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## MURPHY ADMINISTRATION ADVANCES LIBERTY STATE PARK REVITALIZATION PROGRAM AT OPEN HOUSE

**(23/P033) TRENTON** – During an open house at Liberty State Park on Wednesday, May 24, Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette, joined by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Colonel Matthew W. Luzzatto, shared plans to advance a multi-phase revitalization program for the park, with an initial groundbreaking anticipated by early fall.



Building on two years of public engagement and extensive design engineering work, the revitalization program is a multiple phase effort led by the DEP to clean up, restore, and enhance natural resources; improve and expand access to open space; increase public recreation offerings through the addition of athletics facilities; bring public arts, cultural, and community spaces into the park; improve transportation to and within the park; and build greater resilience to flooding and climate change through nature-based solutions.

The end result of this phased approach will be a Liberty State Park that features active recreational, arts and cultural development across more than 100 acres of its perimeter, and an open space and passive recreational central park at its heart that will provide flood resilience benefits to the surrounding developed features as well as to the host community. Detailed information about the revitalization phases is included on DEP's [Liberty State Park Revitalization Program microsite](#).

"Liberty State Park is a treasure that will always belong to the people of New Jersey," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "Our Administration's plan prioritizes protecting our precious public lands and revitalizes Liberty State Park through exciting new amenities for the community, including new ways to enjoy nature, play sports, engage in active and passive recreation, and experience arts and culture. The proposal will also improve transportation to and within the park and include long-term improvements to enhance flood and climate resiliency. I would like to thank Commissioner LaTourette and his team at the Department of Environmental Protection for engaging in a robust and thorough public engagement process that puts the needs of the community first."

"Liberty State Park is one of the crown jewels of our state park system—rich with history and full of opportunity," **Commissioner LaTourette said**. "My DEP colleagues and I are excited to share the next steps in revitalizing this incredible park, and more importantly, to deliver transformative improvements that better serve the needs of New Jersey residents, and especially our host community in Jersey City, while also enhancing our natural environment and promoting greater flood and climate resilience."

"This ambitious project signifies a new era for Liberty State Park. It marks the commitment not just to enhancing the park's recreational and cultural facilities, but also to strengthening our resilience in the face of climate change. This is an investment in our community, our environment, and our future," **said Colonel Luzzatto, Commander of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' New York District**.

"The inclusion of nature-based solutions in the Liberty State Park Revitalization Program is a groundbreaking move. The Corps specializes in restoration of native habitats, wetlands, and urban forests. These features will not only boost the park's biodiversity but also enhance its capacity to combat climate change and flooding. This project serves as a beacon for sustainable development. We would like to thank our partners at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the State of New Jersey for giving us the opportunity to partner in this project," **added Colonel Luzzatto**.

At the open house, DEP staff presented detailed renderings of the engineered design of many elements of the interior section and a video presentation that simulates the expected visitor experience of these improvements.

"With valuable feedback from thousands of members of the public who have participated in prior engagement sessions, DEP is making progress on improvements at Liberty State Park that provide exciting new spaces for visitors to play sports, enjoy nature, picnic and host community events," **said John Cecil, DEP Assistant Commissioner for Parks, Forests & Historic Sites**. "The goal of the Liberty State Park Revitalization Program is to enact an integrated strategy to better serve the visiting public and nearby communities, restore and enhance natural resources, honor the park's history and celebrate our diverse culture."

"By restoring the interior of Liberty State Park, we are not only enhancing the natural beauty and recreational opportunities within the park, but also strengthening resilience to flooding and providing ample chances for the public to engage with nature and enjoy stunning views of the park amenities and the surrounding cities," **said Elizabeth Dragon, DEP Assistant Commissioner for Community Investment & Economic Revitalization**. "This project exemplifies our commitment to achieving a more sustainable and livable future for all New Jerseyans."



DEP will share its schedule for revitalization program activities over the next year, which will include multiple points of continued public engagement. Feedback from the public will be used to inform further design work by DEP.

