

**National Park Service
NPNH Sub-Cluster
Principles and Promising Practices of Civic Engagement
Workshop
February 6, 2006 - 9:00am – 3:30pm
National Parks of New York Harbor Education Center**

Goals

- ◆ To foster a clear common understanding of civic engagement and the wide range of opportunities it offers park managers and interpreters.
- ◆ To provide tools and strategies for civic engagement that can be used in parks within the NER to support our goals in Interpretation & Education, and other areas of park management.
- ◆ To help participants to build on the base of their current activities to enhance their success with civic engagement.
- ◆ To model, through the workshop, exemplary tools and approaches to civic engagement.

Agenda

- 8:30 Arrival – coffee and pastry
- 9:00 Welcome
- The context for NER CE within the larger CE movement – Eileen Woodford
 - The relationship of CE to I&E within the NER – Jeanette Parker and Sheila Cooke-Kayser
 - The role of CE in the national and regional I&E agendas – Patti Reilly
- 9:30 Opening
- Participant Introductions
 - Envisioning success
 - Principles and promising practices of CE
 - Learning from our experience at our own parks
- 10:45 Break
- 11:00 Learning from the Work of Others
- Case studies, followed by facilitated discussion
- Cape Cod's GMP: A Cautionary Tale - Maria Burks
 - Meeting People Where They Are – Tara Morrison
 - Community Interpretive Programs: Connecting the Park's Resources and Themes with Local Historical Sites – Sheila Cooke-Kayser
 - Marsh Billings Rockefeller NHP – Excerpt from A Civic Engagement Woodstock's Civil War: A Speakchorus
- 12:15 Lunch and informal networking

1:00 Building on Your Current Base

- Relationship of CE to our current work
- Implementation challenges and solutions
- The role of CE in meeting our I&E, management and planning goals

2:00 Break

2:15 Moving Forward

- What skill sets are needed to successfully accomplish CE within our parks?
- Which of these do we currently have and where is additional training needed?
- What are some opportunities for us to work collaboratively on common themes?
- How can we build a culture of civic engagement throughout our region?

3:00 Closing Words and Evaluation

3:30 Adjourn

2/5/06

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Compiled Homework Results

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Interviews with Park Employees

What are some specific ways that it would help you, from your role in relationship to our park, if the public were more involved and engaged?

- Job more rewarding to know that people cared about the resource and weren't at odds with the park. If they're interested then they would be more engaged. It would make it easier to come to work each day.
- Although I am not an interpreter, I think it would provide better broader participation in public programs, plus more input and potential for "organic" program development.
- NPS would be more visible at FIIS
- Would enhance/ expand my capacity and the park's capacity to provide park services and programs- including all aspects of operations- interpretive building capacity for formal and informal interpretation. Media.
- Having an engaged public is a true barometer indicating whether we are successful. Would show whether we are presenting our mission and programs in a way relevant to the public – waysides, programs, website presence.
- Engaging the public would help spread word of who and what we are. Many people see this site as merely the place to go to visit the Statue of Liberty,

without realizing its history and role in shaping the country. Instead of answering questions like "Where's the restroom?", we would be able to, if even for a few minutes, discuss the importance and significance of the site. Most of our visitors are from elsewhere, just passing through the city. I think for long term goals, we need to get the local community, those who will help see projects though, involved. With the development and population growth in Battery Park City and Lower Manhattan, there must be some people who are interested in this period of American history and would be willing to get involved in the site, whether it be doing research or providing other types of support. It's a matter of finding them and developing a working relationship with them.

- They would have a better understanding of our mission
- More compliance to laws and regulations
- More credibility regarding the rangers' authority to oversee the Seashore
- More public awareness of NPS as a whole
- They would treat our resources more gently and hopefully be better stewards of our park.
- Greater public involvement and engagement would support expanded programs, greater visitation and a greater understanding of the value and importance of these sites. The interpreters could get beyond not only working on the basics of keeping a site open but also work on more "fun" programs, materials, and media. The Park could afford to explore technology and invest time and effort in partnerships. Increased public-private partnerships could support greater interaction with the public, with interested parties and with subject matter experts and scholars for members of the staff, as well as facilitate increased communication and scholarship. We would be able to build collections or linkages to institutions that do care for relevant artifacts or tell related pieces of the same story.
- Improve opportunities to discuss visitor perceptions
- Find out community interests
- Improve volunteer and stewardship opportunities
- Develop better community based advocates for park programs
- Better public interest, awareness, and participation in open house/public meetings.
- The park clean ups let visitors experience the park resources. They will have a better appreciation – cleanups inspire them to be more tidy.
- Use engagement to identify local expertise that is presently unknown (untapped) and could be of potential use to the park.
- Special interest groups present problems, as they influence management and park decisions: examples:
 - Why are fishermen only people allowed in park at night?
 - Why is fishing beach a FREE beach, and not part of FEE beach schedule?
 - Birders have more proportionate control in management decisions (Raccoon alley when road was re-routed)
 - Gunnison beach regulars exhibit political influence
 - Windsurfers want C lot restricted to just their use

