



# REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION, INC.

*... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.*

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### REGIONAL PLAN DEPLORES APPARENT ABANDONMENT OF GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA PROPOSAL BY U.S.

"The Gateway National Recreation Area proposal should not be abandoned by the federal government," Regional Plan Association declared today in response to the Nixon Administration's decision to dispose of a major segment of the proposed park, Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook in New Jersey.

A plan for the national park, which would combine the unused or minimally-used ocean beaches at the entrance to New York harbor, was issued by the U.S. Department of the Interior almost two years ago and called at that time the number one park priority for the federal government. The idea was proposed originally by Regional Plan Association.

A statement by Regional Plan President, John P. Keith, on the proposed disposition of Fort Hancock follows:

"In his State of the Union message on January 23, the President of the United States declared: 'And not only to meet today's need but to anticipate those of tomorrow, I will put forward the most extensive program ever proposed by a President of the United States to expand the nation's parks, recreation areas, open spaces in a way that truly brings parks to the people where the people are. For only if we have a legacy of parks will the next generation have parks to enjoy.'

"Within one week of the President's declaration, the Bureau of Budget and

Management has informed the General Services Administration that it can dispose of Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook in New Jersey, one of the major components of the proposed Gateway National Recreation Area.

"Matched with this action, the President's choice of words is ironic because 'parks where the people are' was the slogan of the 200 community organizations who in 1963 successfully persuaded the City of New York to acquire Breezy Point, another proposed component of the Gateway park, at the tip of the Rockaway Peninsula. The City has not had the money to develop it for large-scale use.

"The unique aspect of the Gateway National Recreation Area is the lack of acquisition costs. All land is owned by federal, State or City governments. The tremendous inflation of land costs that has plagued almost every other recently established national park is avoided.

"Fifteen million people live within a two-hour drive of the park, seven percent of the whole nation. Upward of a half-million people a day would be able to use the Gateway's swimming, fishing, boating, recreational and cultural facilities at the completion of the 10-year development program proposed by the Department of the Interior in 1968. Fifty million people a year would avail themselves of the facilities, according to the Department of the Interior. The cost would be \$20 million a year--40¢ per user--over 10 years, when development would be completed. Never has the federal government been able to serve so many people with recreational facilities of high quality for so little money.

"According to the rules for disposition of surplus federal property, the federal government has asked the State of New Jersey if it wishes to acquire Fort Hancock. The Governor has indicated that he will acquire it, but he still hopes the federal government will take it back for the Gateway park. Even though federal legislation enables the State to acquire the Fort for a nominal sum, New Jersey's financial condition seems likely to preclude its development.

"If the Gateway proposal is cast away, many aspects of the plan will be lost even if New Jersey and New York City eventually prepare their holdings for limited use. For example, there probably would be no ferry trips to the parks, the beaches would not be managed as a unit to balance their use and offer varied types of recreation, and nature education promised under the Department of Interior plan would be lost. Overcrowded existing beaches will become more crowded still.

"The decision to sell Fort Hancock apparently was made before the New Secretary of the Interior Rogers Morton had an opportunity to review the program. We urge that he and the President reconsider this decision and instead send to Congress the necessary legislation to establish the Gateway National Recreation Area so that Congress can schedule hearings this year. In turn, we urge the New Jersey and New York members of Congress to use their influence to see that such legislation is moved through Congress in 1971.

Regional Plan Association is a 42-year-old civic organization working for a more efficient and enjoyable urban region surrounding the Port of New York and for wide opportunities for all its residents.

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# THE REGION'S AGENDA

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ADMINISTRATION BACKS AWAY FROM GATEWAY PROPOSAL - page 2

## RPA POSITION BACKED BY NATIONAL ACADEMIES:

Start STOL, Consolidate Schedules, Sharply Reduce Private Flying to Prevent Kennedy Expansion or Fourth Airport

The report of the National Academies of Science and Engineering on the possibility of expanding Kennedy Airport further into Jamaica Bay concluded: (1) extensive expansion into the Bay would be too costly from an ecological and recreational viewpoint; (2) there is no evidence that we will need a fourth airport in the Region if (3) duplicate commercial flights are eliminated, general aviation is sharply reduced and rapid improvements made in air traffic control systems. These should be done. In the meantime, (4) land for a fourth airport should be reserved but not used until clearly demonstrated that it is needed. And (5) alternative systems for inter-city transportation like V/STOL (vertical and short take-off and landing planes) and high speed trains should be considered.

