



ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Marine Park Alliance assists NYC Parks with a mission to provide cultural, environmental and volunteer programming in Marine Park for the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES



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Marine Park Alliance Annual Report 2022

Dear Friends,

2022 was a year of piloting cultural programs. Marine Park Alliance introduced its Just for Kids series, which took place over the summer in all four of the playgrounds. We realized that the park already has great programming for mature adults through Millennium Development's senior center; however, there has never been a conscious development of children's programming in the park. Then in fall, we began an introductory bird watching program together with NYC Audubon. The program successfully brought many new visitors to the park's salt marsh to spot its avian inhabitants in their element. This is a valuable outcome because far too many visitors are aware of the park's developed areas, but not its natural landscapes. New birders means new hobbyists willing to support conservation efforts in the salt marsh.

As we scheduled program leaders, we committed to engaging quality local artists and to paying a fair rate. These professional artists and presenters elevate MPA's program offerings, and deserve compensation for their expertise. Moreover, government grants have made it possible to realize this commitment. The benefit is strikingly evident at Lenape Playground, where we engaged renowned muralist Danielle Mastrion. She previously painted the entrance mural at Shirley Chisholm State Park and lives across the street from our own Marine Park. She transformed the dull, neglected sculptures in our playground into a vibrant snake and turtles that children love to interact with.

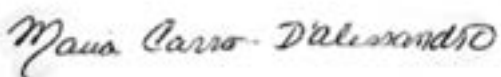
We brought additional educational and cultural elements to our other programs as well. For instance, at Santa in the Park, a Japanese group led origami activities and we made winter crowns out of dried phragmites reed grasses.

When presenting new programs, we now collect critical feedback to inform the future of community engagement here. After programs we ask participants to fill out surveys and talk with us about future programming. Your input is important to us!

This annual report describes highlights from 2022 including audience comments about what the programming meant to them. We listen closely to participant feedback to further develop outreach for the following year. Keep a look out for more new programming in 2023!

Stay healthy by using your park!

Sincerely,



Maria Carro-D'Alessandro
Chair



Stephanie Samaroo-Martinez
Vice Chair



HIGHLIGHTS

POST-PANDEMIC PROGRAM CALENDAR

Just before the pandemic, we had designed our first spring program calendar. That design went unused for two years due to the Covid-19 restrictions severely impacting the availability of programming. We finally printed our first Spring/Summer Calendar once gathering restrictions were lifted and the park came closer to “normal” operations. Because spring and summer are high usage seasons in parks, this new calendar was larger in comparison to the fall calendar of 2019. We also included an article about responsible dog ownership that so many of our daily walkers appreciated. Thank you to our wonderful graphic artist, Cliff Harris, and our generous calendar sponsors Con Edison, Power Mortgage, and Fillmore Real Estate.



PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY

At Marine Park Alliance we believe the park embodies the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words as "a land where [people] of all races of all nationalities and of all creeds can live together" to enjoy nature and the healthfulness of the outdoors.

You will see this when you visit in the variety of activities across the park, and in our programming that is intentionally inclusive. Over the past few years we've introduced highlights such as the multicultural Festival of Lights series, the Just for Kids series, a Lunar New Year celebration, and planned for 2023, Black History Month programming. Audience feedback surveys revealed what people appreciated most of the Festival of Lights series:

- "Celebration of culture & diversity"
- "The intent of inclusiveness and diversity"
- "The community coming together to celebrate a minority festival."
- "The way it was organized."
- "We enjoyed our culture. Happy Diwali to all."
- "We enjoyed learning about Diwali; listening to chants and seeing the beautiful saris. We also appreciated having the pandit present."
- "I truly enjoyed the "shared" togetherness as we observed the Festival of Lights."



TWO NEW PILOT SERIES!!

Just For Kids

In summer of 2022 we piloted a new, seven-session series of programs just for children. Events took place in all four of our playgrounds, with content targeting different age groups. We partnered with Brooklyn Public Library, Gerritsen Beach Volunteer Fire Department, the Urban Park Rangers, Bklyn Elite Jumpers, and others to engage a diverse set of presenters for each event.

The Bklyn Elite Jumpers kicked off this Just for Kids series with a double dutch workshop, while the Urban Park Rangers closed it out with live critters the kids could handle. The biggest crowd pleasers? The Gerritsen Beach Volunteer Fire Department showing children and their families what firefighters do and how they use technology in their state-of-the-art trucks!

The Just for Kids pilot gave us insights to working with families and reviewing event performance allowed us to refine the program to maximize participation in 2023 and beyond.