- Surfer's have special interests
- Resolution: get these groups in a meeting together so that they can see other group's points of view.
- With more engagement, we might have people "pushing our hand" to get things done. Lots of public feedback at some sites means we've put lots of emphasis there on projects. Engagement might also provide better feedback on the effectiveness of our efforts. The feedback would not only be useful for understanding what the public wants us to do, but the info. Could also potentially be used to scope, justify, and explain projects (to the public and when competing against other parks for project funding).
- Civic engagement could help us by having people notify us of hazards, problems with deviant behavior, design errors or flaws, material failure, etc.
- More public involvement will result in improved interpretation and a better understanding of what the public expects from the park. New ideas regarding exhibits and interpretive programs would come from interested individuals in the public sector.
- Getting the community involved with the park would open doors for opportunities for me to develop and establish an ongoing dialogue with the public. The benefits I would receive from this dialogue would be a better understanding of the publics' expectations from the National Park Service. The information I would receive would establish a foundation for a relationship with the community about the National Park Service history, the parks history and its future, its operations and programs. Communication is the first building block in establishing the foundation that is needed between the NPS and the Public. Communicating gives me an opportunity to inform the public of events and how their help might improve the parks activities, for example getting the public to volunteer their time to the park, establishing a method to acquire donations from the private sector through fund raising, etc.
- If public were more involved and engaged, the park would have better understanding of what the public interest is and where they are willing to invest time and energy. This would expand possibilities of what could be done in the park.
- More public involvement and engagement would broaden our reach beyond park boundaries. Public involvement and interest would facilitate connections/interactions of the many resource managers around the NY metro area.
- If the public was engaged: - less need for mythbusting, job is simplified, put out more effective information
- We could avoid surprises, develop better plan, specs and regulations
- Have more cooperation, resource protection

What are some different ways that you would like to see the park engage the public?

- First thing to do: provide basics- feel welcome, safe, and comfortable in the park. They are important and park management respects them. Integrating the

public's input into park planning- long-term, resource management, monitoring, and stewardship. How to do it in an effective manner. Are we marketing to the public in an appropriate manner? Not limited to reacting to the public (passing the critical letter along to someone else). Receptive to input and using it in a constructive manner.

- Need to partner with the outside in ways that translate to win-wins (on both sides). Complementary goals and missions.
- More education opportunities
- Co-sponsor more activities, develop regular-recurring forums, clarify park mission and goals, visit the community
- Partners would do programs on a regular basis here at Fort Wadsworth, like Audubon gives programs at Sandy Hook.
- Long Island businesses should market the national park, which would increase tourism dollars
- FIIS could have more visibility and attendance at public events, i.e., boat shows
- Engage more with other levels of governments, creating better enforcement teamwork
- Develop a FIIS directory for the public
- The public could be invited to a meeting and asked what kind of interpretive programs they would like to see here at Fort Wadsworth
- As I mentioned, there has been growth in the population of Lower Manhattan. And in the population must be children. If we could find ways to reach the children, I think the parents would start to get involved. Schools, day care centers, tenant associations and summer camps would be the ideal place to start. If we could offer activities aimed at children like school outreach and reenactments, perhaps in the evening, I think that would get the word out of what we have to offer. Hopefully in this outreach, adult without children would hear about who we are and get involved.
- Hold meetings at least three times a year with members of the community to discuss future events in the park.
- Since a majority of visitors are from out of town, I think we need to get tour associations and NY visitors centers involved. When asked "What is Castle Clinton?" the answer should be something historic about the site, not "Oh, that's where you get tickets for the Statue of Liberty." Providing materials to these locations would be a start.
- The park should attend and participate more in the meetings and workings of local citizens groups, business organizations, community boards, etc. to be more in touch and in tune with what they're doing and what their concerns are with respect to the park.
- The Parks, with greater support, could become learning centers for the community with more public programs, substantial outreach, and expanded or clearer roles for partner organizations. We would be able to experiment with more "fun" programs, expanded or after-hours programs and the use of less traditional media. We would be able to explore some new technology, develop more interactive and complete exhibitry, and target different segments of our audiences. We would be able to promote the sites more – currently we suffer

from a lack of visibility. Promoting linkages among the Parks would weave together more of the “stories” that link these parks. We would be able to bring money or in-kind support to partnerships with other non-profits or NGOs. We could provide technical assistance and planning advice to the community in an effort to protect other historic assets (and/or interpret the sites of what would have been historic assets if they had not been lost.)