The Port Authority responding to the study ruled out expansion into Jamaica Bay, indicated it was working on plans for a STOLport, agreed with the recommendations on noise suppression, repeated it's position on the need for a fourth airport and stated that it had no additional plans for further reducing general aviation at the three major airports.

The conclusions of the National Academies are identical with Regional Plan's recommendations of two years ago! RPA urges their implementation. A fourth airport should be avoided if possible to save over \$1 billion in capital expenditures, 20 square miles needed for the airport itself, over 200 square miles that would be impacted with noise too loud for normal conversation, and greatly increased operating inefficiency for both airlines and passengers.

We recommend that:

1. The Port of New York Authority immediately again raise landing fees for general

aviation during peak hours. The scarce commodity at the airports is time on the runway during peak periods. General aviation uses as much time as larger planes. It should pay its real cost, with the possible exception of air taxis (just under half the general aviation plane movements) because they feed airliners. But even air taxis should pay their full cost if the alternative to their subsidy is a new airport. Air taxi service could be part of a future STOL system.

2. The federal government should expedite research and investment in air traffic control.

3. We support the Port Authority's move to build a STOLport. This is a regional, not a City facility; the Port Authority, not the City, should build it. Tri-State Transportation Commission should now prepare a regional STOLport plan capable of handling all short range flights by the year 2000 so the first STOLports will fit into an ultimate system. Other site considerations: there should be (1) room for expansion, (2) no conflict with present or zoned uses nearby, (3) existing or potential mass transit to Manhattan and Newark, (4) no conflict with especially valuable recreation or housing sites on the Hudson River.

4. Since the New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority now owns Stewart Airport (a recently deactivated airbase near Newburgh in Orange County) and will serve it with high speed rail from Manhattan, this constitutes a reserve site for possible overflow at the three major airports and for local airline and freight traffic. The development pattern for Newburgh should, therefore, reflect the needs of a medium-sized airport.

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# THE REGIONS AGENDA



## NEXT STEPS TO ACHIEVE GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

The next two weeks will be crucial in determining whether legislation to establish the Gateway National Recreation Area, (Breezy Point, Sandy Hook, Jamaica Bay and the Staten Island beaches) can be guided through Congress during the current session.

Despite Secretary of Interior Morton's assurance to Mayor Lindsay that he favors the Gateway National Recreation Area there is yet no evidence that the Administration intends to move it forward. The proposed legislation has been incarcerated in The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for almost 10 months, although Interior and the Senators from New York and New Jersey have tried to dislodge it. Then the General Services Administration ordered Fort Hancock (part of Sandy Hook) designated as surplus to federal needs. Only two weeks earlier a high Interior official told RPA there was nothing new to report on Gateway. According to law, New Jersey was given first refusal of Fort Hancock, but only 11 days to decide! (The Governor said he would acquire it but hoped the U.S. would take it back for Gateway.)

And, on the very day that Secretary Morton assured Mayor Lindsay of his interest in Gateway as a national park, the President, in his message on the environment, identified Sandy Hook as one of the natural areas to be released for local development.

If the Gateway proposal is rejected, many aspects of the plan will be lost even if

New Jersey and New York City eventually prepare their holdings for limited use. For example, there probably would be no ferry trips to the parks, the beaches would not be managed as a unit to balance their use and offer varied types of recreation, and nature education promised under the Department of Interior plan would be lost. Other existing beaches will become more overcrowded.

Consequently, if Gateway National Recreation Area is to be realized, it will depend upon action by the congressional delegation of the two states--New York and New Jersey. Several congressmen have introduced legislation. A similar move is underway in the Senate. Within two weeks, it is anticipated, all of the congressmen and senators in the two states will be asked to co-sponsor proposed legislation.

Major newspapers of the Region--New York Times, The Record (Bergen, Passaic and Rockland Counties), Newark News, The Long Island Press--and WNBC-TV and WINS have strongly challenged the Administration's decision to relinquish Fort Hancock. Now it is up to conservation, recreation and community organizations to urge the President and Secretary Morton to advance legislation for Gateway. If they do not, senators and congressmen from the Region will have to pursue an independent legislative route by introducing and supporting legislation, securing early hearings and passage before the end of this session of Congress.