



SALT MARSH NATURE CENTER BRINGS PEOPLE BACK TO NATURE

Parks' new Salt Marsh Nature Center at Marine Park in Brooklyn serves as the gateway to a newly-designed wetlands and tallgrass environment that provides city residents with an unexpected respite from the noise and crowds of New York. The 70-acre site features a one-mile trail that allows visitors to walk into the salt marsh to enjoy the panoramic view of the surrounding area. On clear days, the World Trade Center is visible in the distance.

Parks' Capital division and Natural Resources Group (NRG) collaborated to design the nature center and surrounding trails. Project Manager Nancy Price and her team of landscape architects began designing the trail by talking to Urban Park Rangers who were already leading nature walks in the then-undeveloped area. The new trail is based on an existing trail that was widened, realigned, and stabilized for greater accessibility and security.

The Rangers and the design team wanted visitors to be able to walk among the tallgrass in order to catch occasional views of the marsh without disturbing wildlife. The project called for a special blend of grass seeds based on a survey of the grasses that were already growing successfully in the delicate soil. Trail highlights include a bridge where visitors can walk over the marsh and a preexisting high point, supplemented with 20 additional feet of earth, which provides a stunning view over White Island and the Garrison Creek Inlet.

The nature center itself, designed by Parks architects, serves as a home base for the Brooklyn Rangers and a team of 50 volunteers who help with landscaping at the site. The center is a starting point for a variety of educational and outdoor opportunities that include fishing, canoeing, and a monthly lecture series. The center has proved to be extremely popular: according to Urban Park Ranger E.J. McAdams, more than 710,000 people have visited the center since it opened on June 19. *For additional information about the Salt Marsh Nature Center, contact E.J. McAdams at (718) 421-2021. Written by Emily Willits.*



The Salt Marsh Nature Center provides a respite from the noise and crowds of the city

NEW SILVER CARS ARE THE GREENEST IN FLEET

Parks recently acquired four Honda Civics fueled solely by compressed natural gas (CNG). These sedans are the first dedicated CNG vehicles in the Parks-owned fleet. Parks also has 7 all-CNG Ford Expeditions utility vehicles which were donated for three years in 1998. Parks has 86 other vehicles which are dual-fuel, meaning they can run on either gasoline or CNG.

Unlike the dual-fuel vehicles, the new Civics rely completely on compressed natural gas. These Civics produce negligible amounts of greenhouse gases, the pollutants be-



Parks' new Honda Civics run completely on CNG

lieved to be the major cause of global climate change.

Currently the Hondas are used by OMP's Parks Inspection Program and travel to park sites in all five boroughs. They can be fueled at any of fourteen CNG fueling locations throughout the city, including Flushing Meadows Corona Park. More fueling sites are in the planning stages. Current stations fill to 3000 pounds per square inch (psi), which is enough fuel to travel 150 miles. New stations will fill to 3600 psi, allowing the vehicles to travel over 200 city miles and 250 highway

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CRUMB RUBBER FILLS SAFETY SURFACE GAPS

Gaps between rubber safety surface tiles are unsightly, difficult to repair, and pose trip hazards when they reach a width of 1½". Richard Graham, a member of the Queens In-House Restoration Crew, has developed an innovative method of filling the gaps. Graham mixes granulated rubber with an epoxy binder to make rubber crumb filler for the cracks. Granulated rubber is typically used to repair holes in poured safety surface and is much less expensive than silicone. The Queens Storehouse purchases the binder and rubber granules from Vitricon (631-231-1329). The binder is expensive at \$130 per 5-gallon pail, but it is only necessary to mix a small amount of binder with the crumb rubber. Crumb rubber costs \$21 for a 55-lb. bag. *Call Richard Graham at (718) 699-6732 for additional information. Written by Emily Willits.*



Filled safety surface gap

INNOVATIVE REPAIRS COMBAT SWING VANDALISM

Every day started the same way at a number of playgrounds in midtown and lower Manhattan: Park Supervisors would climb up on their ladders and unwind the swing chains that had been wound around the horizontal pipe of the swingsets the night before.

These days are no longer.