- Have contacts that can connect us to user groups who could provide input on project scope (i.e.: If we’re proposing picnic area improvements, start by asking someone from the user group what they would like).
- In order for us to engage the public the National Park Service would have to reach out to the public and establish a bond of trust in addition to a communication bond. A method would be to let the public know that the park is in their community and that the National Park Service is there to provide a service to them. National Park Service personnel can communicate and publicizing ongoing and future events and programs; rangers can do out-reach programs to the schools districts. Also, the park can educate the public on many government issues by holding public debates and forums.
- The park needs to have a better presence on the web, and expanded web page with interactive features.
- Periodic park highlights should be accessible via local and city media news (including print, tv, radio, etc.).
- Park mission and presence should be connected with any activities that are hosted in the park.
- Invite specific groups to the park to make them more aware of park features/services and resource values. Are there specific community groups that should have more information that are not being reached?
- Have general public meetings periodically that do NOT have a specific agenda or subject, to get input from public
- Public meetings, but be more creative than the usual formats. Dedicate a staff person (park? Region?) to that purpose.
- NPS should go out of the park to public meetings
- Let NPS employees go out (in govt vehicles) on coffee runs in their uniforms – when people see us in our uniforms they ask about Sandy Hook and what is going on. This is a good way of making informal contacts with the public.
- Public thinks we are unapproachable, so informal offsite contacts will help counteract that opinion.
- Establish focus groups to deal with specific issues
- Development of specialized programming directed at underserved ethnic populations
- Development of volunteer and internship programs
- Would like demonstrations of farming and agrarian lifestyle; visitors would come away with a better understanding of what happened when the family lived here.

How would carrying out these ideas benefit you, the park and the community?

- Benefits all. Park is recognized as a resource to the public, and the public becomes true caretakers of the resource and the necessity of stewardship. Community is better served if we know what their needs are, and they have a better understanding of our missions and what our abilities are given staffing and financial support.
- Would enhance/ expand my capacity and the park's capacity to provide park services and programs- including all aspects of operations- interpretive building capacity for formal and informal interpretation.
- Carrying out these ideas would benefit me in that I could do the job I'm supposed to do and can gain additional skills and personal fulfillment. The park would benefit because people would fully realize (hopefully) what this site is about and provide further support. The community would benefit because they would know about another resource in their community and the educational opportunities and activities it can provide.
- Better relations between the park and community. The taxpayers will feel that they are a part of the decision making process.
- Me – It would be easier for me to communicate our Environmental Management information to the public, so outside groups could follow these guidelines, as well.
- Park – We may learn of ways that outside groups and agencies are already ahead of us in some EM areas that we can then emulate.
- Building our presence through civic engagement would make it easier to convene and fund programs; improve or upgrade exhibits and/or interpretive materials, which would communicate more to the community. We could work with educators, specialists and scholars to expand available programs and we could do more to tailor programs to curriculum standards. We would be able to better demonstrate the relevance of historical events and happenings that continue to have resonance and impact today and provide lessons for the future, as well as illuminate the development of our republic, of democracy, of New York City and the nation. [Expanded education and interpretation.] We could grow support for the importance of historic preservation, the protection of cultural landscapes, creation of historic districts, restoration of viewsheds and other historic and cultural assets.
- Create more true park "friends" rather than single-issue groups posing as friends. True park friends and cooperators would value the park as a whole, not just in advocating their specific special interest.
- People would know who we are, which would lead back to the credibility issue, and respect and understanding of the LE Ranger's job at FIIS
- It would be helpful because people would tend to notify LE/FIIS when they see a violation or resource issue. Now they don't know who to call.
- Visitors can distinguish between NPS and other agency officials, and what the associated roles are
- We provide a service to everyone and it would benefit the park to involve the public through volunteer services, outreach programs, providing programs and information to the schools and communities. Also, getting NPS personnel involve in community programs and affairs, etc. Volunteers help the parks

operations and provide a service to the park when there is a shortage of funding for personnel and the volunteers would gain a sense of accomplishment because they contribute to a worthy cause – keeping the history alive for future generations.

