Daphne Yun  
Gateway National Recreation Area  
210 New York Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10305

Re: East and West Pond Stewardship Plan

Dear Daphne Yun,

As a regular visitor to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, I have enjoyed birding there for years and have considered it an oasis within the city. Recently, however, I have noticed signs of neglect that must be addressed if the refuge is to be a healthy ecosystem and a desirable destination for both birds and other wildlife as well as people. It can’t be those things if the intention is to let it evolve “naturally.” It must be taken care of by professionals who have the appropriate skills, experience, and interests and who understand how to actively manage to a resource plan.

I noticed these issues on a recent visit and I had some unanswered questions:

* Invasive plant species encroaching on native plants everywhere
* Overgrowth of vegetation in general but especially at designated sites with benches so sight lines are limited
* Paths that are not meant to be walked on. Why keep these? Paths that have been overtaken by vegetation
* Lack of maintenance of broken benches, fences, and signage
* Many of the nest boxes look worn. Is anyone maintaining the nest boxes? They need to be cleaned out, repaired, or replaced. I do hope you are not planning to remove them
* Where are the bird feeders that were there for years? Please install bird feeders and keep them clean. The birds will still migrate and the public will be grateful to see these birds up close
* Where are the terrapins? They used to nest there
* I noticed raccoons in the nest box at Big John’s Pond that was intended for Barn Owls, a very sensitive species
* The industrial gravel on top of the pathway around the West Pond is impossible to walk on, uncomfortable, and noisy
* There are lawns near the visitor center that were once maintained as a butterfly/pollinator zone. It’s a missed opportunity to keep the lawns and I never see anything there anymore
* The valve system at the East Pond is notoriously malfunctioning. Something must be done to replace it.

These are some of the most obvious issues that I noted. I wonder if a group effort, a collaboration among interested local organizations, could get JBWR back on track to be “the Jewel of the Gateway.”

Sincerely,

Your Name