



Environmental Focus

Spring 2009

"an aesthetic, unpolluted environment with a natural and historic heritage"

B.C.E.Q. hosts its Eighth Annual Water Conference

On March 18th, BCEQ hosted its annual membership meeting and water conference at Manhattan College. The conference focused on helping waterfront stakeholders form a Harlem River Working Group. The success of the conference is evidenced by conferee attendance and the follow-up May 6th meeting held at the Urban Divers Harlem River Ecology Center.

The community is ready and able to protect the water and its waterfront around three areas:

- Greenway & Access
- Education & Ecology
- Outreach, Advocacy & Water Use.

This new group will work toward restoring the Harlem River; reconnecting the waterfront with the

people; recreating the water's edge; and reinvigorating in-the-water recreational and commercial activities. The group will work along the full length of the river's edge to include the following parks and/or access points: Spuyten Duyvil, Marble Hill, University Heights Bridge, Roberto Clemente, Bridge Park, Depot Place, Yankee Stadium Replacement Parks (new Harlem River Parks), and the Park Avenue Point.

The next working group's meeting will take place on June 17th from 6 to 8 p.m.; check our web page for the place. For more information about the Harlem River Working Group please send an email to HarlemRiver@bceq.org.

BCEQ will also host a page on its web site for the Harlem River Working Group. Watch for it online.



UPDATE

At the March Annual Meeting, new members of the Board of Directors were elected along with the 2009 Class. Congratulations to our newest Directors: Dotti Poggi, Dr. Dena K. Robins, and Anne-Marie Runfola.

For more information about environmental events or news, make our web page your home page at www.bceq.org. Keep In Touch by blogging, commenting and/or uploading photos.



Ivy is a local environmental educator who is available to answer your questions about environmental topics. *Ask Ivy* is written for entertainment/informative purposes only and doesn't necessarily represent the views of BCEQ nor its editorial staff. If you have a question for Ivy email her at askivy@bceq.org or send it to: Ask Ivy, c/o BCEQ, P.O. Box 265, City Island Station, The Bronx, NY 10464.

Dear Ivy,

I've recently noticed that the newly opened Sachkerah Woods Playground, in the Southeast corner of Van Cortlandt Park is closed. With temperatures rising I usually go there with my kids, why is it closed?

No Where to Play in Norwood

Dear Nowhere to Play:

The Parks Department closed and padlocked the Sachkerah Woods Playground on April 1, 2009. This playground was promised to the community for some time and finally opened in 2007. It has been shut down for repairs due to leaking underground water pipes. (Somewhat ironic as it was built as a result of mitigation for the building the water filtration plant nearby.)

The pipe that is leaking is part of the playground's spray shower. In order to access the pipes the contractor had to break through the color concrete of the playground, so that has to be repaired and/or replaced as part of the scope of work. According Community Board 8, the Parks Department expects the work to be completed and the playground reopened in approximately four weeks. This of course depends upon the weather and if the contractor works every day at the project site.

You are not the only one who has no local playground. Call Community Board 7 or 8 and ask them to urge the Parks Department to make this repair a priority and get the playground open. (CB 7 is 718-933-5650 and CB 8 is 718-884-3959).

Ivy

Dear Ivy,

For a while I was seeing news stories about Randall's Island being used exclusively by private schools. I haven't seen anything lately, what's going on?

Public School Mom in Parkchester

Dear Public School Mom:

Just before Earth Day more than 60 people turned out in East Harlem to hear some of the latest incarnations of the Bloomberg administration's plan for Randall's Island.

Facing a lawsuit with local plaintiffs represented by Norman Siegel, the Mayor and Randall's Island Sports Foundation sought to address the claims that they were creating a sports complex for elite private schools from the Upper East Side, the West Side and Riverdale. The first plan was struck down by the court for assigning the majority of the public fields to a handful of schools whose tuition easily exceeds \$20,000. The latest plan was again created with no public input and would still allocate an astounding 50 percent of the fields for the few connected schools. The administration pointed to a grandfather policy that would allow some of the groups that have used the island for many years to continue to do so, prompting some to question the equity of this kind of thinking.

