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Credit: Hudson River Park

HUDSON RIVER PARK TRUST OPENS PIER 26 SCIENCE PLAYGROUND

New marine science-inspired recreational space features two interactive play structures in the shape of native sturgeon species

Science Playground advances Trust's environmental programming and invites children to learn about local ecology and explore fish anatomy up-close

NEW YORK, NY (January 23, 2024) — The Hudson River Park Trust today announced the opening of the Pier 26 Science Playground, a 4,000-square-foot recreational space designed to emphasize marine science. The inspiring playground was designed by OLIN, the same firm that designed nearby Pier 26, and was made possible by a private capital campaign led by Hudson River Park Friends and grants from local elected officials. Together with the future Hudson River Estuarium, now in its design phase, Pier 26 and the Science Playground will advance Hudson River Park's mission of connecting New Yorkers of every age with the astonishing wildlife and critical environmental importance of the Hudson River.

"Holiday breaks may be over, but it doesn't mean the fun has to end," said **Noreen Doyle, President and CEO of the Hudson River Park Trust**. "Hudson River Park's new Science Playground is a place for children and their imaginations and adventures, but it's also a place for learning about our local habitat. We are so grateful to Hudson River Park Friends including and especially Mike Novogratz and everyone who donated to this project, and to Borough President Mark Levine, Council Member Chris Marte and the entire City Council for their financial support and leadership as well."

"These two giant sturgeons will attract tens of thousands of NYC children to explore this unique playground and learn about the rich Hudson River habitat and its marine inhabitants," said **Connie Fishman, Executive Director of Hudson River Park Friends**. "Friends thanks its generous donors, our capital campaign chairs, elected officials and especially, Michael Novogratz, former Friends' Board Chair, for making this exciting addition to Hudson River Park a reality."

"I walk in the park almost every day and I'm thrilled to see this playground come to life," said **Mike Novogratz, former Board Chair of Hudson River Park Friends**. "I love the two giant sturgeons and I am sure the city's kids will too! It's been exciting to watch the playground get built over the past year, and I'm so pleased to have been part of its creation."

The newly constructed Pier 26 Science Playground is an important educational and recreational space that furthers the Trust's extensive science and environmental programming. The playground includes two larger-than-life custom-fabricated play structures in the shape of two endangered sturgeon species native to the Hudson River — the Atlantic Sturgeon and Shortnose Sturgeon. Children can climb inside the two sturgeon structures and explore fish anatomy, such as a sturgeon's swim bladder, and interact with other marine-oriented play features to learn about local wildlife that resides in the Park's 400-acre Estuarine Sanctuary. The two sturgeons, designed by OLIN, were detailed and produced by the Danish play equipment design and fabrication team at MONSTRUM, a firm that specializes in creating whimsical, nature-based designs that spark imagination. The playground also includes a perimeter seat wall, safety surfacing, and climbing nets, and through OLIN's design, is enveloped by native plants and trees, connecting it to the overall Park landscape.

The Trust's nonprofit advocacy and fundraising partner, Hudson River Park Friends, completed a successful capital fundraising campaign, raising nearly \$4 million for the construction of the playground from a combination of private and public sources. The initiative was championed by former Friends' Chair, Mike Novogratz, who provided a \$1.3 million match for private donations. The New York City Council provided \$1 million to the playground. In 2022, New York City Council Member Chris Marte and Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine also contributed funding for this project, which expanded public funding and enabled the design to include a misting feature and other landscape improvements.

"Hudson River Park continues to provide experiences that all New Yorkers can enjoy, learn from, and appreciate," said **Congressman Dan Goldman**. "With the new Science Playground at Pier 26, the next generation now has another opportunity to learn about marine life and New York's local marine ecosystem through hands-on experiences. I'm especially thankful to Connie Fishman with Hudson River Park Friends for spearheading this project and Noreen Doyle for her exceptional leadership. I'm looking forward to bringing my own kids to this new playground very soon."

"As a former science teacher, I love HRPT's integration of creative play with an age-appropriate lesson in local marine biology," said **Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine**. "By showcasing the Hudson's native sturgeons, the Science Playground is helping build kids' appreciation for New York City's environment and will foster the next generation's commitment to protecting our natural resources. The Science Playground will be a must-visit destination for all families spending time around Hudson River Park."

"I'm thrilled to see how the Pier 26 Science Playground play structures have come to fruition," said **Assembly Member Debroah J. Glick**. "What a fun and educational play area for youngsters to enjoy. I applaud the Hudson River Park Trust for their stewardship of the Park as a vital hub for recreation and education, and for providing New Yorkers and visitors such an engaging way to learn about the importance of preserving the Hudson River habitat."