Weekly Birding

In fall of 2022, MPA began a pilot birding series in partnership with NYC Audubon. Offering birding events is a great way to attract people to conservation and we hope it encourages the next generation of environmentalists! The Alliance covered the costs of offering weekly Intro to Birding sessions, while NYC Audubon provided expert leaders able to make birding approachable for families and novice birders. We also held a session for experienced birders with local expert Heydi Lopes. Ms. Lopes lives near the park and walks the Salt Marsh Trail daily, so she knows the birds well. She is our birding hero! Additionally, we teamed up with the Littoral Society for Raptorama, an event in which fascinating, injured birds of prey were on display to the general public. Up close, the injured birds conveyed a majesty with their beautiful feathers, their wingspans and their intense eyes.

In an end-of-season survey, respondents said they enjoyed “learning the different bird names and how to identify them;” and “seeing the same people come back on the bird walks made it more fun and it gave a sense of community;”

About the Audubon experts, one participant wrote, “The leaders were very informative in their own ways. One was all about the bird calls, one was about the birds’ movement, and [another] was about the birds’ visual clues.”

Ms. Lopes said that she enjoyed “showing others the nature of Marine Park, a place that I love!”



VOLUNTEERS ARE GOLD

It turns out that in the wake of the pandemic, our community service offering was one of very few still available to area students. Considering health restrictions on indoor activities, parents were comfortable with our volunteer program because we work outdoors. MPA received a large number of high school volunteers this year, and our total volunteer hours surged up to 3,500 for the year!

The NYC Green Fund made it possible for us to hire a consultant for the program to administer registration both online and in person. Carrienne Knorr knows the names of each registered volunteer, remembers what landscaping tasks they worked on each session, and provides letters for community service documentation. Ms. Knorr's sharp memory and upbeat demeanor fosters wonderful connections because hundreds of people feel recognized for the good work they have done.

Many of our "regulars" are excited to take on new and different tasks. Last summer and fall we trialed using our most reliable high school volunteers as assistants on public programming. Two, Julie Wu and Ester Zhang, asked to take on more administrative work, so they helped us in the office with data for grants and assisted with the launch of our new pilot series Just for Kids. They spoke with parents in the playgrounds, sometimes in Chinese as needed, and helped the instructors. The girls next assisted with the new Intro to Birding series, helping novice birders learn to use binoculars and introducing citizen science data collecting via eBird.org.

Toward the year's end, they helped us with a tabling event talking with the public about Marine Park at the new Patagonia store in Williamsburg. At our table they worked with customers' families to make festive winter crowns out of phragmites stalks.



Local Eagle Scouts were another new set of volunteers who tackled two large projects with Alliance support.

- Scout George Pullini and Troop 238 cleared a one-acre site of stumps and invasive vines in order to plant native wildflowers as a “pollinators meadow.”
- Scout Karol Reyes, Troop 238, and their families cleared another site of illegal dumping, invasive vines, and weed saplings to liberate the largest trees in the park for the public to appreciate their glorious canopies and girth. These were willow oaks, and the largest had a trunk diameter over 5 feet!
- Scout Zachary Amir of Troop 353 cleaned up years of dumping behind the fence along Avenue V with his group and their families.

We also added monthly landscaping assistance to the nearby historic Hendrick I. Lott House, another Parks Department property two blocks away from the park.

With so many new projects we increased the overall number of volunteer events and hours by over 50%.



Photo: Cyrus Gonzales

MEDIA OUTREACH

We hired communications expert Jonathan Robinson to streamline our outreach and marketing efforts. By the end of the year, Mr. Robinson established a communications team, introduced a social media content calendar, put in place content and editing best-practices, and determined evaluative measures to ensure the consistency of stakeholder-facing messaging ahead of events. With his expertise our elevated communications grew to reach over 140,000 people across our social platforms, and more via email and traditional media sources.

In July Mr. Robinson launched a monthly newsletter to announce programs, accomplishments, and park news as well as to thank special donors and partners. The newsletter quickly grew from an initial audience of 400 in July to 1,500 by December, and currently has 3,200 subscribers.

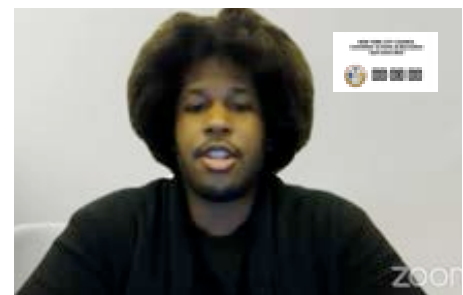
He also helped us earn coverage in several local newspapers and magazines throughout the year, including Brooklyn Magazine, the Canarsie Courier, and the Brooklyn Eagle.