Besides the unjust distribution of playing time and space, the overall land use plan to install dozens of artificial turf fields where passive recreation, meadow and trees were before, has managed to avoid environmental review, so far.

Ivy

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Thank you for your support.

2009 BCEQ



“Keeping it Reel”
**Environmental
 Education Awards**

BCEQ is soliciting nominations for our Annual Environmental Education Award.

The “Keeping it Reel” award is named after our co-founder Helen Reel, who worked tirelessly for the betterment of the Bronx’s environment.

You can nominate people in three categories (one nomination per form, please):

1. **School Teacher**
2. **Non-Formal Educator**
3. **Student**

For a nomination form, please visit our web page at www.bceq.org, click on the Education Committee in the right hand column.

If you have questions, contact Anne-Marie Runfola, Education Committee Acting Chair at anne-marie.runfola@bceq.org or 718.430.1846.

Awards Nomination Forms are due by May 21, 2009. The awards will be announced at the June BCEQ Board meeting.

The Status of Yankee Stadium Replacement Parks

This remains an issue for residents who lost their valuable parkland when it was alienated to the New York Yankees for the building of a new stadium. While the new stadium is open and in full operation, tickets are priced so high that even the "high roller" favorites are not sold out. Many national media reporters have commented on this. The latest report is that some ticket prices are being cut in half.



The old stadium land was promised to replace the parkland taken to build the new stadium. Some movement has finally begun on the dismantling the old stadium; however, many suspect, much of that was just posturing because the City was getting so much flack for not having demolished it (especially in view of the quick demise of Shea Stadium). Recently though, things seem to have slowed; there appear to be less workers around. At the recent City Council Parks Committee oversight hearing held by its Chair, Councilwoman Helen Foster, she asked the Parks Department (Parks) to explain what is happening with the old stadium memorabilia (negotiations are still ongoing between the Yankees and the City).

Still, the community is without replacement parks! At monthly community meetings, Parks present excuses for delay after delay for why nothing has been built. The **interim park** is being dismantled in 2 weeks to be reassembled on top of a parking garage. While original projections put this park as completed in the Spring 2009, it is now being done in two stages and will be temporary for at least 18 months. Ironically, the demolition of the old stadium is projected at 18 months. **Pocket parks** that should have been completed this summer have not been initiated — they're still being used for parking. **The Metro North station** — named "*Yankees - E. 153rd Street*" on the Hudson Line is scheduled to open May 23, 2009. The completion of the **Harlem River Waterfront (Tennis Court) Replacement Parks** is schedule for late winter 2009-10.

Feelings are mixed from residents who are trying to balance their love of the team with the loss of parkland. All Hallows High School's baseball team practices in its cafeteria and plays their home games on the opponents' fields. A grant request to the Yankee Stadium Community Benefits Fund for a bus to transport the teams was denied. So, while they have successfully built a Major League Stadium and a Metro North Rail Road Station and Ramp, they could not build local parks for the neighborhood.

~ Joyce Hogi

CALL FOR 2010 CALENDAR PHOTOGRAPHS

The upcoming BCEQ 2010 Calendar will have the theme “Bronx Water.” Possible photographs of Bronx Water might include: rivers, ponds and lakes, water falls, storm water run-off, sprinklers and children in parks, water fountains, fire hydrants gatehouses, the Old Croton Aqueduct and artifacts of the Croton Water system etc. Visit www.bceq.org to submit your picture.

The 15th Annual Bronx Parks Speak Up, Parks, Environment and Politics was a huge success. Over 275 Bronx residents came out to “Speak Up” to their local Council Members.



In addition to the Parks and Politics panel discussion attendees visited display tables, learned new skills at various workshops and networked with each other and various city agency representatives. BCEQ has been involved with the Bronx Parks Speak Up since its inception 15 years ago.

If you have ideas for next year’s event please send an email to bxspeakup@hotmail.com



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The Bronx, NY 10464
www.bceq.org
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Is your BCEQ membership up-to-date? If the date on your mailing label has expired please visit www.bceq.org to renew your membership. You don’t want to miss an exciting issue of our Environmental Focus newsletter.

Thank you!