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DEP Opens Waterfront Nature Walk at Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant

New Walk Opens Waterfront to Public Access for First Time in Decades

New York City Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Emily Lloyd was joined today by Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, State Senator Martin Dilan, State Assemblyman Joseph Lentol, City Council Member David Yassky, and representatives of the Newtown Creek Monitoring Committee (NCCMC) at the opening ceremony for the Newtown Creek Nature Walk. The Nature Walk affords the public their first waterfront access to Newtown Creek in decades and was designed by renowned environmental sculptor George Trakas through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art program in conjunction with DEP's ongoing upgrade of the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP).

Located in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn, the quarter-mile nature walk offers stunning views of the City and of the nearby industrial landscape, as well as many unique architectural features, plantings and construction techniques that were designed by Trakas to evoke the rich, continually evolving environmental, industrial and cultural histories of the local area.

"It's not everyday that you hear 'nature walk' and 'wastewater treatment plant' used in the same sentence, but this juxtaposition is a perfect example of the New York we are building in the 21st Century, a place where essential services co-exist with dynamic public spaces to enhance quality of life Citywide," said DEP Commissioner Lloyd. "The project also advances Mayor Bloomberg's ambitious PlaNYC goals, ensuring that the public has broader access to the waterfront and increasing water quality throughout the City's waterways. We hope that the Nature Walk will become a destination for Greenpoint residents and all New Yorkers for generations to come. I particularly want to recognize the efforts of the Newtown Creek Monitoring Committee who have contributed so much in the effort to bring this project to fruition."

"We are delighted to have worked with our colleagues at DEP, the wonderful artist George Trakas and the community to bring this work to Brooklyn's waterfront and allow the

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public to enjoy the neighborhood in a whole new way," said Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin.

"The Nature Walk is an innovative use of industrial space that uses thoughtful design and landscaping to create a place where green space and infrastructure coexist for the benefit of all," said Irene Klementowicz and Barbara Mihelic, NCMC's co-chairs. "The Nature Walk is a testament to our community's perseverance and an exciting example of what can happen when a community works in concert with a City Agency."

Trakas's design explores the various eras of Newtown Creek, from its inhabitation by the Lenape people prior to the arrival of Europeans, to the thriving cooperage, shipmaking and lumber industries of 18th and 19th Century Greenpoint. One of the first design features visitors encounter is a 170 foot "vessel" with 13 feet high bowed walls that are orientated to mimic the way old boats were built along the shore of the East River in Greenpoint during the 19th Century. The original boats were nearly twice the size of the Nature Walk vessel and were built from lumber floated to Whale Creek from Nova Scotia and milled where portions of the Newtown Creek WWTP currently sit. (See accompanying brochure for more detail on the Nature Walk.)

A centerpiece of the Walk is a set of nine, 12 inch thick granite slab steps that ascend out of the Creek and were designed to reflect the common origin of all life in the water and the sea. Beginning on the lowest steps are etched Latinate, scientific names that trace the evolution of the Earth through multiple geologic and biologic eras and include many forms of life native to Newtown Creek and the Greenpoint area. Nearly 36 tons of granite was used to construct the steps, and more than 60 tons of stone is featured throughout the rest of the Walk.

The artist framed the granite steps with several unique installations to help orient visitors. On one side of the steps, seven stone circles are etched with native place names used by the Lenape people indigenous to the area. Each name is etched at a different angle, so visitors can see the place it identifies while reading each word.

On the other side of the steps, Trakas designed a 1400 pound granite table in the shape of an enormous shipping bollard, the cylindrical posts used to secure ships in port. Atop the table is an etching of Newtown Creek's original watershed, before the first Europeans came to inhabit the land. The etching has a slight gradient, so falling rain drops will replicate the journey of the Creek's own, original waters.

The Walk also features a 515-foot pathway along Whale Creek that is richly planted with trees, shrubs and other flora native to the Newtown Creek area, including Swamp White Oak, Sweet Gum, Eastern Red Cedar, Sawtooth Oak and Pitch Pine. The long pathway also features several recessed seating areas that afford visitors intimate access to the surrounding waterways.

As DEP's upgrade of the Newtown Creek WWTP progresses, two additional sections of the Nature Walk will be built, extending the Walk from the southern terminus of Whale Creek, over the Creek itself, and toward what used to be Green Street. DEP's general contractor for much of the plant upgrade and the Nature Walk is the joint venture team of Picone/McCullagh. DEP's electrical contractor on the project is 5-Star Electric. The landscape architect, following

George Trakas's design, was Quenelle Rothschild & Partners, LLP. The cost for the Nature Walk project was \$3.2 million.

Saturday's opening also featured a number of children's activities. In addition to a community canvas where young people were able to creatively express their vision of Newtown Creek using colored markers and beautiful ribbons, DEP's Education staff designed a Scavenger Hunt that leads kids on an exploration of the many cultural, historical, and scientific aspects of Newtown Creek and Greenpoint, which are creatively infused in the Nature Walk's design. The Scavenger Hunt is available to families and children via DEP's website at nyc.gov/DEP.

The Newtown Creek Water Pollution Control Plant is the largest of New York City's 14 water pollution control plants. The plant serves approximately 1 million residents in a drainage area of more than 15,000 acres (25 square miles). The plant began operation in 1967 and currently treats 18% of the City's wastewater at a capacity of 310 million gallons per day (mgd) during dry weather flow. Upgrade work began in 1998 and will eventually raise Plant capacity to 700 mgd during wet weather flow.

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection manages the City's water supply, providing more than 1.1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents throughout New York State through a complex network of nineteen reservoirs, three controlled lakes and 6,200 miles of water pipes, tunnels and aqueducts. DEP is also responsible for managing storm water throughout the City and treating wastewater at 14 in-City wastewater treatment plants. DEP carries out federal Clean Water Act rules and regulations, handles hazardous materials emergencies and toxic site remediation, oversees asbestos monitoring and removal, enforces the City's air and noise codes, bills and collects on City water and sewer accounts, and manages city-wide water conservation programs.

The Newtown Creek Monitoring Committee (NCMC), a committee of volunteers from the Greenpoint community, was established in 1996 pursuant to a City Council resolution allowing the City to acquire property required for the upgrade of Newtown Creek WWTP. NCMC members are appointed by the local City Council member, the Brooklyn Borough President and Brooklyn Community Board #1. NCMC, with the assistance of its technical consultant, reviews and makes recommendations about activities associated with the treatment plant upgrade in order to mitigate potential impacts to the Greenpoint Community. NCMC also works with DEP to identify and design community amenities such as the Nature Walk, and is one of the longest standing citizen oversight committees in New York City.

New York City is implementing the most extensive plan to strengthen its urban environment ever undertaken by an American city. In April 2007, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg unveiled PlaNYC, a 127-point plan designed to create the first environmentally sustainable 21st century city. The long-term plan focuses on every facet of New York's physical environment – its transportation network, housing stock, land and park system, energy and water infrastructure, and water and air quality – and sets the course for a 30% reduction in global warming emissions by 2030.