



Report to Hudson River Park Advisory Council

September 12, 2023

SUBMERGE Marine Science Festival

SUBMERGE will be back September 29 & 30 at Pier 84. Join our River Project team and regional STEM experts to learn about NYC's coastal waters and wildlife. This interactive science festival invites the public to explore water topics through awesome experiments, kid-approved entertainment and much more! On Friday, teachers can book a field trip to attend the festival. Students will have the opportunity to participate in this interactive event and try out jaw-dropping experiments, meet local wildlife and learn from local STEM experts. SUBMERGE field trips are free to book, with priority access given to Title I schools.

September 30th is a special day in the Park as we present the public day of SUBMERGE where we invite all New Yorkers, and visitors alike, to learn and explore at more than 20 activations on the Pier. The public festival day coincides with West Side Fest, a collaboration with 19 arts and cultural institutions in New York City, including partners like the Whitney and Poster House. We are looking forward to collaborating with Poster House, who will be presenting Poster House on the Pier (63), with performances and activities until 5PM; a perfect stop after enjoying SUBMERGE with your family.

Thank you to the AC Members who have shared information about field trip opportunities already. If you would like to help spread the word, please contact us at education@hrpt.ny.gov.

Design and Construction

Science Play Area

Monstrum, the Danish play equipment manufacturer, assembled and installed the sturgeon and other equipment throughout August, with all Monstrum work completed by Labor Day weekend. Alpine is preparing to install site safety surfacing this month, followed by fencing and remaining site furnishings, with landscaping to follow later this fall. Completion of the Science Play Area is scheduled for late fall.

Estuarium

The design team has been working on preliminary building concepts and developing strategies for using Hudson River water in the exhibits. The team met preliminarily with DEC to review some of the regulatory issues associated with using Hudson River water for flow through tanks. We look forward to sharing progress and receiving feedback from the community this fall.

550 Washington Crosswalk

The traffic signal is now fully operational, and the project is complete.

Gansevoort Peninsula

At the Gansevoort Peninsula, work is progressing well and we expect this park area will have opened to the public before the next Advisory Council meeting. The bikeway, sports field, 13th Ave promenade, boardwalks, lawn, sand bluff, kayak landing, salt marsh, and most of the esplanade are complete. The building is making good progress, with canopies and green roofs installed and cladding underway and restrooms currently being outfitted with fixtures. Remaining work includes the Bloomfield Street shared use road, dog run, adult fitness area, and rain garden. Portions of the building cladding and adjacent rain garden along with some paving in this area will extend into the fall.

Chelsea Waterside Park

A ribbon cutting took place on June 15 to reopen the much-improved Chelsea Waterside Park in its entirety. The extensive overhaul of the space now includes a new public restroom, a permanent picnic area with lighting for evening use, an expanded and refreshed synthetic turf sports field, and an expanded dog run with water features and separate areas for small and large dogs. We were delighted to host many of our AC Members, elected officials and community residents to celebrate.

Pier 97

Construction at Pier 97 is also continuing to progress for a planned Fall 2023 opening. Fencing and railings are being installed at various locations around the pier and all trees and shrubs have been installed. All play equipment has been installed and the contractor is preparing to install safety surface later this month. Installation of concrete unit pavers is complete on the west half of the pier and is continuing to the east. Work on the new restroom/maintenance building is also progressing with over half of the structural concrete walls complete and the remaining wall to be completed in the following weeks. The building will again open at a later date than the pier open space.

34th Street Interim Pickleball Courts

Construction of four (4) pickleball courts in a section of HRPT's storage yard commenced in July. The courts will be paved in the next 2 weeks with fencing to follow immediately afterwards. Completion is expected for early autumn 2023.

W 29th to W 46th Street Esplanade

The Trust has received eight proposals for Design and Related Consultant Services for the W 29th to W 46th Street section of the park. We have started the internal RFP review process and expect to make a selection before the end of the year. Following approval by the Trust Board, we look forward to kicking off the design process with a community engagement session in early 2024.

Environmental and Sanctuary Initiatives

This was another busy summer of education for our River Project team, with over 100 enriching STEM programs (and counting) offered throughout the Park. We launched an early childhood education series, Sensory Science in the Pier 57 Discovery Tank, which we are excited to continue through the fall due to its popularity with local families. Additionally, we've continued with a

range of wildlife-inspired creative programs that are rooted in poetry, painting and storytelling in that space as well. This month, we're also hosting our first Ask a Scientist program in the Discovery Tank, which will be a part of Climate Week and feature two talks from local climate researchers. All summer long, we also held our always popular Big City Fishing program on both Piers 26 and 51. And of course the Wetlab continues to be a popular spot for visitors of all ages, as this year we expanded open hours to include both Saturdays and Sundays during the summer months.

