



**Report to Hudson River Park Advisory Council
March 12, 2024**

Parkwide Seasonal Positions Now Open

The Trust is hiring a wide range of seasonal positions, which is part of our longstanding commitment to creating green job opportunities by hiring staff that support work happening throughout the Park. Seasonal roles are currently open with the Trust's Horticulture, Public Programs and River Project departments. We are pleased to share that the Trust is currently accepting applications for the 2024 season, with roles again focused on horticulture, field science, education and events. We appreciate you sharing these opportunities with your networks and to learn more visit: <https://hudsonriverpark.org/about-us/work-with-us/careers/>

Design and Construction

Gansevoort Peninsula

HRPT is currently awaiting a temporary certificate of occupancy from the NYC Department of Buildings for the restroom and concession building. Padilla Construction and Interphase Electric are completing final building finishes. JR Cruz will be returning this spring to replace plantings per warranty and complete permanent dog run striping.

Science Playground

The Science Playground opened to the public on January 23 with two third grade classes from St. Luke's as our first guests. While we did not have an official ribbon cutting, seeing a group of kids run screaming into a brand-new playground made a great day to work in the park world.

We want to give a special thanks to Friends which championed the project & ran an incredibly successful capital campaign. And another special thank you to Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, Council Member Chris Marte, and the former City Council Speaker who also helped fund this special new playground.

Alpine Construction will return this spring to replace plantings and activate the playground's fog plume feature. There were closures for safety in February due to compacted ice freezing the safety surface. We have been monitoring crowding, which was particularly acute for one of the first warm, sunny weekends.

Estuarium

The designers are continuing to develop all aspects of the building, landscape, exhibits, water intake and mechanical systems in the schematic design phase. They will be studying exterior materials and fenestration, while further developing the interior layout and overall building appearance. We look forward to returning to the community with updates in the coming months.

29th – 44th Street Landscape and Esplanade Design

The HRPT Board approved the selection of Marvel Architects to lead landscape and esplanade design. HRPT will be meeting with Marvel shortly to kick off the project and orient them to this complicated area. We will be begin stakeholder outreach and engagement later this year and will let you know when that begins.

Pier 97

We began providing limited public access to Pier 97 at the end of December and are aiming to open the remaining spaces including the Belvedere, Overlook, and Playground in the spring. Work on the new restroom/maintenance building is progressing with the main structure and frame for the façade louver system complete. Trade contractors continue to install electric, plumbing, and HVAC inside the building and the contractor is installing wall insulation, windows, and the roofing system.

Pier 45 Boardwalk Repair

As previously reported, after many years of service and heavy use, the Pier 45 wood decking has reached the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. Construction is occurring in two stages, first the far western end, followed by the southern walkway second. Work is going well and should be complete by May 2024.

Pier 25 Playground Improvements

As we reported last fall, we are undertaking some repairs & improvements at the Pier 25 Playground, including to the water features and surfacing. Construction has been going well, and the swing areas of the Playground will be reopening shortly with the remainder to follow this Spring.

Environmental and Sanctuary Initiatives

Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan (ESMP) Meetings

We hosted our third annual ESMP Sanctuary Science and Technical Advisory Council meetings this winter. At our Sanctuary Science meeting, regional experts, local university and college faculty, environmental partners and the Research & Habitat Enhancement subcommittee joined our River Project team to discuss research progress and priorities. The Trust shared updates on our seven internal research projects including fish ecology, eDNA, plastic pollution, water quality, pathogens, and studies focused on Park habitat enhancement efforts. Visiting Scholars also presented on their research in the Park sharing findings related to the Gansevoort Peninsula salt marsh, oyster recruitment and genetics in the Park, CSO impacts on microbial community assemblages, and pilot projects utilizing video and image analytics to look at the presence of mobile species, like fish and crabs, in new habitat enhancement areas. Discussion focused on opportunities to build off current projects and remaining science questions that could guide short and long-term research goals. At our Technical Advisory Council meeting, all three management area subcommittees came together at our Pier 57 Discovery Tank to comprehensively review progress across the entire ESMP Action Agenda over the last year. Trust staff shared project updates and facilitated breakout groups for attendees to consider where their organization's work best aligns with ESMP goals and explore collaboration opportunities. The breakouts also allowed time to discuss remaining questions in each management area and how those questions could be tackled with current resources (e.g. funding, expertise, partners, city/state initiatives, etc.) to help realize our ESMP goals.

