



GATEWAY
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NAVY LAND GRAB DEPRIVES CITY OF NATIONAL PARK LAND

The Gateway Citizens Committee, the Parks Council, the Sloop Clearwater and the Natural Resources Defense Council today charged that the Navy plans a land grab which will deprive the public and Gateway National Recreation Area of the shorefront at Fort Wadsworth.

According to the Navy's draft supplemental environmental impact statement on the Staten Island homeporting of the U.S.S. Iowa issued in December 1985, the Navy has put forward a plan that includes seizing all of Fort Wadsworth, a 227-acre former Army base on the Staten Island side of the Verrazano-Narrows, for Navy housing and recreational uses. This action could end forever the dream of a shorefront national park on Staten Island.

"Congress declared in 1972 that the bayfront beaches of Fort Wadsworth would become part of Gateway National Recreation Area," stated Marian Heiskell, former chairman of the official Advisory Commission and currently serving as New York Co-Chairman of the Gateway Citizen's Committee.

"Instead, the Navy wants the shorefront for its exclusive recreational use. Fort Wadsworth is large enough for both park

and Navy use. We want to share Fort Wadsworth; the Navy wants it all."

Fort Wadsworth, the Navy says, is needed to provide housing, PX and recreation facilities for the Navy personnel who will work on the Iowa and at Stapleton. The Navy wants the shorefront not for housing, but for a private recreational area. "But this land was dedicated for an urban national park by Congress in 1972. That commitment will be violated if the Navy does not allow the shorefront to be turned over to the Department of the Interior," declared Terry Benbow, of the Gateway Citizens Committee.

The Fort Wadsworth shorefront is the northern terminus of the proposed shorefront national park running seven miles from Fort Wadsworth to Great Kills. The Fort Wadsworth section was the key parcel because it formed the "gateway" of Gateway National Recreation Area. "The people of New York City can share the shorefront with the Navy," stated Judith Spektor, Executive Director of the Parks Council. "With the Navy on the upland and the national park on the shorefront, the beautiful bayfront, shore and historic structures will be open to everyone."

The groups sued the Army and Navy in 1980 over their failure at that time to turn over Fort Wadsworth to the Department of the Interior. The case is pending in Brooklyn Federal Court. Ross Sandler, an attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, said that the groups hoped that the Navy would alter its plans for Fort Wadsworth. "If not, the groups intend to take legal action against the Navy," he said.

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