



Jones Beach State Park Revitalization Plan: **Responsiveness Summary** **August 5, 2014**

In March, 2014, Governor Cuomo announced that the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (“State Parks”) is launching a \$65 million initiative to revitalize Jones Beach State Park. Information on the revitalization initiative was posted on State Parks website, and the agency encouraged public comments regarding the proposal, including holding a public information meeting on Long Island on May 8th. This document summarizes the public comments received at the information meeting and written comments submitted to the agency’s website, and provides the agency’s response to all comments.

This Responsiveness Summary is organized by seven general categories of comments: Park Infrastructure, Accessibility, Recreation Facilities, Food and Beverage Concessions, Natural Resources, Historic Preservation, and General Comments.

Park Infrastructure

- 1. Comment: The proposed bikeway is a positive development; what’s the timetable for the bikeway?**

Response: There is no formal timeline for constructing the proposed bikeway – construction will depend on the availability of funding and future sequencing of the many improvements proposed in the revitalization plan.

- 2. Comment: Consider adding shelters along the bike path for shade and protection from storms.**

Response: Shelters / shade structures will be considered during the development of the bike path.

- 3. Comment: State Parks should install more benches—especially at the Beach 6 Boardwalk.**

Response: State Parks will evaluate the need for additional benches throughout the park, and will assure that new benches are installed in a manner that they are accessible to individuals with mobility limitations.

- 4. Comment: State Parks should install alternative energy technologies in the park:**
- Consider using solar car ports as Suffolk County does.
 - Will electrical vehicle charging stations be added?
 - Consider using small wind turbines to reduce energy costs.
 - Incorporate solar power into new construction or rehabilitation projects.

Response: Utilization of alternative energy technologies will be considered during the design phase and will be implemented where feasible and appropriate.

- 5. Comment: State Parks should consider moving parking lots closer to the beach.**

Response: At this time there is no plan to relocate or create additional parking areas closer to the beach. Federal and state policies prohibit construction of new facilities, including parking areas, in areas at high risk of damage from coastal flooding and storm surges.

- 6. Comment: State Park should improve signage throughout the park.**

Response: Creating a cohesive signage program is a goal for the park. Many of the original signs from the park have been found and are being recreated and adapted for modern use. A signage assessment will also be done park-wide to improve directional and informational signage.

- 7. Comment: Will the Senior Center go away or be improved?**

Response: In the past, State Parks provided an informal space for seniors during the fall, winter, and spring months. Most recently the Senior area was located in the West Bathhouse, but it was not available the last two winter seasons (due to damage from Superstorm Sandy and ongoing construction activity at the West Bathhouse). The agency will investigate the possibility of including a Senior Center in the future at the current location of the Castles in the Sand display area in the East Bathhouse.

- 8. Comment: Add emergency call buttons along the boardwalk and throughout the park (similar to the systems on college campuses).**

Response: State Parks has no immediate plans to develop a park-wide emergency call system, but the agency will monitor the need for enhanced communication systems in the future.

- 9. Comment: State Park should consider rehabilitating the lifeguard offices on the pool deck at the West Bathhouse—a permanent structure would be a huge improvement.**

Response: Comment noted.

- 10. Comment: State Parks should consider eliminating the traffic circle in front of the water tower where the Wantagh and Meadowbrook Parkways intersect—a regular traffic light would be an improvement.**

Response: The traffic circle is a major historic feature that is a defining element of Jones Beach State Park. It provides efficient movement of traffic for travel in three directions (east, west, and north). The agency has no plans to remove the traffic circle.

- 11. Comment: The Park’s Toll Booths are in shabby condition; the park should consider accepting EZ-Pass and credit card payments.**

Response: Comment noted. As part of the Jones Beach revitalization initiative, the agency proposes to construct new park entrance plazas that are more “park-like” than the existing toll plazas, which are outdated and in poor condition. The agency is also evaluating installing technology to accept EZ Pass and credit / debit cards. The timing of these projects will depend on the availability of funding and the overall sequencing of the many improvements proposed in the plan.