Winter & Spring Programming: Field Trips & Public Events

The Pier 57 Discovery Tank has provided our River Project team with its first year-round programming space and has expanded both our field trip and public events through the winter months. NYC schools have been scheduling hands-on winter field trips in the Discovery Tank classroom focused on climate change, pollution, environmental justice, and plankton. So far, these programs have been very popular, with 77% of our groups coming from Title 1 Schools. The classroom's high-tech elements help our educators expand beyond traditional classroom curricula to create an exciting experience for students visiting the Park.

Last week, we also opened our spring field trip calendar. Historically, spring is our most popular season of field trips, so we are glad to be increasing our number of available time slots significantly with our SUBMERGE Marine Science Festival moving to May 17 & 18. While SUBMERGE was previously held during the fall season, following feedback from local teachers, we have decided to move this festival to May to make the event more accessible to NYC students. This season we are also excited to debut a new program on Gansevoort Peninsula called Salt Marsh Science. This program will teach field science skills to students who will have the opportunity to build a model of a salt marsh, conduct analysis of tide pools and explore this inspiring green space. To learn more about field trips, visit hudsonriverpark.org/fieldtrips.

Our River Project team has also been offering public-facing programs in the Discovery Tank this winter including our popular Painting Nature, Ask a Scientist and Guided Gallery events. During those gallery open hours our educators highlight rotating educational exhibits to teach about fascinating aspects of our Hudson River ecosystem. March's theme is focused on oysters and shares more about the Park's ongoing restoration efforts, which in recent years have resulted in the installation of over 35 million juvenile oysters into Park waters on habitat enhancement structures like reef balls and oyster gabions.

Federal Funding for Sanctuary Initiatives

We are pleased to report that Congressman Nadler has allocated \$963,000 for habitat enhancement and research in the current NOAA funding bill that recently passed Congress, and we have already begun identifying potential enhancements. This is in addition to the \$750,000 appropriated by Senators Schumer & Gillibrand, along with Congressman Nadler, for habitat enhancement monitoring last year. We met with our TAC last fall to discuss goals & methods and have been working with NOAA to shape the scope of the project, including testing innovative monitoring techniques. We expect additional monitoring to begin this year.

Public Programs

We are putting the finishing touches on an exciting 2024 Programming Season that brings back many of our beloved series like Sunset on the Hudson, Healthy on the Hudson, and Sunset Salsa. Spring kicks off with the ever popular SUBMERGE Marine Science Festival taking place in May on Pier 84, a switch from its usual September timing. Blues BBQ is planned for a mid-August date and will feature an amazing line up of Blues artists from across the country. We are also bringing new and exciting programming to Pier 97 and 14th Street Park and some unusual fun finds its way to Pier 76 on Labor Day Weekend.

Sail4th 250

Sail4th 250 (otherwise known as Op Sail) is a multi-state, high-profile international tall ship and government project formed to celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States. As a major component of a nationwide endeavor, Sail4th 250 will host tall ships and vessels from around the world in the New York Harbor over the weekend of July 4, 2026, including many ships will be in the Park. Much has changed in the Park since Op Sail was last here and we have been meeting with them as they learn about our facilities and begin planning.

Field Permits

With the completed renovation of Chelsea Waterside and the opening of Gansevoort Peninsula, one of our biggest sport seasons ever kicks off on March 11 and runs through June 16. Each season the Trust receives requests for field permits that vastly outstrip available time and space. We are proud that this Spring season we have 55 groups across seven fields permitted for over 6,500 hours of practice and play. Summer season applications will open on March 18 and will be due no later than April 22.

Operations

The Barrier 1 security gate at 24th St. has been replaced by SDOT. The newer gate is shorter and easier for staff to operate when providing ingress/egress for vehicles entering the park for any operational, event, or emergency needs.

State DOT is working with a sub-contractor to perform repairs on pavers throughout the bikeway and crosswalks. Work is expected to begin during the month of April. HRPT contractors are also actively working on repairing broken pavers throughout the park esplanade. Paver repair work has been completed in the Tribeca neighborhood and contractors will begin repairing pavers in the Chelsea neighborhood this month.