The phases of the revitalization program include:

### **Phase 1A: Cleanup, Restoration, and Resilience (Interior Area)**

- Cleanup of 230+ acres long closed to the public due to legacy industrial contamination;
- Ecological restoration and construction of nature-based solutions that serve critical flooding and climate resilience functions for the community;
- Reintroduce native tidal and non-tidal wetlands, meadows, and urban forest ;
- Create hilltop scenic overlooks with NJ/NY harbor and skyline views;
- All features bound together in a 5.6-mile walking and running trail network;
- Includes cleanup at the site of the future *Southern Athletics Hub*, which will be planned concurrent to the remediation for development following cleanup.

### **Phase 1B: Immediate Active Recreation, Arts and Culture Improvements (Northern Area)**

- Near-term development of public amenities along the Audrey Zapp Drive corridor, e., from Jersey Avenue to the Central Railroad of New Jersey (CRRNJ) Terminal Building;
- Create the *Northern Athletics Hub* for public outdoor active recreation amenities, including multi-purpose athletic fields and support facilities;
- Rehabilitate and repurpose historic CRRNJ train sheds as covered outdoor public community space and marketplace;
- Develop arts and cultural spaces, including public outdoor amphitheater with harbor/skyline backdrop;
- Add community center, playgrounds, concessions, and other public gathering spaces;
- Evaluate and begin transportation and internal circulation improvements.

### **Phase 2: Holistic Master Plan (Southern & Waterfront Areas + Parkwide Integration)**

- Assess opportunities and plan improvements for southern (Morris Pesin Drive Corridor) and waterfront (Freedom Way Corridor);
- Create *Southern Athletics Hub* to complement Phase 1B recreation amenities with specific elements selected through public process;
- Public athletics could include track and field center, integrated multi-use fields, basketball courts, racquet courts, skate park, or other amenities;
- Evaluate feasibility of potential community pool, aquatics center, community gardens;
- Integrate elements of earlier phases into holistic parkwide network;
- Develop long-term parking solutions.

“Liberty State Park is an outstanding gem in New Jersey's magnificent State Park System. It gives local access to open space in the most congested area of the state, and it's the embodiment of so much of our nation's heritage - the gateway through which many of our families started their own American history,” **said Jennifer M. Coffey, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions Executive Director.** “This community-driven plan to remediate and restore this magnificent land, much of which has been locked off from public access due to contamination for nearly a half century, is a point of pride and a real triumph for the people of New Jersey.”

“The Friends of Liberty State Park praises the Murphy Administration's Commissioner of the NJDEP Shawn LaTourette for his leadership in spearheading the visionary plans for an international model of transforming a former freight yard site into spectacular urban nature habitats and miles of paths, and also for his democratic planning process with maximum public participation for the design of 60 acres of free active recreation and other Central Park-type improvements for this American landscape behind Lady Liberty,” **said Sam Pesin, President of The Friends of Liberty State Park and son of Morris Pesin, who has been credited with spearheading the founding of Liberty State Park.** “We also thank the Commissioner for responsibly honoring the 46 years of the broad public consensus for a crucial quality of life public resource with only small-scale commercial activities and without admission-fee, traffic-jam causing stadiums and commercial concert venues.”

“Liberty State Park is a precious commodity. Thankfully, we have influential stakeholders, legislators and politicians who wish to ensure that the park continues to be a diverse recreational destination for *everyone* - for those who want to explore nature and conserve the delicate ecosystem, to the athletic team seeking a place to practice, train and play competitive sports,” **said Luz Guzman of Friends of Lincoln Park.** “We like to thank the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for hearing all sides and designing a plan that guarantees Liberty State Park truly is a haven for all.”

“From the time of the Lenape American-Indians spending summers along banks of the Hudson River to the waves of immigrants welcomed to their new country through Ellis Island, millions continue to visit this historic treasure of New Jersey,” **said Paula Mahayosnand, President of the Jersey City Parks Coalition.** “The Jersey City Parks Coalition is dedicated to ensuring that Liberty State Park is enhanced to provide an array of passive and active recreation for those seeking the spirit of adventure within a metropolitan city. Today is a momentous occasion where we can celebrate this balanced approach for all to enjoy.....free and green!”