- 12. Comment: Wind protection structures are needed at Field 6 to provide a seating area and facilitate winter use.**

Response: Field 6 will be evaluated for patron amenities and winter use.

- 13. Comment: Pole markers are needed on the beach / boardwalk so patrons can describe their location in case of emergency.**

Response: Comment noted.

- 14. Comment: Benches with shade and water fountains should be installed in the recreational court areas.**

Response: The court areas and proposed fields will be evaluated for the inclusion of new or additional benches, shade structures, and water fountains (where feasible).

Accessibility

- 15. Comment: Universal access facilities should be installed at Field 6, Field 4, and other locations; more ramps should be installed to provide beach access to individuals with mobility limitations.**

Response: Comment noted. State Parks will evaluate the universal accessibility of the Park and make changes and /or improvements as practicable. All rehabilitated and new facilities in the Park will meet or exceed all applicable accessibility standards under the

federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

- 16. Comment: State Parks should reach out to the disabled community for their insight on future projects.**

Response: Comment noted.

- 17. Comment: State Parks should ensure universal accessibility design standards and regulations are embraced throughout the park, including access to recreation facilities (such as fishing piers), benches, the boardwalk, parking facilities, and pathways.**

Response: Comment noted. Universal design will be evaluated throughout the facility. Any new construction will incorporate universal design and existing infrastructure will be retrofitted where feasible. Significant improvements have already been made – examples include: many boardwalk barriers (stairs) have been removed and replaced with ramps; Mobi mats have been installed at several locations (these are substantial plastic runners placed on the sand, making it easier for people to transit from the boardwalk to the beachfront); and accessible parking spaces have recently been added at Field 10. State Parks is committed to installing additional accessibility enhancements at Jones Beach.

Recreation Activities

- 18. Comment: Functional access should be improved to the park for boaters at Zach’s Bay. Existing anchoring should be maintained, but consideration should be given to installing a small dock or other structure to allow boaters to access the park. Consideration should also be given to installing a small concession and a jitney stop at this location.**

Response: These suggestions will be taken into consideration during the park improvements design phase. Multiple locations will be considered, given that the existing Far Bay building is highly deteriorated.

- 19. Comment: A fishing pier should be installed at the Meadowbrook Bridge (similar to an existing structure at the Green Island Bridge on the Wantagh Parkway).**

Response: Comment noted. State Parks will explore the feasibility in the future of developing a fishing pier at the Meadowbrook Bridge.

- 20. Comments: Fishing and 4WD Drive Access**

- a. Field 9 should be reinstated to support fishing, surfing, birding, and stargazing.
- b. Fishing access should be enhanced to the cove at Field 10. Overall, more access should be created for fishing.

- c. **4WD off-road vehicle access should be provided to the West End Jetty (West End 2), Field 9, and elsewhere.**
- d. **State Parks should provide seasonal vehicle access to the West End jetty area, before Memorial Day and after Labor Day.**
- e. **Don't change anything at West End 2—there are plenty of 4x4 beach access points on Long Island. No additional 4x4 access is necessary at Jones Beach.**

***Response:** Park visitors come to Jones Beach because of the diversity of park settings that allow them to enjoy the facets of Jones Beach that appeal to them. Throughout the park's 80-year history, the public has never been allowed to drive off-road vehicles in Jones Beach State Park. The West End of the park has long been maintained in its undeveloped state, providing an area for park visitors seeking a natural beach setting (in contrast to the concentration of developed visitor and recreational facilities in the park's core between the East and West Bathhouses). The West End also is very environmentally sensitive, providing habitat for rare and endangered birds, plants, and ecosystems. The agency has no plans to create off-road 4WD vehicle access on the West End.*

"Field 9" was an additional parking field located east of Field 6, accessible off the Ocean Parkway. Field 9 was closed in the 1970s due to erosion of the beachfront. The area is located directly adjacent to the beach, in an environmentally sensitive location that is highly vulnerable to erosion, flooding, and wave damage from coastal storms. State Parks has no plans to construct parking facilities at the former Field 9 site, nor to create off-road 4WD vehicle access.