- Ultimately the park would be a place that the community identifies with and managers sense that they are actively contributing to the mission of public service.
- Better Public Relations – victims of Hurricane Katrina loved the NPS because we helped them after storm, where as they hated FEMA because of that agency's lack of attention.
- With public input into programming, there might be more incentive to come to programs. Increased visitation would increase political support for the Fort Wadsworth unit.
- Mutual understanding, help establish park priorities, increase useful volunteers, increase resource knowledge.
- Improves ability to do our jobs, protects our resources, garners resources, achieve our mission
- Distinction between State and Federal park – which agency oversees Sandy Hook?
- Change name from Civic Engagement to something that sounds less like we are going to war..... alternative: Community Outreach?
- Constituency building can result in increased support of park program.
- More community engagement would result in a common understanding of concerns.
- More external ideas could result in more creative solutions to problems.
- If the public were in general were better informed regarding TR prior to arriving at Sagamore Hill they would get more out of the experience of visiting here.

Composite Responses:

- CE is important in insuring that parks aren't just places of refuge for the white, upper middle-class elite. Parks should represent the diversity of the area.
- CE will create an edge to our dialogue. It will challenge how we do business by gaining alternative perspectives. It enriches our work
- If additional funding is available, CE could create a better feedback loop with underserved communities.
- CE can make the NPS the platform for real stories...Roger Kennedy said that parks 'have the real thing.' CE can put the real stories together in a way that would give and added sense of mission and purpose – push the envelope further.
- CE adds vibrancy and meaning to my work, and allows it to evolve. Adds stimulation and interest.
- Reflects a broader public interest compared to NIMBY-ism. Our park transportation plans suffered by not having a broad-based group of participants.
- Deeper engagement on dog management brought in new voices beyond the stakeholders with a vested interest. A broader perspective is a better reflection of the public's viewpoint. A park is a public asset, not just a stakeholder asset.

- Institutionalizing CE will require support and resources for social science research...there is currently a lack of support at the WASO level.

Interesting questions because I think we are pretty engaged here. I think we realize the importance of open communication with the public. I can share some ideas I have had about education.

I think we should have more input from the guardians and extended families of the students, not just the teachers. We could learn more about how we could help the students from the family point of view. It could be helpful not only in school programs, but in after school programs, group programs, and family oriented programs. It would also garner more wide-spread support and recognition for the park. It also helps the adult chaperones to understand the programs and the importance of the programs.

The next question is how to create accessible forums for people to contribute. We need new ways to engage families on the same level as we do teachers. Is it through parent – teacher night at schools? Electronically? We need to think together what is the method to get into the community to learn what they are thinking and needing beyond the teachers' view. Go beyond what we are using – community meetings and focus groups – to engage. This will benefit me by making it easier to create successful programs that have more impact.

We are doing well with primary things, but we need to do more. Only the interested people are going to show up for the community meetings. For example, it has been really helpful in the field to be able to talk with the general public talk about the idea that Golden Gate is bringing together people to talk about the dogs and leash issue. When I say we are working with a group of stakeholders, it immediately diffuses the situation out in the field. It is an important way to deal with controversy – and it sends a message to those not directly involved that we are not dictating, not just telling, but are sensitive to trying to work it out with the community. That is a very important message I can give to people on both sides of the issue.

It does not seem out of the ordinary to allow room for dialogue in a search for deeper and relevant meaning in history and science. It is something we have been striving for a long time. What does an event mean to the different people in it? And what does it mean to the context of what is going on now? It is not unusual to think of a program as a way to open that dialogue to see that one historic event can mean very different things to different audiences. As an important part of how the National Park Service starts to help the American population understand history beyond their history books. We don't feel the need to shy away from it.

The park partners, however, often feel that a position of advocacy is important, particularly with environmental issues. If the idea is to bring together different opinions without advocacy of a particular position, then it is critically important for the partners, in this age of partnership, to be on board. In other words, part of engaging the public is engaging our partners also. And particularly the partners are going to be groups that

advocate, or many of them will be groups that advocate. That can cause tension around the partnerships.

My thoughts: This interview was provocative in thinking about new vehicles of engagement. Also to think about: 1. open to new ways of engaging that best fit the needs and approach of the communities we hope to reach, 2. need to publicize current and controversial civic engagement on a more consistent basis to the local community as a way of engaging more people, not just informing them of issues, 3. park partners form an important role in civic engagement and need to be in dialogue with park staff/management to see the continuum from controversy to dialogue to advocacy.