Fall Field Trips

As the summer months come to a close, the River Project wraps up a successful season of camp field trips and public drop-in programs. As the weather starts to cool, programming continues on through the fall, as our River Project educators get ready to start a new season of hands-on STEM field trips throughout the Park. This season, students can explore shoreline ecology on the Pier 26 Tide Deck, investigate fish and oysters in our Pier 40 Wetlab or investigate climate change and pollution impacts on our waterways in the Pier 57 Discovery Tank. As always, Title I schools have the opportunity for program fees to be fully waived when booking programs.

Tribeca Habitat Enhancement Project Updates

Last month, Phase II of the Tribeca Habitat Enhancement project was completed. This encompassed the installation of an additional 24 reef balls and 24 gabions split up into three new clusters (8 Reef balls and 8 gabions each) installing an additional 5 million spat (juvenile oysters) to the area, for a total of 16 million juvenile oysters installed between Piers 26 and 34. These additional, seeded structures will help to complete the artificial reef corridor originally proposed by the project. Since the Hudson River's bottom is primarily soft and muddy, adding more solid structures offers both a settling area for encrusting organisms like oysters and mussels and a hiding place for mobile creatures such as crabs and young fish. This new generation will mature in a few years and bolster the initial set of oysters deployed in 2021, increasing the likelihood of sustainable populations in the region.

2023 also marks the second year of Tribeca monitoring by the Park and contracted team managed by consultant AKRF including a team of researchers from Hudson River Foundation, New Jersey City University, Rutgers University, Monmouth University and Billion Oyster Project. As in 2022, the enhancement structure survey looking at oysters and epibionts in June 2023 with an upcoming second survey scheduled in early October 2023. The fall survey will be inclusive of the three newly installed Phase II clusters. The mobile species/fish trap survey is concluding its weekly sampling this week as well. We are excited to glean any preliminary findings from the first two years of data collection and are looking forward to considering ways to include videographic analysis via divers in future years.

Gansevoort Salt Marsh Wildlife

We are excited to share some preliminary wildlife observations from the Gansevoort Peninsula salt marsh. During preliminary surveys of the site for upcoming research pilots, River Project staff have observed flowering *Spartina* grasses over a meter (3 feet) tall and several as-of-yet uncommonly observed species including plover-like shore birds, abundant schools of killifish and

even a few fiddler crabs. This underrepresented habitat, protected by even more oyster enhancement structures off the Gansevoort northern shore, is hoped to support an even greater biodiversity as it matures. More to come as research is conducted in the coming field seasons.

Public Programs

The Public Programs event season was another outstanding success, with highlights including an expanded Healthy on the Hudson featuring weekly workouts at Pier 57's classroom space, additional Jazz at Pier 84 series run with partner Jazz Foundation of America. The Jazz Foundation also curated the Second Stage for Blues BBQ Festival that brought a record number of 15,000 attendees over the course of the event to Pier 76. Pier 76 was a gathering place throughout the season, and we were excited to partner with Bike New York for introduction classes for both children and adults. Sunset Salsa continues to be a summer favorite, drawing weekly crowds of more than 2,000 dancers for an even longer season, making excellent use of the Pier.

Athletes of all ages continue to utilize the Park for sports of all kinds and users are excited for the expanded field opportunities at Gansevoort. We look forward to another packed winter season on our sports fields. Applications are now being accepted and are due October 9. Walk Run events return to the Park in abundance throughout the next few months and we look forward to welcoming back longstanding events including MMRF Team for Cures Run, The Walk to End Epilepsy, and Rise Up Against Addition 5km, amongst others.

Operations

Pride Sunday

The annual Pride Sunday event was a success this past June. Trust staff from various departments worked diligently to ensure that safety measures were in place so that Park visitors had a pleasurable and safe experience in the park. Unlike previous years, we incorporated seasonal staffers from other departments which helped us to create a warm guest experience for our visitors. The park sustained minimal damage, with the bulk of the issues being in the landscaped buffer areas parallel to the bikeway. Trust staff will work to implement plans for future Pride events to ensure these spaces are protected.

Air Quality Issues

Due to the Canadian fires this summer, poor air quality issues posed several challenges for the Trust field staff. Management paid close attention to the air quality updates and quickly made adjustments as needed, which included limiting staff time outdoors and providing necessary PPE.

Bikeway Resurfacing Project

SDOT's bikeway resurfacing project is complete with the exception of minor edge repairs that are currently ongoing.