- 21. Comment: Improvements should be made to the basketball courts (for children and adults).**

***Response:** The basketball courts will be evaluated as part of the overall review of recreational facility improvements for the park.*

- 22. Comment: Consideration should be given to adding a weight room and tennis courts.**

***Response:** Additional recreation areas and resources will be evaluated for their feasibility at the park.*

- 23. Comment: State Parks should not reduce lifeguard coverage (hours or areas). West End 2 and Field 1 were reopened in 2013. This should be continued—need to staff with lifeguards to protect the public.**

***Response:** Comment noted. State Parks strives to provide lifeguard coverage and operate the park's many swimming beaches in a manner that maximizes public swimming opportunities consistent with the operating and staffing resources available to the agency. In 2013, State Parks received additional funding to expand swimming operations at Jones Beach, including opening West End 2. This additional funding was a*

one-time allocation in response to the uncertainty of other municipal Long Island beaches being open and available for swimming after the severe effects of Superstorm Sandy. Sandy-related damage has been repaired and all parks are open. Accordingly, for the 2014 summer season State Parks returned to our normal practice of prior years at Jones Beach – swimming is offered every day at seven lifeguarded beaches at Jones Beach. Field 1 is open for swimming on busy weekends. Swimming is not provided at West End 2.

24. Comment: State Parks should consider revitalizing East Bathhouse swimming pool.

***Response:** The revitalization plan calls for improving the swimming pool and associated amenities at the West Bathhouse, which is currently open to the public. Rehabilitating the East Bathhouse pool, which has been closed for a number of years, would require a very large capital outlay. The agency has determined that the level of potential public use does not justify the significant capital and operating expenses of constructing a second swimming pool at Jones Beach. The agency is evaluating other appropriate uses for the East Bathhouse.*

25. Comment: State Parks should consider a skate park.

***Response:** The planning team will evaluate the feasibility of developing a skate park at the facility.*

26. Comment: Lacrosse and soccer fields are not needed at Jones Beach State Park.

***Response:** Demand on Long Island for access to recreational soccer and lacrosse fields exceeds the current availability of fields. The agency believes recreational fields will provide a popular and beneficial amenity, creating new opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation for children and adults. The proposed location for the new fields, in a previously disturbed area located north of the Ocean Parkway between Parking Fields 3 and 4, will not negatively impact experiences for visitors to the park's ocean beaches, boardwalk, and existing public amenities.*

27. Comment: Artificial turf should not be used at the proposed athletic fields; it is not environmentally sound and can hurt children.

***Response:** State Parks has installed artificial turf fields at two state parks (Brentwood and Riverbank). The agency's experience with these fields is consistent with literature reviews and NYS Department of Health guidance, which has concluded that crumb rubber artificial turf fields do not pose significant health risks (in comparison to grass fields). Artificial turf provides a variety of benefits, including greatly extended playing seasons and conditions, use of recycled materials, and avoidance of need to apply water, fertilizers, and pesticides.*

28. Comment: Consider developing an outdoor fitness equipment area (a fitness zone) at Jones Beach to establish a “Muscle Beach East.”

Response: The planning team will evaluate the feasibility of developing a fitness zone at the park.

29. Comment: Consider developing a small water park at the East Bathhouse.

Response: The planning team will evaluate a variety of potential future uses for the East Bathhouse; the feasibility of developing a small water park will be included in this review.

30. Comment: Consideration should be given to allowing dogs on the beach during the off season.

Response: State Parks has no immediate plans to change our current policy, which prohibits dogs on the beach and boardwalk. The agency will continue to study the issue in the future.

31. Comment: Internal bicycle access should be improved in the park.

Response: The revitalization plan proposes creation of a 7-mile bike loop within the park. Construction will depend on the availability of funding and future sequencing of the many improvements proposed in the plan.

32. Comment: Consider developing Recreational Vehicle (RV) sites at the West End of the park. Two hundred RVs could be accommodated in existing parking fields with limited improvements. RV sites would provide revenue and there is noted demand (Hither Hills State Park is always booked).