Interviews with Park Visitors or Partners

What are some specific ways that it would help you, from your role in relationship to our park, if the public were more involved and engaged?

- I teach students about bridges and spans. Kids don't have prior knowledge about bridges or spans. If they and their parents felt that Fort Wadsworth was a welcoming place, they might go there and walk under the Verrazano Bridge, maybe sketch it. Students have a very limited view of life and they would bring so much more to their discussions and ability in the class room if they could freely explore Fort Wadsworth the way I did as a child.
- I'm not entirely sure how the public is involved or engaged at any of the parks I visited, as that sort of information wasn't publicized in any way. Is there a "Friends" organization? I don't think so. All three parks had an obvious "Friends" constituency—DAR, Colonial Dames, Daughters/Sons of the Civil War, the Union League. If there was partnering, there was nothing that made a visitor aware of anything.
- As a concerned citizen, if the public were more engaged then the future of park and natural resources and open space would stand a better chance of being valued and preserved.
- There could be a greater demand for ecotourism, which would allow more people to visit the park while causing less damage
- It would give me stories for my newspaper, thereby increasing circulation and sales
- I would also be able to spreading my concerns about park issues, and generally increase awareness all around.
- Volunteer: The more people that visit the park, the more people we will be able to contact.
- Volunteer: The more people that use the ferry (or other facilities), that means that the ferry will continue to run – tours will continue to be offered, etc
- First of all, it has to be understood that my role in relationship to the park is that of a naturalist and environmentalist. For public involvement to have a beneficial effect on the natural resources of the park, it is very important that the National Park service define their mission as protectors and stewards of those resources.

Public engagement for furthering the stewardship of the parks' natural and historic resources presupposes that the public fully appreciates why we have national parks. The appropriate public uses of national parks should be clearly defined in signage, literature and interpretive programs. An informed and engaged public would not tolerate the level of structural neglect that is evident in many Gateway units. An informed and concerned public would demand the level of park staffing necessary to protect the public, park resources, and facilities and run camping and educational programs.

- Partner: Because he interacts frequently with the public and is constantly communicating information to them, it would be helpful for him to know more about both the format they like to receive information (web, pamphlet, one-on-one, workshop) and the level of information they are looking for (highly technical, brief summary, etc..) This would help him to determine both what products he should produce and how the information can be best conveyed.
- Help organization increase membership
- Help individuals better understand how they can personally gain through engagement
- Increase organization's capacity to better serve the park
- More opportunities for funding, engage volunteers with new ideas.
- One teacher asked a question that I think cuts to the heart of the issue: "Am I the public?" "The public" is our own jargon. Teachers, parents, students and other individuals don't think of themselves as part of a generic "public." They think of themselves either as individuals or as members of some kind of group (teachers, the PTA, a church congregation, voters in a congressional district, etc.). If we want to engage people with our resources, we must think of our constituents the way they think of themselves. Then we can engage our resources with their values and interests. "The public" only exists in civics textbooks.
- One teacher stammered, "Learn more about New York City parks," not realizing that we were a national park even though I mentioned it at the beginning and end of the program and in all her teacher materials.
- I could quit my job doing outreach

What are some different ways that you would like to see the park engage the public?

- The public knows Fort Wadsworth as a military facility; they do not see it as a welcoming place. I went there a lot as a child because I had friends from school whose parents were stationed there. We had a wonderful time visiting the fort, waking under the Bridge, having bonfires on the beach. Most people in Staten Island don't know how beautiful and interesting Fort Wadsworth is. I think the park needs to do a better job publicizing (especially to families) the incredible views and making the place seem friendly (for family activities). The Greenbelt Nature Center works hard to publicize the child friendly nature programs available each week at schools. The park should have a bulletin of activities and the age range for these activities. My students live very close to the fort, but they don't visit it. The lantern tours need to be better publicized. The park does not

emphasize the science aspect of the grounds, just the history. The park should publicize its science aspects.