ADVOCACY

Marine Park Alliance is an active member of Parks & Open Space Partners, a group of greenspace nonprofit leaders from the city's five boroughs. We have learned from colleagues at POSP how to be better advocates for parks citywide as well as for our own. We blog about important issues and post requests for you to sign on to petitions, especially the 1% for Parks campaign. Jonathan Robinson and Board Secretary Karen Eichel presented testimony at two NYC Council hearings to support the campaign and to promote Marine Park staffing. Next year we will partner directly with New Yorkers for Parks to develop more avenues to get the word out and garner more support for Parks.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

A big change happened in September when Margot Perron, the Park Director from NYC Parks, retired. She transitioned into a volunteer position with the Alliance to work on grants management and programming. NYC Parks' system of park administration varies in each borough and Brooklyn does not support park administrators other than the grandfathered Prospect Park administrator. Therefore, Ms. Perron's position with Parks will not be refilled, making clear the need for a fully funded CEO position to liaison with the agency, engage the community and raise funds. In 2023, Marine Park Alliance will launch a campaign to fund an executive director position for the nonprofit. We hope you can help us meet this tall order!



FUNDRAISING CAPACITY GROWS

The Alliance's income grew 60% in 2022. This increase was achieved by growing our individual donor base, new foundation support and a new government grant.

Early in the year we received a capacity building grant from New York Community Trust that enabled us to create a three-year fundraising plan. An expert fundraising coach encouraged a development research and spring appeal that was mailed out with the colorful Spring/Summer Program Calendar. This new approach increased our number of individual donors by 84%.

We were also successful in attracting government streams of income through grants. Our NYS Assemblymember Jamie Williams is very supportive of women-led organizations and provided us with a generous legislative expense grant for programming through the NYS Department of Parks & Preservation; NYC Council Members Mercedes Narcisse and Farah Lewis awarded programming grants; and NYC Department of Cultural Affairs awarded a first grant. Although these grants were awarded in 2022, we will receive the funding for these grants in 2023 as reimbursements.



TREE LOSS

During the summer drought, we issued a "Tree Sentiments" survey via social media and learned that respondents almost universally have an appreciation for trees. It was great to affirm this love of trees, as the drought caused significant plant loss across the park. Large trees, shrubs and whole garden beds succumbed. Lacking access to water was a huge issue.

In the fall, we requested new saplings be planted throughout the park to replace the loss and trialed the formation of a "tree brigade" to give extra care to trees in need. In 2023 we will plead for help from all park visitors to bring a gallon to their favorite trees daily or weekly if next summer is a repeat dry spell.



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All photos are taken by MPA board members unless otherwise noted.

SUPPORTERS

DONORS

We couldn't have this impact without your financial assistance. We are tremendously grateful to the generous donors listed below as well as our partners.

