



The Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan:

Update from the Advisory Committee

Presented at Ryan Visitors Center, October 4, 2006



Background

- Local Law 71, enacted in 2005, requires DEP develop a Watershed Protection Plan to restore and maintain water quality and the ecological integrity of Jamaica Bay
- Local Law 71 also created the Advisory Committee to:
 - Provide Plan recommendations to the DEP and the Council
 - Provide advice to the DEP regarding the Plan
- The Advisory Committee consists of 7 members (4 appointed by the Mayor and 3 by the Council):
 - Doug Adamo, National Park Service
 - Manny Caughman, Community Activist
 - Len Houston, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - Dan Mundy, Jamaica Bay Eco Watchers
 - Brad Sewell, Natural Resources Defense Council
 - Larry Swanson, Stony Brook University
 - Chris Zeppie, Port Authority of NY/NJ



Background (cont'd)

Schedule (as revised by Intro. 376)

June 29, 2006: Advisory Committee submitted preliminary recommendations to the DEP and the Council

September 1, 2006: DEP submitted a Plan Interim Report that responds to Committee preliminary recommendations

March 1, 2007: DEP completes the draft Plan

June 1, 2007: Committee submits final recommendations to the DEP and the Council

October 1, 2007: DEP completes the Plan

October 1, 2008 (and every 2 years afterwards): DEP submits a report to the Mayor and the Council on the Plan's progress and reasons why, if any, changes are needed



Jamaica Bay: A National Treasure in Jeopardy

The Bay's once abundant and thriving resources and ecological systems are at risk.

- Sewage treatment plants surrounding the Bay release approximately 300 million gallons of treated wastewater per day, containing 30-40 thousand pounds of nitrogen, which stresses the Bay's marshes.
- Wastewater and stormwater runoff contribute to harmful algae blooms that decrease oxygen levels in the water, which is essential for healthy marine life. Metals and organic pollutants from runoff collect in hotspots and accumulate in the Bay's marine life.
- Between 1924 and 1999, more than 50% of the Bay's marshes disappeared. If the current rate of loss continues, all the marsh islands may vanish by 2024.
- More than 25 governmental agencies have jurisdictional responsibilities in the Bay and coordination among them has often been lacking.



Development of Preliminary Recommendations

- The Committee and DEP held public outreach meetings in Brooklyn and Queens in January and February 2006
- The Committee held monthly working sessions from November 2005 through June 2006 to draft goals and recommendations
- The Committee convened expert panels on the topics of stormwater and green building BMPs, wetland loss and water quality in order to hear the most current scientific information on the Bay's problems
- The Committee views its role as independent of, but cooperative with, DEP; monthly joint sessions were held and technical information and progress reports were regularly exchanged in developing the preliminary recommendations

More information about the Committee's working sessions and expert panels are available on the Committee's website:

<http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/jamaicabay/jbwppac/advisorycommittee.html>



The Advisory Committee's Preliminary Recommendations

- Report containing the Advisory Committee's preliminary recommendations is available at:
<http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/jamaicabay/index.html>
- Goals and recommendations were developed in 3 major areas:
 - water quality
 - ecology
 - planning and outreach
- 62 recommendations; 15 recommendations were designated as priority recommendations



The Committee's Priority Recommendations

Water Quality Priority Recommendations:

- Upgrade 26th Ward & Jamaica sewage treatment plants to tertiary treatment
 - *Reduce nitrogen pollution to the Bay*
- Stop centrate processing in the Bay
 - *Reduce nitrogen to the Bay; just removing 26th Ward's centrate would bring a 6% decrease in total nitrogen pollution*
- Revise codes, guidelines, and requirements governing construction, reconstruction, and landscaping of public infrastructure (streets, medians, etc.) to incorporate BMPs
 - *Decrease polluting stormwater runoff and CSOs*
- Create a stormwater BMP pilot program
 - *Maximize use of BMPs in pilot area(s) within the watershed*
- New water conservation program for NYC
 - *Increase sewage treatment plant capacity during storms, increase residence time of wastewater in the plant*



The Committee's Priority Recommendations (cont'd)

Ecology Priority Recommendations:

- Transfer city-owned wetlands and adjacent areas within the watershed to a responsible public agency
 - *Protect wetlands identified by the Wetlands Task Force*
- Expand buffer zone on tidal wetlands to 300 feet (consistent with statewide standards)
 - *Protect the city's ever-shrinking number of wetlands*
- Implement transfer of development rights program
 - *Preserve existing open space*
- Fill degraded low-lying marshes and monitor results
 - *Restore rapidly-disappearing salt marshes*
- Remove artificial barriers to tidal flushing
 - *Possible examples: culverts under FAA roads east of Rockaway Turnpike, culverts at 5th Road in Broad Channel*
- Develop a plan to halt the spread of invasive species
 - *Comprehensive, long-term effort (monitoring and control) needed*



The Committee's Priority Recommendations (cont'd)

Planning and Outreach Priority Recommendations:

- Increase the number of real time monitoring stations
 - *Improve understanding and accuracy of the Bay's ecological system and reduce reliance on modeling*
- Direct Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination to create a Jamaica Bay specific environmental assessment form
 - *Increase scrutiny of projects within the Bay's watershed, including cumulative impacts from related projects*
- Add access points in Southwestern and Southeastern Queens
 - *Increase visitation and appreciation of the Bay from Southeastern and Southwestern Queens communities*
- Incorporate a unit on the watershed into the city's public education curricula
 - *Increase students' understanding and awareness of the Bay's ecological systems and the impacts that littering, water use and pollution have on the Bay*



Next Steps for the Advisory Committee

- Solicit feedback on preliminary recommendations
- Continue to refine recommendations; final recommendations due June 2007
- Provide advice to DEP concerning draft Plan (due in March)
- Assist in building support and consensus for Jamaica Bay protection and restoration



How Can I Get Involved?

- Fill out a comment sheet and/or talk to the Advisory Committee members
- Check on the JBRMIN Website for updates and meeting announcements:
<http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/jamaicabay/index.html>
- Encourage others to get involved in the process
- Send Plan suggestions to Megan Lew, NRDC, 40 West 20 St., New York, NY 10011 or email mlew@nrdc.org
- Let DEP and the Mayor know your views



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Watershed Protection Plan
Advisory Committee