- For St. Paul's Church—it should be marketed more. I had no idea that it was there, and the guide even said, most visitors from New York were there for their passport stamp (a testament to the success of that program getting folks to less “sexy” parks. There is a way in which the Colonial/Colonial Revival aspect could be highlighted, as well as the connection to the Roosevelts. There was the moment in the 1930s when conservation efforts for the colonial past reached its zenith, there might be a way to incorporate that into the exhibits of the park to make it just more than a “colonial” church. For Hamilton Grange and Grants Tomb, well, the problems there are more basic as the exhibits are in deplorable shape. Grant was more than a general, but you wouldn't know that by visiting his tomb. His presidency and reconstruction are completely overlooked. And the physical exhibits looked like a school project, not a professional display. The Grange suffers from its location, sandwiched as it is between two competing buildings, but the planned move could be used as an attraction to the park. Why not involve the public more in the discussion/conversation regarding the move to St. Nicholas Park. I think it that were made part of the educational process, it might, in fact, draw more people to the park.
- Generate interest: a) Improve marketing outreach, b) Offer programs of public interest, c) Accessibility to parks in more remote locations - explore options like using school buses to pick up groups from more distant areas - field trip concept.
- Educate: a) Offer new programs, b) Offer programs targeted to different levels (e.g. intermediate birding), c) Explore Internet or virtual tours/programs to improve outreach (eg. record Herbert Johnson lecture series, offer a virtual wildflowers walk), d) Explore partnerships with colleges & museums to offer discounts on courses like ornithology.
- Develop desire for stewardship: a) Public involvement in research projects, b) Public assistance with resource management; for both to succeed, an organized volunteer coordinator needs to be in place and the participation options need to be flexible to meet the availability of the interested citizen.
- If the NPS is to engage visitors with a conservation ethic, all park service personnel, at all levels including the Park Service Police, should be required to take a park orientation course about their role as stewards of the parks natural and historic resources. The Park Service Police must be more than traffic cops and be more engaged in protecting the natural and historic resources through positive public engagement.
- The visitor centers at the Wildlife Refuge and Fort Tilden should not be the only units in Gateway where the public is exposed to natural resource exhibits. The large beach going crowds at Riss Park present an opportunity to engage the public in the value of aquatic resources they are using and the nature of barrier beaches. The type of exhibit with aerial photographs of the Rockaway peninsula in Fort Tilden's Building #1 would be a model for a more accessible exhibit along the Riss Park boardwalk.
- The Ryan Visitor Center was supposed to be a center of educational exhibits and activities. Because Gateway is at the edge of a great metropolis and remnants of

a natural coastal environment affected by this industrial culture, exhibits on the geological and human history of Jamaica Bay and the Rockaway peninsula could turn the Ryan Visitor Center into major educational resource. The materials for such an exhibit exist at the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the Harbor Estuary Program (HEP) and within Gateway's Division of Natural Resources. Yes, much of this information is available on Web sites generally visited by students, scientists and environmentalists but it needs wider exposure in a public venue. In addition, there could be rotating exhibits posed by K through 12th grades and colleges. Children should know how water supports all life and where our drinking water comes from and where our wastewater goes.

- Many wildlife refuges in the U.S. and Canada have observation towers that allow the public to get a better sense of place and orientation with the surrounding landscape. In the very flat terrain around Jamaica Bay observation towers are especially useful in that they afford opportunities for observing wildlife that are not possible from ground level. Such towers would assist in studies of bird distribution and movements within Jamaica Bay. Interpretive plaques with maps would be essential. I have proposals for the location of two observation towers at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife refuge at Crossbay Boulevard.
- Bring back the "Gateway Outlook," a quarterly newsletter that kept the public informed about park programs, personnel and projects in Gateway. Keeping the public informed about the working changes and some policy decisions really helps to engage the public. When members of the public sees a pile of sand appear on Floyd Bennett Field or the sidewalk torn up along Crossbay Boulevard, the advance notice in a newsletter would allay many concerns. Changes in personnel would help the public understand who's who and what their role is in Gateway. If printing is too expensive, an online version on the Gateway Web site would be acceptable.
- If part of the NPS mission is to educate the public about the stewardship of natural and historic resources, the Gateway Web site falls far short in its role in public education. Despite the copious educational resources residing in the Division of Natural Resources' and the Jamaica Bay Institute's libraries, the only thing we learn from the education pages of the Gateway Web site is that there were coastal defense gun batteries at Sandy Hook. No mention of the erosion problems at Sandy Hook, in Jamaica Bay, Great Kills and Plumb Beach. The Gateway Web site gives the wrong message that wildlife only exists in Jamaica Bay and Breezy Point Tip - all other areas are just so many buildings. One should not have to link to other Web sites to appreciate the rich natural and intellectual resources of Gateway. The public will not readily support what they cannot see. There should be a reciprocal relationship or cross referencing between the Gateway Web site and physical exhibits at Gateway Units.
- Free access, eliminating the cost of a ferry ride would get more visitors to the park
- More parking would also increase visitation
- Park should have more one-on-one with public from all levels of park employee to all segments of the public