Caution signs reminding park visitors not to climb over railings due to dangerous conditions in the water will be installed throughout the park this month. The signs also contain language on suicide awareness with a Suicide & Crisis Lifeline to contact. They will be installed at areas where we have seen repeated crossing of the railings.

Facilities

Our Facilities staff will begin to reenergize water systems to the drinking fountains parkwide from April 1 through April 15. All display fountains and splash park features in the playgrounds will be turned on by Memorial Day weekend.

Horticulture

We planted about 100 plants at the Christopher St. fountain for the second winter in a row. It has been a success and visitors have expressed appreciation for it.

For the first time we hosted indoor volunteer events that were mainly training activities with some of our regular Neighborhood volunteers. They also helped maintain our indoor greenhouse. It was a success and anywhere from 2-5 people attended 2x/week. Feedback on the experience was positive.

Trust staff spent about 575 hours of time this winter clearing snow and ice. There were four different snow events though overall it was another mild year. Some Park facilities remain closed during times of ice due to limited staff being able to clear areas and to protect the play surfaces from damage during removal.

Public Safety

We reported in January, during the colder months when unhoused persons that frequent the Park and use our facilities are more vulnerable to the elements, PEP implements a policy called Code Blue. More specifically, between November 15 and March 15, when the temperatures drop below 32 degrees or during inclement winter conditions (i.e. strong winds, forecasted precipitation for more than two hours, extended periods of cold, sudden cold after a warm period), known locations are visited during each tour and unhoused persons are checked for wellness including hypothermia, frostbite, and/or any other cold-stress related issues. These visits can result in people accepting medical assistance, other services, moving to safer locations, and/or moving off park property when the park is closed to the public. Between November 15, 2023 and March 6, 2024, PEP has conducted 964 Code Blue checks.

The recent inclement weather and subsequent snow and ice conditions in the Park necessitated the closing of some Park assets for safety reasons. PEP was busy addressing numerous incidents of Park patrons entering closed sections of the Park and putting themselves and others at risk.

In an effort to address the increasing incidents of dogs in prohibited areas of the park, PEP has spent several months warning violators and educating people on Park rules and regulations regarding dogs on lawns and plant beds and being off leash. They have recently been issuing more summonses for these offenses in addition to distributing educational materials about the risks and harms of not following our dog rules.

Public safety maintains regular communication with NYPD personnel from the 1st, 6th and 10th Precincts who have all agreed to continue to conduct joint education and enforcement operations at strategic points along the bikeway. We anticipate these operations to begin again in early April.

Real Estate and Planning

Pier 76

As previously reported, the discussion about the challenges and opportunities for Pier 76, begun last summer, has continued. The Trust presented at CB4's January 11 Waterfront, Parks and Environment Committee meeting, and returned on February 8 for additional discussion. Both meetings can be viewed on CB4's YouTube page [here](#). CB4 approved a letter at its March 6 meeting, providing additional feedback. Our next step is to engage with our local elected officials to continue the discussion.

Pier 40 Marine Operator

As we reported in the last AC meeting, the Trust received nine proposals in response to the Pier 40 Marine Uses RFP issued in August 2023. Based on review of the proposals, interviews, and references Trust has selected New York Water Tours Inc. (NYWT) and is currently negotiating the concession agreement. NYWT presented to Community Board 2's Waterfront and Parks Committee on February 7 and we will encourage them to attend an upcoming AC meeting. We hope that the AC will join us in welcoming NYWT into the Park community.

NYWT proposes to dock six vessels on the north and west side of Pier 40 offering sight-seeing and meal cruises, with a mixture of ticketing available to the general public and for private events. Similar to the previous operator Hornblower, they will also use some Pier 40 interior space for passenger processing, sales and marketing, and the storage of supplies and materials.

Battery Park City Resiliency Project

The Battery Park City Authority has continued to advance more detailed design for the resiliency project that will affect the southern reach of Park. As previously reported, we are pleased that the design has changed to no longer run along the bikeway adjacent to the Park. We are continuing to work with BPCA as their design progresses to understand the extent of construction and potential impacts to the Park.