Chelsea Waterside Playground

The large slide at the Chelsea Waterside Playground was finally replaced in August after a severe vandalism incident that had previously forced its closure for safety reasons. As many people will remember, the slide is a custom piece made in Denmark and required specialized repair.

Horticulture

The Park received some trees and perennials last week to get ready for our fall planting season. The Horticulture staff has been dealing with the unusual bouts of heat this summer, trying to keep plants alive by watering and maintaining the irrigation systems. The staff is excited to have a newly planted space at Chelsea Waterside Park and is maintaining the new plantings.

For the first time we received two staff members through the City's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). An organization named Hanac helped us secure the 2 employees who are both still in High School and worked with us for 6 weeks from the beginning of July to the 2nd week in August. Both were great and interested in learning more about Horticulture. The program for us was very successful and something we hope to continue next year. t

Public Safety

It has been a busy summer in Hudson River Park. Unfortunately, since the last report there have been two major incidents in the park.

On Thursday, July 13, a 35-year old man was stabbed while he slept on a park bench at Pier 84 in the early morning hours. The victim was transported to Mount Sinai hospital where he subsequently died. HRPT was able to provide the NYPD with substantial video footage. Late in the evening on July 17, NYPD detectives arrested 19-year-old Luis Gil in Chicago for this murder.

On Monday, August 21, at approximately 8:30 AM, a woman jogger was physically assaulted and verbally harassed with anti LGBTQ comments in front of Pier 40. HRPT has provided the NYPD with video footage of the incident and offered our assistance. This case is being investigated by the NYPD Hate Crime Task Force. The NYPD has put up Wanted Posters in the vicinity, and we have shared the photos and information with the AC.

Separately, the Pride Sunday celebration in the park was a success this year with only one notable altercation that resulted in patrons being removed from the Park. The safety of the thousands of celebrants was the tremendous effort of HRPT staff, PEP, and huge assistance from the NYPD.

As reported at our last meeting, we have experienced an increase in people climbing over the safety rails along the river throughout the Park. Since January PEP has successfully gotten 200 people moved from river side of the safety rail to the safety of the esplanade. Eleven people who entered the water were safely rescued. Two individuals drowned before they could be saved.

As part of our waterfront safety efforts, we have installed six additional life rings throughout the park for a total of thirty-nine and installed four additional ladders on our floats.

Real Estate and Planning

Pier 76 Task Force

The newly established Pier 76 Task Force met twice in July and meetings will continue this fall. As previously reported, membership includes local elected officials, representatives from Community Boards 1, 2 and 4, the Advisory Council and Hudson River Park Friends as well as HRPT staff and Directors. We are pleased that facilitators Carl Weisbrod and Kristina Pecorelli from HR&A and Lisa Switkin from James Corner Field Operations agreed to work with us again for this process. In July, the first meeting focused on the earlier effort from 2020 that had to be halted due to Covid and HR&A provided a good update on the market changes we are seeing today, particularly related to commercial office. Community Board 4 presented at the July 27 meeting on its Affordable Housing Plan, which also led to a discussion about the possible sale of future Park air rights and other land use issues in that neighborhood. The goal of the Task Force is to develop actionable recommendations for the redevelopment of Pier 76, which would then need to go through all applicable approval and review processes.

Marine Uses at Hudson River Park's Pier 40

On August 22, the Trust released the RFP for Marine Uses at Pier 40, with proposals due on October 5. The existing permit with Hornblower expires at the end of this year, so the Trust is seeking proposals from reputable and experienced marine operators and vessel owners to utilize the large berths located on the north and west sides of Pier 40 for eligible water dependent uses, including vessels that provide sightseeing excursions and dinner cruises, charter operations, docking of historic vessels with commercial operations, berthing of large boats and yachts, and docking of vessels that provide programming, educational and other cultural uses. It is an exciting opportunity, and we are hoping for a robust response to the RFP as the revenue stream for the Park is substantial with the current occupancy.

The RFP does not include any uses on the south side of Pier 40, and does not impact the uses there, including the Wetlab, VCB, or the Mooring Field. The Trust has generally been pleased with Hornblower's operations, apart from some specific noise issues this summer that we have worked to address, and which provides us with approximately \$1.2 million in revenue each year to support Park operations. We attended Manhattan Community Board 2's August Parks & Waterfront Committee meeting where we discussed some summer noise concerns from Hornblower and this RFP, particularly that the Trust is seeking reputable respondents whose operations are compatible with the existing uses in the Park and that respect the residential and commercial character of the adjacent neighborhood.