- Increase budget for Interpretation would go a long way to engage the public
- Networking and hobnobbing with public to informally scope out issues
- Volunteer: Push for Fort Restoration
- Volunteer: Conduct advertising, e-mail contacts, have people write to judge regarding Law Suit (Fort Restoration)
- Volunteer: Have more concrete answers for public when they ask about Restoration – not just that it's in litigation.
- Partner: Would love to see a more "open house" type atmosphere that would allow the public to understand more about what the park does behind the scenes to ensure both the protection and use of the park as a resource.
- Encourage more environmentally appropriate visitor facilities and activities (hiking, fishing, boating, picnicking, etc)
- Public will become more engaged if they can get a better NPS experience in the park.
- Expand web based communication systems (website, list serve, e-newsletters, etc.)
- Would like to see more offerings beyond tours, etc. Workshops such as Elderhostel, other special programs related to the site.
- Offer more services, programs that the visitors would like more accessible, open the park up more to public.
- Would like to see traffic routed through Oyster Bay to create more involvement with the community. (Traffic is currently routed around the CBD of Oyster Bay, limiting tourist experience with the community.
- Here I got very specific answers that say less about civic engagement than about seeing parks as service providers. More and cleaner porta-potties was the primary interest, followed closely by more "curbing" of dogs. As one fourth grader said, "Don't make your dogs do doo-doo." (You can't make this stuff up!) A mother told me that she tells her daughter when they visit a certain local park, "See that tree? Go behind it."
- The truth is, people in this area do not know what constitutes Gateway NRA, a confusing confederation of disparate units. They do not know who we are, much less what we have to offer, so they can't ask for more.
- The park could relate more to their issues. Issues of the community
- If we were considered a valuable resource, then the people would come.
- If we were really accessible - culturally, economically - then people would use the park.
- Help people see what they can get from the park, they would find value. Youth seeking job enhancement skills, training, experience, through utilizing the park

How would carrying out these ideas benefit you, the park and the community?

- My students don't know what a tour guide is. When in class, I asked the students to pretend to be a park ranger and give a tour, but they did not know how to do it. My students have limited knowledge of people and places.

- The most obvious benefit is these are terrific resources that are under-exploited, both for their educative value and historical significance, as well as the economic benefit to the areas in which they are. The story of the colonial church and the wealthy settlers in the Bronx, and their early contributions to the history of New York and the United States is a story that St. Paul's can uniquely tell. Hamilton's contribution to the Revolutionary War and the makings of the United States is an equally important story (and one you would have no idea about visiting The Grange today). And Grant's Tomb should be more than a mausoleum, a tomb for dead history, but a way to talk about the Civil War in a more immediate context.
- I would benefit if the public were more engaged then the future of park and natural resources and open space would stand a better chance of being valued and preserved.
- The park would benefit by fulfilling its mission, increasing visitation and the public's interest and desire to maintain parks, natural resources and open space.
- Once the public embraces the concept of stewardship of Gateway - preserving its natural and historic resources for future generations - and the concept that is a national and international resource for migrating birds, they can become a constituency for the park. If all that Gateway has to offer are ballfields, marinas, a sports/entertainment complex and playgrounds, how is it different from any city or county park? The NPS in Gateway must distinguish itself in the eyes of the public by becoming the vital link between our industrial culture and the natural environment. By taking advantage of the educational opportunities and significant intellectual resources of Gateway, the NPS can become a hub of environmental education scientific research. But the spokes from the hub - Fort Wadsworth - need to reach out to every Gateway unit.
- Planning for any new activity or facility that will increase the number of visitors coming into the park must include funding for additional park staff for protection (patrols), maintenance and interpretation where appropriate.
- There appears to be two divergent types of public engagement that affect all national parks: There is that segment of the public that value their parks as oases within stressful urban environment where one can find some degree of tranquility. A park where low-key human activities are encouraged is a park where people can enjoy forms of recreation compatible with wildlife conservation.
- The second type of public engagement presumes that a national recreation area is a no-man's-land where people should be allowed to engage in destructive and disturbing activities such as: Operate dirt bikes off the road, ride ATVs off the road, ripping around in any public waterway on personal watercraft (jet-skis). There is no regard for the future of the parks natural resources or existing wildlife among associations and corporations that promote these activities. Fortunately, Gateway has resisted these inappropriate activities and should continue to do so.
- A park that, under the title of "recreation area," presumes that the best form of recreation must bring in the maximum number of visitors with all the traffic, noise litter and air pollution that entails, is inimical to wildlife conservation. I

believe that wildlife should be protected and their habitat preserved because of their intrinsic value.