Response: The agency acknowledges there would be public interest in RV camping at Jones Beach. However, creation of RV camping at the West End would require the agency to invest significant capital funding to provide code-compliant facilities, as well as commit ongoing staffing and operational resources to administer camping. The agency would also need to complete a detailed environmental review to analyze the potential for negatively impacting rare and endangered species and sensitive ecosystems. State Parks has no immediate plans to propose RV camping at Jones Beach, but the agency will continue to study the issue in the future.

Food and Beverage Concessions

33. Comment: The proposed Field 6 Diner is a good idea.

Response: Comment noted.

34. Comments: Additional Concession Opportunities

- a. **The commercialization / concessions along the boardwalk are visually intrusive and potentially not economically feasible.**
- b. **Additional concessions are unnecessary and will increase litter / garbage.**
- c. **Jones Beach State Park is a park, not an amusement park.**

Response: The revitalization plan proposes expanding the range of food and beverage services at the park, to provide more diverse offerings, meet the demand of current patrons and attract additional visitors, and provide healthy food options. State Parks is carefully designing concession facilities to be consistent with the park's historic design aesthetic. The economic viability of expanded concessions will be determined through the response to competitively issued Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for food and beverage concessions. Operational requirements will be established to prevent litter.

35. Comment: Wines produced by Long Island sustainable wineries should be offered at the proposed restaurants. Local businesses and products should be supported and considered before other vendors for concessions.

Response: State Parks will require concessionaires to include locally sourced foods, beverages, and products in their menus and offerings.

36. Comment: Alcohol sales along boardwalk are not a good idea.

Response: State Parks has historically allowed concessionaires to sell alcoholic beverages at Jones Beach. The agency will continue to require concessionaires to implement efforts to promote the safe and responsible consumption of alcoholic beverages.

37. Comment: Will the boardwalk remain open or will restaurants and new concessions take up space?

Response: The boardwalk will remain open. New food and beverage concession areas will be sited and designed in a manner to avoid impinging the public's use of the boardwalk.

Natural Resources

38. Comment: There should be less infrastructure at Jones Beach—naturalize the park.

Response: Virtually all of the enhanced facilities proposed in the revitalization plan are located within already developed areas, between the East and West Bathhouses. The undeveloped portions of the park will retain their current natural character.

39. Comment: Consider dark skies areas at the park. New facilities should not add to light pollution in the environs of the park.

Response: The revitalization plan includes a detailed lighting analysis on how to use the latest technologies to secure energy savings and reduce light pollution, while providing lighting necessary to support evening activities that currently exist at the park. Any proposed new illumination of recreational fields will be designed to minimize ambient lighting and will be concentrated at the core of the park, away from environmentally sensitive areas.

40. Comment: Clam shells should be utilized as a natural paving material for trails.

Response: Comment noted.

41. Comment: Please address the designed landscape at the Central Mall—replace the invasive, “alien” plants with native or at least plants native to the northeast. A butterfly pollinator garden should also be considered.

Response: State Parks is committed to developing sustainable designed landscapes. The agency agrees that invasive plants are not desirable and will not be used.

42. Comment: Continuing the recreational use bike path along Jones Beach West End will have a permanent detrimental effect on resident and migratory bird populations that use this sensitive habitat to feed and rest. A bicycle path will dramatically reduce this habitat. There should be no additional paved surface in this area.

Response: The proposed bicycle path will be routed adjacent to existing roadways and parking fields, to provide bicycle access to the park’s many fields and amenities, and provide a scenic experience, while avoiding the construction of a new paved pathways through undisturbed natural areas.

43. Comment: The West End of the park should be managed for wildlife and ecological values.

Response: The revitalization plan does not propose the development of new park facilities or changes in management of the West End.

44. Comment: State Parks should develop partnerships with local groups, like the Boy Scouts, in exchange for environmental patches and experience.

Response: State Parks is open to partnering with local groups to help maintain the park.

45. Comment: Consideration should be given to capturing rainwater to flush toilets.

Response: State Parks will evaluate the feasibility of this suggestion when developing new structures.

