldest cultural and historic resources in jeopardy. This problem is particularly visible in parks like Minute Man National Historical Park, Boston National Historical Park, and other units that tell the story of the American Revolution. The most recent statistics suggest that the entire National Park System suffers from a cumulative maintenance backlog of \$11.9 billion. Of this total, \$4 billion is needed to rehabilitate historic structures at national parks. This staggering number motivates NPCA's Northeast region to view this campaign as a high priority. Given the fact that two-thirds of national parks in the Northeast region are cultural and historic sites, tackling this problem is especially important.

Producing this video is just the start of a larger campaign intended to reach elected officials, asking them to better fund Revolutionary War units and address the maintenance and repair backlog.

To send a message to our elected officials, the Northeast region will launch a series of events throughout New England showcasing the video and educating local citizens about the severity of the problem. As a result of these events, we'll call upon our newly engaged advocates to “speak-up” and contact their members of Congress.

See the video at www.vimeo.com/153819464!

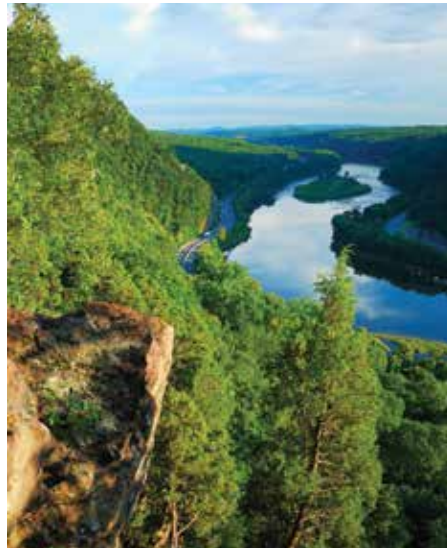
Above: British soldiers fight the Minute Men on Battle Road in Concord, MA during an April 2011 reenactment ©sphaner | iStockPhoto

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For three days, Jim, John, and I visited small gateway communities along the Delaware River to meet and engage with the local residents. We came to understand that the condition of the Delaware River is critically important to the future well-being of two major national park units in the region and the tourism economies of numerous small communities in the area.

Our road trip through the Wild, Scenic Delaware River region gave the three of us the opportunity to meet a diverse group of local stakeholders, and experience an incredible variety of different backgrounds. We were asked to participate in two local radio interviews, tour the rich Eco Zone in the Pocono Environmental Education Center, walk the grounds of the Woodstock concert site and tour the fascinating exhibit halls of the Bethel Woods Museum all while driving along the majestic Delaware River Scenic Byway. A noteworthy part of the journey was standing at the exact point where the Delaware River intersects with three states—New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.



Jim summed it up perfectly, “The Delaware River is the anchor attraction of this region and the long term health of the river is directly tied to the viability of the local economies and the well-being of local people; the greatest threat to the tourism economy of the Delaware River region would be any decision that compromises the integrity of the river itself.”

The opportunity for Jim, John, and I to experience first-hand how tourism connects environmental stewardship and economic benefits improved NPCA’s understanding of the importance of well-managed public lands and waters in local communities. We all agreed that local stakeholder participation along with NPCA’s on-the-ground work with communities is the approach that will best preserve the natural environment. But don’t just take my word for it, go out and become a geotourist yourself.

John Beljean and Oliver Spellman work for the National Parks Conservation Association. Jim Dion is a Sustainable Tourism Program Manager with National Geographic and a Vice President at Solimar International, an organization that promotes global development through sustainable tourism. NPCA’s Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions continue to play a pivotal role in the development of the geotourism mapping project, funded by the William Penn Foundation, and implemented by National Geographic’s Mapping Division.

Above: Aerial view of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area ©Songquan Deng | Dreamstime

The Amazing Epic Ride After-Party at Gateway

On July 23, cyclists from all 5 boroughs will participate in the **Epic Ride**, a 30-45 mile bike ride from Greenpoint, Brooklyn to Rockaway, Queens along the Brooklyn Greenway and Jamaica Bay Greenway bike paths. The Epic Ride builds awareness of the importance of bicycle transportation access to the Jamaica Bay unit of Gateway National Recreation Area for all New Yorkers.

At Riis Park, “the people’s beach,” NPCA will host the Epic Ride’s finish line bash with our partners the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, the National Park Service, and Riis Park Beach Bazaar. Once at Riis, bikers and beach goers alike can learn more about Centennial events at Gateway NRA while scoring free swag, enjoying local food and drinks, live music, and a well-deserved dip into the Atlantic Ocean.

Register to bike the Epic Ride at epicride.nyc

Volunteer with NPCA at the Epic Ride Finish Line and After Party! Sign-up to volunteer at www.epicvolunteer.eventbrite.com.