- Building a constituency for adequate funding requires a much deeper public engagement as park advocates than now exists. With adequate funding, Gateway could have sufficient personnel to discharge their stewardship responsibilities by an increased presence throughout the park.
- As someone who has been an active advocate for the preservation of wildlife habitat at Gateway, I believe that an educated and informed public instilled with a conservation ethic will want to preserve Gateway's natural resources for future generations to appreciate.
- Increased visitation
- Park visitation would increase ... expanding and building a constituency.
- Supportive organization can function as an advocate for the park in ways not available to the NPS (outside funding sources, take advantage of appropriate fee for services opportunities)
- More affordable trips to the park for the general public
- Benefits would occur on all economic levels instead of just the most affluent, or those with expendable incomes
- Increased public awareness would also increase park awareness on all kinds of issues if the general public was notified and involved in park's well-being
- Volunteer: There is an important historical reason for keeping Fort Buildings
- Volunteer: Gun batteries are unique, important for our children to help them understand our history and keep history alive
- Volunteer: More school tours should come to Fort Hancock, the more visitors who come and see the Fort, the more support the NPS will get for preservation
- Partner: If these ideas were carried out he believes the public would have both a more enjoyable visit and a better understanding of both the benefits and limitations of the park.
- Partner: He feels the park would gain a more informed user base, thus allowing the park to develop and produce better products for the public.
- Partner: He feels that a park and public working together benefits both parties by breaking down the barriers of mis-understanding and mis-information.
- Better, stronger park, more park friends, people would be happier to know about a park they could access. "Green Spaces, Calm Nerves." (9/11).
- People would come to the park units more often and enjoy them better, with fewer health risks.
- I wouldn't have to spend so much time, energy and money on outreach. The park would be relevant to the local population. The community would see the park not only as a nice place to visit, but a resource that improves their lifestyle.

Composite Responses:

I direct a cancer education program at the public hospital. The population is primarily poor and people of color. Many of the group members, in their 40s-60s, have never been to the national park, or even over the Golden Gate Bridge. They rarely have been to the

ocean which is just a bus ride away. Their lives have been consumed by tragedy, violence and poverty.

I have brought my group to the GGNRA on two occasions: to the Marin Headlands and to Alcatraz Island. We had the benefit of an interpreter who could help navigate the experience. They still talk about these visits. They were very special and memorable. We are planning to come to Muir Woods next summer.

I have given a great deal of thought to how the park could engage this population.

I would like to see the park make links with people who are marginalized or denied access to essential programs and services that are distributed unequally in our city. I think the park could benefit by looking at other communities – like health communities. I know that the park cares about youth who are seen as “at risk,” – well, my patients are grown-up at risk youth with cancer. We should not abandon them just because they are no longer part of the public school system.

In health care in San Francisco, we see health as more than just physical well being – it connects with mind, body, and spirit. I see in the literature of the national parks the suggestion that parks can promote a spiritual connection with nature. My participants, because of the complexity of poverty, do not see themselves as having access to nature. If we can engage in the ways that people try to take care of their health – especially those who are poor and live with chaos and drama – we could somehow make a more powerful link with what the parks have to offer.

Could we have a constant dialogue about what are some of the programs we already offer and why is it such a leap to include adults with life threatening disease in the target group? The emphasis on youth is important, and it makes me think of something that my groups have in common with youth. Youth are in a transitional stage – and so are the participants in my cancer groups. Anytime one is in a transitional time, they are open to opportunities for self growth and exploration. The park should look at these types of other communities in intensive transition that could translate into new opportunities. The participants are in a moment of life when they can look towards the external community to really give them peace of mind and more connection to their community. For national parks, this could be a community in profound transition with opportunities, in collaborating in meaningful visits. It can be transformative.

Continuing dialogue between the programs means we could talk about the ways in which people have used connections with nature to promote healing. Anecdotally people will say nature helps – the more affluent go to retreats to seek this help, but what about people who do not visit the parks, don't see the ocean? What is it that makes people centered, healed in nature? Can we identify it and articulate it? Where is this community when we think about research that heals people with nature. People with money can spend time with nature and most of those healing properties is based on *their* experience, not the people who traditionally are not able to access nature.

The health care system does not offer this to its patients. Perhaps in partnership, we could.

My thoughts: I felt inspired by this interview. It prompts me to think about 1. Communities invisible to national park outreach efforts, 2. How people in transition seek opportunities, 3. Linking health and national parks in deeper and more meaningful ways, 4. How community-based groups believe in dialogue to identify and further common interests.