Historic Preservation

46. Comment: State Parks should restore historic stonework and masonry buildings throughout the park.

Response: State Parks is committed to assuring that rehabilitation of historic buildings and structures maintain the historic character of the park. The West Bathhouse has undergone extensive renovations that began last year and the historic limestone and Barbizon brickwork has been repaired as needed. Some materials originally used in the park are no longer available; this stonework is repaired (where feasible) and replaced as needed with a new material with a similar look.

47. Comment: Jones Beach's historic mosaics and stone inlays should be restored.

Response: The revitalization plan includes restoration of the mosaics at the Central Mall and other locations in the park.

48. Comment: The replacement windows chosen for the West Bathhouse do not reflect the original window scheme. Considering the historic significance of the building, it is important to ensure that the profile of the mullions is as close to the original dimensions as possible.

Response: State Parks is following the recommendations of the Historic Structures Report that was prepared for the West Bathhouse, and is consulting with the State Historic Preservation Office, as it rehabilitates the building.

49. Comment: Is there a monument to Major Thomas Jones (for whom the park is named after)? If not, there should be.

Response: There is no monument to Major Thomas Jones at the park at this time, but State Parks will take this comment under consideration.

General Comments

50. Comment: A number of comments were received from representatives and members of construction trade unions that State Parks should utilize and support local building trades union members for construction projects, and should consider formal Apprenticeship projects.

Response: Comments noted. State Parks follows applicable New York State laws when awarding all construction projects, including competitively bidding all projects and requiring all construction contractors to pay prevailing wages for all work. While state contracting procedures do not provide a preference for local contractors (rather, state laws require that contracts be awarded to the lowest qualified bidder), State Parks' general experience is that given the scale of park capital improvement projects, local construction contractors are well positioned to secure park construction projects.

51. Comment: What percentage of post Sandy repairs were done by unions, and will you be using union workers moving forward?

Response: Repairs at Jones Beach and other state parks on Long Island in response to damage caused by Hurricane Sandy were completed by a variety of emergency contractors, some of which employed union labor and some of which did not. As outlined above, State Parks follows state laws regarding the bidding of construction projects. While state procurement laws do not require contractors to use union labor, they are required to pay prevailing wages. State Parks requires strict compliance with prevailing wage requirements on all construction contracts.

52. Comment: The beach umbrella rental shack should be moved down to the beach near the big surf flag signs; this location is easier for patrons and may help educate patrons about the importance of beach flags.

Response: State Parks will take this suggestion into consideration.

53. Comment: How many opportunities at the park will go to MWBE businesses?

Response: Governor Cuomo has developed a comprehensive MWBE program for all state agencies, establishing a goal that at least twenty percent of state contracts should be awarded to minority and women owned businesses. Agency-wide, State Parks has

exceeded the twenty percent goal for the last several years.

- 54. Comment: Biodegradable material should be utilized in lieu of plastic and Styrofoam and plastic bags should be banned at the park.**

Response: Comment noted.

- 55. Comment: State Parks should develop a community steering committee—to be accountable for the expenditure of tax dollars and allow for continuous public input.**

Response: While State Parks has no plans to develop a formal, permanent steering committee, the agency welcomes public input, comment, and recommendations for improvements to Jones Beach.

- 56. Comment: Will there be additional Park Police at Jones Beach? There is a need to increase security and patrols on the beach.**

Response: In May, 2014, the State Park Police graduated 34 new officers from our annual training academy. The new police officers have been assigned to state park regions across the state, with the Long Island Region receiving a net increase of 6 new police officers.

- 57. Comment: This revitalization plan contributes to suburban sprawl—patrons need peace and quiet.**

Response: The revitalization plan is focused specifically on already developed areas of Jones Beach State Park. The park's extensive natural areas will remain undeveloped, providing diverse opportunities for visitors seeking quiet beach settings.

- 58. Comment: State Parks must be able to maintain any new facilities that are built.**

Response: Comment noted. As a state agency, State Parks relies on our yearly budget allocation which can vary depending on various factors. The agency is pursuing a number of initiatives to increase efficiency and maximize our ability to operate attractive, clean and safe facilities while providing quality recreational and interpretive programming throughout the park system.