All is Well Coaching

Amazon Smile

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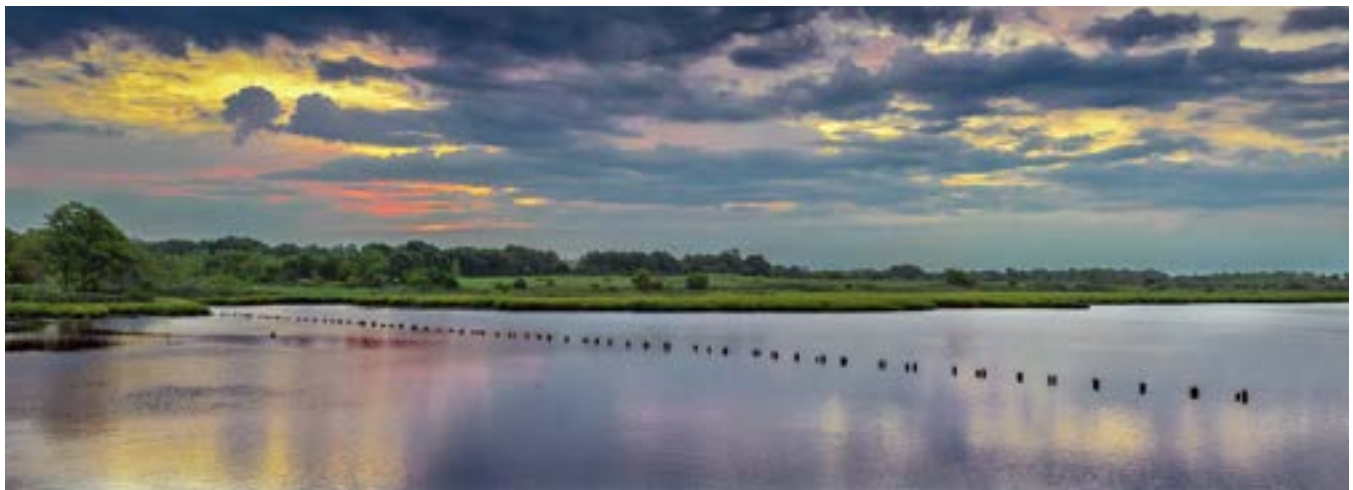
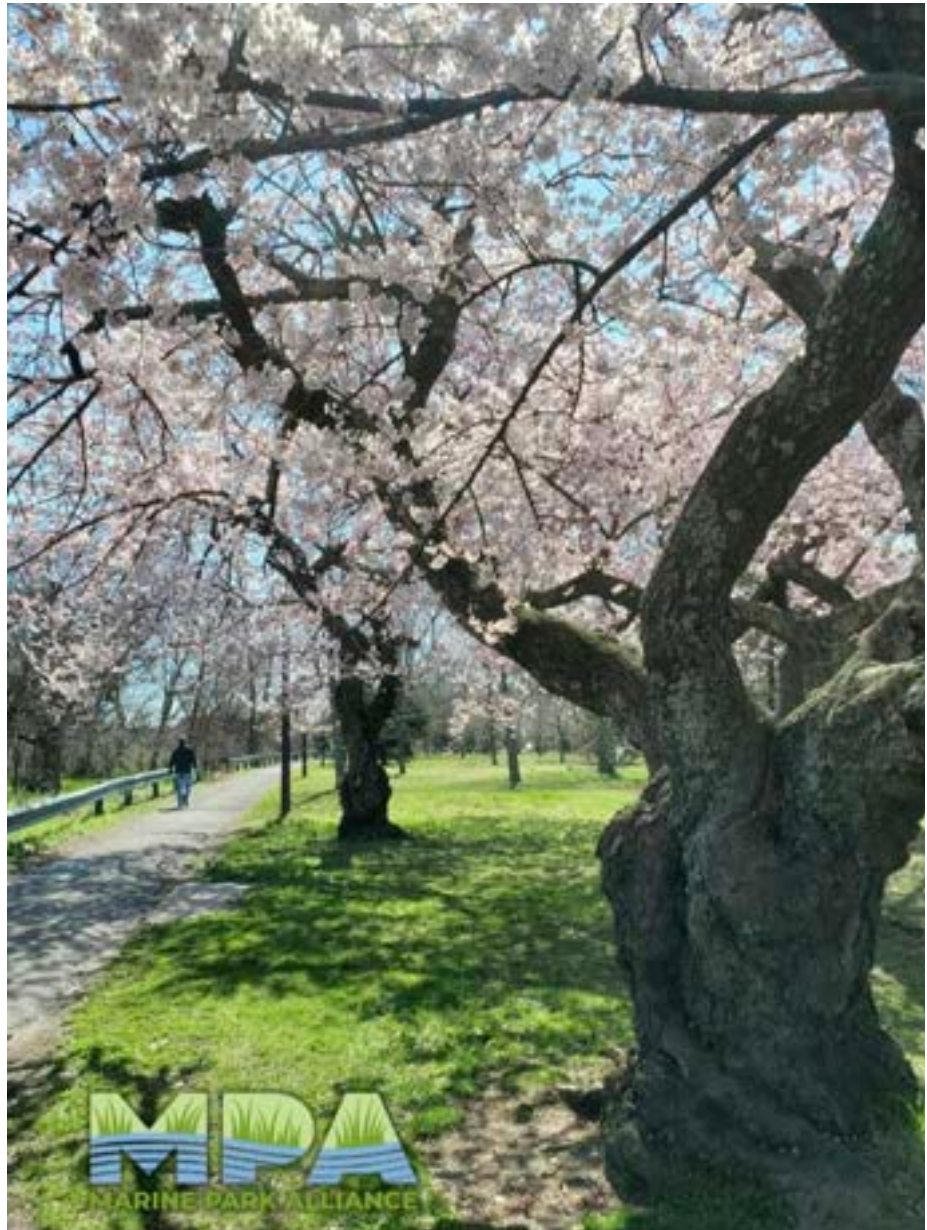


Photo: William D. King

PARTNERS

Marine Park Alliance coalesces many nonprofit groups that care deeply about the park. Our partners are listed below alphabetically:

American Littoral Society
Brooklyn Cricket League
Gerritsen Beach Cares
Gerritsen Beach Property Owners Association
Gerritsen Beach Volunteer Fire Department
International Lions Club/ Marine Park Chapter
Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy
Marine-Madison Homecrest Civic Association
Marine Park Community Association
Millennium Development
Natural Resources Group (NYC Parks)
New Yorkers for Parks
New York Road Runners
NYC Audubon Natural Areas Conservancy
Partnerships for Parks/ City Parks Foundation
Salt Marsh Alliance
Urban Park Rangers (NYC Parks)



FINANCES

In FY22, we were able to use reserves from three previous years' surpluses. This strategy allowed us to accept our first large NY State Assembly Legislative Initiative Grant, which will be funded as reimbursement monies the following year.