"I am excited to welcome this beautifully designed Science Playground to Hudson River Park," said **Council Member Christopher Marte**. "The design elements aren't just educational, but fun, and show the best of what public playgrounds can be. The design elements will help kids from a young age better understand the natural world that's thriving just a few feet away from them in the Hudson River. I know this is going to become a popular spot for families and schools, and can't wait to see it in action."

"We're thrilled to open the Pier 26 Science Playground, where learning and fun go together swimmingly," said **Tammy Meltzer, Chair of Manhattan Community Board One**.

"Congratulations to HRPT and all those who made this a reality, providing a place where kids can take a deep dive into the fun of marine life. As we anticipate the completion of the Estuarium, this playground spawns the beginning of an immersive educational journey into the rich marine ecosystem of the Hudson River. Together, these spaces will foster a new generation of environmental stewards, as excited about preserving our natural world as they are about playing in it."

Hudson River Park Friends' Playground Committee, a group of devoted neighborhood parents who promote and support children and families through their engagement with the park, raises funds for playgrounds and family programs to provide children with opportunities to learn, play, grow, and help advance our mission to educate the public on the rich history, ecology and wildlife of Hudson River Park.

The Pier 26 Science Playground was completed by a team of design and construction partners, with OLIN leading the design of the playground and play structures. Hudson River Park's River Project team advised on the scientific aspects of the design, helping to integrate science-based, age-appropriate educational features that help bring the sturgeon to life. The detailing and fabrication of the play structures was completed by MONSTRUM. Construction of the playground was managed by Gilbane Building Company and Invictus Engineering, while Alpine Construction and Landscaping Corporation handled the construction with Lerco Electric as the electric subcontractor. Other design and construction partners include Wesler Cohen for MEP engineering, Silman who completed the structural foundation design of the playground, KoolFog as the fog plume design partner and Tillett Lighting for the lighting design. Irrigation designs were completed by Northern Designs and signage design was headed up by Pentagram.

"OLIN is thrilled to continue our fruitful partnership with Hudson River Park and lead design of the Pier 26 Science Playground," said **Trevor Lee, Partner at OLIN**. "With our collaborators at Monstrum and our entire consultant team, we envisioned the Atlantic and shortnose sturgeons, symbols of ecological health within the Hudson River and its Estuary, as larger than life play features where education is enhanced through play. We look forward to this playground and its iconic play sculptures enhancing ecological literacy and inspiring future caretakers of the River."

As the fifth children's playground in Hudson River Park, the Pier 26 Science Playground offers a new recreation space for children and families to play, learn, explore, and relax in. The marine science-themed playground complements the adjacent Pier 26, which was the 2021 winner of the Municipal Art Society's Best Urban Landscape award and was also designed by OLIN. The construction of Pier 26 was inspired by Manhattan's natural shoreline with native plants and a habitat walk that leads visitors through its five ecological zones: woodland forest, coastal grassland, maritime scrub, rocky tidal zone, and the Hudson River. The western end of Pier 26 includes a first-of-its-kind tide deck, which offers visitors direct access to the estuary and hands-on learning opportunities. Pier 26 also features a sunning lawn, sports area, Downtown Boathouse, City Vineyard, and will be the future home of the Estuarium, a center for marine science research and public education on river ecology.

As fundraising continues for the Estuarium, the Trust has selected a comprehensive design team led by the Tribeca-based firm, Sage and Coombe, which will serve as architect of record on the project. EHDD Architecture, which has worked on multiple projects involving live fish, marine science and education across the United States, is the design architect of the Estuarium. The Estuarium is one of the final elements that will complete the original vision of Hudson River Park.

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About Hudson River Park Trust

Hudson River Park Trust is a unique partnership between New York State and New York City charged with building and operating Hudson River Park between approximately Chambers Street and West 59th Street along Manhattan's west side. This free, urban recreational oasis is home to award-winning skate parks, playgrounds, sports fields, gardens and nature exhibits, boating and maritime activities, art installations, and myriad year-round events that celebrate the diverse cultures and neighborhoods along its shores. The Park, which has transformed four miles of decaying piers and parking lots into a premier New York City destination for local residents and visitors alike, plays a critical role in protecting the Hudson River ecosystem. For more information, please visit www.hudsonriverpark.org.

About Hudson River Park Friends

Hudson River Park Friends is an independent nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the completion, care, enhancement and ongoing sustainability of Hudson River Park. Serving as the Park's primary fundraising partner, Hudson River Park Friends generates necessary private support to guarantee that this vital destination for millions of park lovers continues to flourish and grow.