In April of this year, Maintenance Worker Paul Mercado of Manhattan Districts 6 & 8 and Park Supervisor Harry Greenberg of Manhattan District 3C developed a simple and effective deterrent to vandals who toss swings over swingset frames. Mercado and Greenberg installed a piece of reinforced rubber hose about 30" long around the top of the chain that supports the swing seat. They kept the hose in place with a nut and bolt installed near the lower end of the hose. The bolt passes through the hose and through a link in the swing's chain, preventing the hose from sliding down the chain.

According to Mercado, the innovation has proved to be vandal-resistant so far. Prospective vandals would have to climb eight feet up the chain to remove the bolt.

Mercado and Greenberg used old reinforced water hose to secure the swing chains. The hose is Boston Bosflex 1" (2.54 mm) I. D. 4SP 200 P.S.I.W.P. It is reinforced with four spiral of cotton fabric and has an inner diameter of 1". The hose is manufactured by the Dana Corporation, whose local distributor is United Rubber Supply, located in lower Manhattan (212-233-6650). It can be purchased in lengths of less than 450 feet for \$0.94 per linear foot. Full reels cost \$0.75 per linear foot, or \$338 per reel. *For additional information, contact Paul Mercado at (212) 794-6569 or Harry Greenberg at (212) 387-7684. Written by Marc Dember.*



Rubber hose protects swing chains

Parks began purchasing dog-resistant swings in 1998 to avoid the bite damage inflicted on traditional swings by attack dogs and their owners, who used the swings as attack targets to train their pets. Despite the rigidity and toughness of the new polypropylene swings, dog owners still use the swings to train their dogs. The resulting teeth marks can make the seats unusable. The damage varies from small dents and nicks that can cut children to large gashes and burrs on the surface of the swings.

In winter of this year, the Bronx Shops discovered an inexpensive way to repair damage inflicted on dog-resistant swings. Bronx Supervisor of Mechanics Bill Finer and his mechanics experimented with a high temperature torch to heat up plastic seats that had been gnawed by dogs. The heat from the torch causes the plastic to soften, enabling the mechanics to smooth out rough protrusions. Finer and his crew have found that dents and burrs of up to 1/8" in depth can be corrected this way. Unfortunately, the repair method does not work as well on heavier protrusions.

To repair a swing, the mechanics hold the torch about 4" from the swing surface and move it slowly back and forth. The plastic melts in a small pool. The melted polypropylene tends to level itself. However, Bronx mechanics have also used metal blades to smooth out and spread the melted plastic. It is not necessary to remove swings from their frames to repair them using a torch. The swings can be used by children as soon as the molten plastic cools, which usually takes about 15 minutes.

Finer and his crew use a Bernzomatic Trigger Start Torch Kit containing a portable torch, trigger starter, and a 16-oz. MAPP gas cylinder to repair the swings. The kit is available at Home Depot for \$39.00. Refill cylinders can be purchased from Home Depot for \$6.97. Because working with a torch is dangerous, this type of repair should only be done by skilled mechanics wearing proper protective gear. The swing area should be closed off during repairs. *For further information about using portable torches to repair dog-resistant swings, contact Bill Finer, Bronx Supervisor of Mechanics, at (718) 430-1881. Written by Marc Dember.*

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miles. A CNG vehicle can be fueled in the same amount of time as a gasoline vehicle.

In addition to being clean and environmentally-friendly, CNG is cheaper than gasoline fuel. For five gallons of gasoline, the City spends \$6.45, versus \$4.15 for the equivalent amount of natural gas. Each new CNG vehicle cost approximately \$20,000.

Along with piloting all-CNG vehicles, plans are underway for Parks to pilot other alternative fuel vehicles. With the help of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), Parks recently tested a new hybrid gasoline-electric Toyota Prius, a vehicle which passed California's most stringent emissions tests. *For more information about Parks vehicle acquisitions, contact Dan "Frolic" Froehlich at (212) 360-8221 or Ron "Supervisor" Weber at (212) 410-8395. Written by Geoff Hash.*

SHARE YOUR INNOVATIONS!

Do you have ideas that you know would improve the performance of our agency? If you have suggestions for this newsletter or have recently implemented an innovative idea, please contact Parks's R & D Team at (212) 360-8298.

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Newsletter edited by Emily Willits, 9/13/00