

NJMC NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NJMC Dedicates River Barge Park

New Recreation Spot in Carlstadt Enhances Public Access to Hackensack River

CARLSTADT, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) today dedicated River Barge Park, an inviting urban oasis which provides much-needed public access to the Hackensack River in southern Bergen County and offers magnificent riverfront views and a tranquil setting for relaxation, bird watching and environmental education. The new park and boating center will further enable the public to experience the Meadowlands District’s stunning natural beauty and unique urban ecosystem up-close. The park, which will open to the public in the next four to six weeks, is located at 260 Outwater Lane, off Paterson Plank Road.

“River Barge Park is a true environmental jewel and a reminder of the vital importance of protecting and promoting New Jersey’s remarkable natural resources and recreational opportunities,” said Lori Grifa, Chairman of the NJMC and Commissioner of the State Department of Community Affairs. “The park and boating center is a superb example of the Meadowlands Commission’s persistent hard work in transforming the region into a premier destination for the great outdoors.”

The NJMC purchased the 5.5-acre property, which was once slated for residential development, and created the park and boating center with major funding provided by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The riverfront park features a boat ramp, paddling and rowing launch points, a 30 slip marina, a scenic promenade with picnic tables, and a walking trail lined with native plants.

“I would like to express my appreciation to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for their invaluable assistance in making River Barge Park a reality,” said Marcia Karrow, Executive Director of the NJMC. “This spectacular natural area will connect residents from the Meadowlands and beyond to the area’s waterways and inspire a new appreciation for the region’s exceptional environmental qualities.”

The park provides the first public boating access from the western banks of the Hackensack River in southern Bergen County in decades and includes storage facilities for the NJMC’s pontoon boats and canoes. The docks have been used since May as the launch point for the Commission’s highly popular pontoon boat cruises.

The park’s Robert Ceberio Environmental Education Pavilion is located on adjacent property owned by the Meadowlands Conservation Trust (MCT). The 635-square-foot, open-air structure will provide an outdoor classroom whose setting demonstrates first-hand the importance of environmental preservation. Ceberio, the NJMC's former executive director, retired in 2010. He was honored for his commitment to public service and education during a 30-year career with the Commission. Ceberio was also a longtime MCT board member.

“I am extremely honored to be associated with such an outstanding project that will teach the importance of environmental protection to students for generations to come,” Ceberio said. “River Barge Park is a tremendous asset that will enrich visitors of all ages.”

The park is the former site of the Barge Club, a combination boat launch, marina and restaurant. The business was named for two covered, wooden barges that made up the core of its building complex. Over the years the owner amassed a collection of nautical and regional artifacts that were displayed throughout the property and are now incorporated into River Barge Park, providing a sense of continuity to the site. The park's interpretive signage further evokes a sense of place by illustrating the environmental and cultural history of the Meadowlands.

In the 1940s the site was known as Sky Harbor, a seaplane base which trained hundreds of aviators, including U.S. and Canadian flyers during World War II.

The construction of River Barge Park advances the NJMC's commitment to sustainability and green building. The education pavilion features a thatched roof consisting of phragmites from New Jersey marshes, while the pavilion, tables and bench furnishings were constructed with 300-year-old first-growth long leaf yellow pine salvaged from the Barge Club. The park also includes energy-efficient lighting and sustainable storm water management, collection and filtering systems

The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission was created by an act of the State Legislature in 1969 and charged with protecting the delicate balance of nature and providing for orderly development in the 30.4-square-mile Meadowlands District. The Commission has preserved more than 8,400 acres of environmentally sensitive wetlands and its efforts in protecting the region's marshes and improving the Hackensack River have helped foster a remarkable environmental rebound in recent decades. More than 280 species of birds, including 20 on the State's threatened and endangered lists, visit the District or stay year-round. DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst, the home of the NJMC, is known throughout New Jersey and neighboring states as a birding hotspot.

For more information on the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, go to www.njmeadowlands.gov or call 201-460-1700. To check for daily updates on upcoming NJMC nature events, visits by rare birds and to see photos of the region's breathtaking flora and fauna, visit the Commission's Nature Blog, www.meadowblog.net.

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