“We’re excited to see the new, accessible plans for a fully remediated Liberty State Park. DEP listened to Jersey City’s diverse community, balancing the needs for open space and preservation with additional new recreational opportunities,” **said Allison McLeod, New Jersey League of Conservation Voters Policy Director**. “Protecting Liberty State Park is an investment in our urban communities that have historically been deprived of green spaces and recreation. In addition to the new community gathering spaces, cultural programs, and key safeguards against flooding, we are glad to see protection for critical nature preserves like Caven Point. We look forward to the day Jersey City and all New Jersey residents can enjoy these amenities.”

“With this revitalization plan, DEP has reserved this world class park for the enjoyment of the local Jersey City community, and for the people of New Jersey and the region. The amenities, recreational facilities, restored natural areas, historical resources and the incredible views will combine to make this an outstanding public space for all to enjoy,” **said Elliott Ruga, New Jersey Highlands Coalition Policy and Communications Director**. “The northern end of the park is the eastern terminus of the former Morris Canal, which brought the iron and timber from the Highlands to Jersey City so it and its neighbors could grow to become major population centers, industrial giants, and transportation hubs. Today, that relationship between the Highlands and Jersey City still exists. Although the iron and timber industries are gone from New Jersey and the Canal was abandoned over 100 years ago, Jersey City and its neighbors rely on the Highlands for their water supplies, allowing for their continued growth and revitalization.”

“Bravo! Governor Murphy’s NJDEP has delivered a plan for Liberty State Park that is worthy of this unparalleled American treasure,” **said Greg Remaud of NY/NJ Baykeeper**. “It includes a world class 165-acre urban natural restoration with walking and cycling trails, 60 acres of ballfields and active recreation, numerous small-scale eateries and public amenities, along with flood resiliency and improved access. Something for every park visitor to enjoy freely, without the private development.”

“We want to thank Governor Murphy and Commissioner LaTourette for listening to the needs and voices of the community that has for too long been shut out of Liberty State Park. The plan unveiled today is a strong step in the right direction to fulfilling the promise of Liberty State Park, but much work and community input is needed to bring this to fruition. We are pleased that it includes nearly everything that the community and The People’s Park Foundation has advocated for, most importantly cleaning up the toxic contamination that has left hundreds of acres of the park fenced off and unusable and adding new active recreational facilities,” **said Bob Hurley, President of the People’s Park Foundation**. “We’re thrilled to see that this new plan contains a new community center for year-round activities, multipurpose athletic fields for soccer, football, baseball, cricket and field hockey, courts for basketball, tennis, and pickleball, facilities for track and field and swimming, and an outdoor amphitheater—all for the public to use and enjoy. The People’s Park Foundation will remain engaged and activated to ensure promises made to the residents of the community are kept and that the revitalization of Liberty State Park is realized.”

“It is important that NJDEP’s proposed plans for Liberty State Park will finally be made accessible to the public and surrounding communities. Public input, participation, and involvement is a vital component of a successful revitalization program for a park in the middle of the most populated city in the country,” **said New Jersey Sierra Club Director, Anjali Ramos-Busot**. “It is critical that we can offer a wonderful place of nature for everyone to enjoy. That means providing a park that includes a balance of both passive and active recreation without private commercial development. Liberty State Park should remain a place for the people of New Jersey to recreate and enjoy the outdoors without a price tag.”

“More than two generations after the last trains pulled out of the Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal and Morris Pesin’s vision of a public state park that would do justice to Lady Liberty, the fate of Liberty State Park has remained tenuous between preserving the jewel of New Jersey’s state park system and the pressures of private development. Gov. Murphy’s NJDEP has delivered a plan through extensive public outreach that will both restore the Park’s polluted interior, expand active recreation for the Jersey City community, plan for a more flood-prone future and restore the rusted-out train shed into a community hub. Gov. Murphy and NJDEP Commissioner LaTourette deserve kudos for proposing plans that are fully aligned with Morris Pesin’s vision as he rallied public support to turn the industrial lands into the urban preserve that is Liberty State Park,” **said Doug O’Malley, Director of Environment New Jersey**.

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