

Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan

Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, New York City, New York



When Mayor Bloomberg signed a City Council bill requiring the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to create a watershed protection plan for Jamaica Bay, the City turned to Biohabitats to help lead the efforts.

Jamaica Bay is one of America's most important estuaries. Encompassing the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, a unit of the Gateway National Recreation Area, Jamaica Bay has been important to the cultural and economic development of New York City and the nation for more than 200 years. Jamaica Bay is an estuary within the jurisdictional boundary of New York City, immediately adjacent to the Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. The 142-square-mile watershed supports one of the most densely populated urban areas in the United States. The effluent from numerous water pollution control plants,

The 142 square mile Jamaica Bay watershed contains some of the most densely populated areas of the country, the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, New York, which lie immediately adjacent to the ecologically productive Jamaica Bay marine estuary complex.

combined sewer overflows, and augmented stormwater runoff has severely degraded water quality in the Bay. Land filling and dredging operations has reduced the historic wetland complex by 50%, and the remaining salt marshes are rapidly eroding. Nevertheless, the estuary remains an important ecological, cultural, and recreational resource for the citizens of New York City.

Biohabitats was tagged to assist the City with the technical components of the Plan and to build a consensus among a variety of stakeholders to implement multifaceted protection and restoration initiatives. More specifically, Biohabitats' role included researching the ecological systems in Jamaica Bay Estuary, quantifying impacts, and making

recommendations for sustainable ecological restoration and management. We helped organize and lead workshops aimed at addressing both technical issues as well as cultural and regulatory impediments to implementing a fully fledged restoration program.

Biohabitats worked with DEP to prepare and assemble the *Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan*, a guide for future conservation and restoration actions that will return Jamaica Bay to an ecologically rich, diverse and resilient estuary.

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