

# Brooklyn Bridge Beach

## Key Facts

- The best beach in Manhattan
- In an neighborhood with limited recreational space
- Easy to open up to the public
- Likely to be very popular
- Asset to the community
- Could be improved



# EDC Feasibility Study

## Conclusions

“In lieu of direct contact, we recommend alternative engagement strategies, such as fishing overlooks ... shallow wading pools independent of the river”

“The water quality in the lower East River is not likely to be suitable for water contact activities”

“High current speeds ... exceed the comfortable limit for recreational kayaking”

“East River's busy vessel traffic ... a very challenging and dangerous condition for public access to the water”

# EDC Feasibility Study

## Missing Items

- Analysis of neighborhood needs
- Analysis of other beaches in NY Harbor
- Analysis of existing beach usage in NY Harbor
- Analysis of existing recreational use of East River
- Analysis of effective solutions to enhance the beach
- Analysis of benefits of opening the beach as it is
- Analysis of current state of nearby CSOs
- References

# Neighborhood Needs

## Recreational Space

- CB1 has 0.5 acres per 1,000 people.
- CB3 has 0.7 acres per 1,000 people
- NYC average is 1.5 acres per 1,000 people
- NY State recommends 2.5 acres per 1,000 people

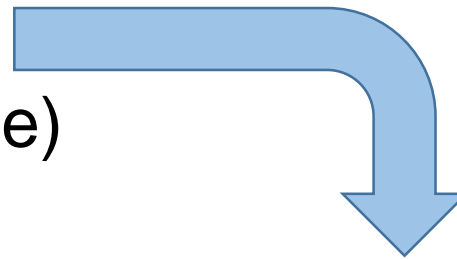
## Other Issues

- Rapidly growing population (CB1)
- Lack of affordable access to the outdoors

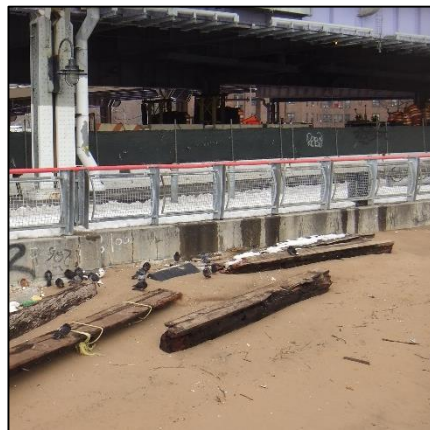
# Opening the Beach

## Action Items

- Remove large items (free)  
Are a navigation hazard
- Remove small items (free)  
Volunteers available
- Install gate (cheap)
- Install ramp (cheap)



Debris on beach before vs. after Jan/23 storm

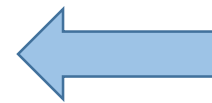


The beach could be opened summer 2016

# Enhancing the Beach

## Feasibility Study

- Artificial Islands
- Wave Fences
- Floating Breakwaters

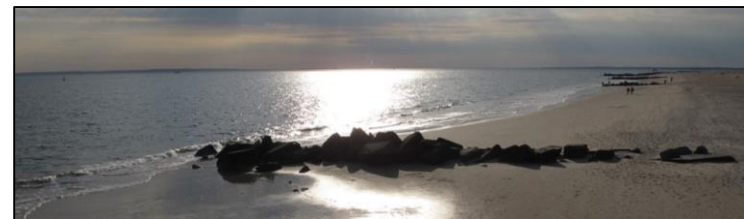


All expensive  
and impractical

## Better

- Groynes: Affordable, ecological, and removable
- Already used extensively in New York City
- Naturally traps moving sand
- Popular worldwide

Coney Island



# Public Access

“To ensure the active management and supervision of the site ... proposes an urban beach concession”

## Response

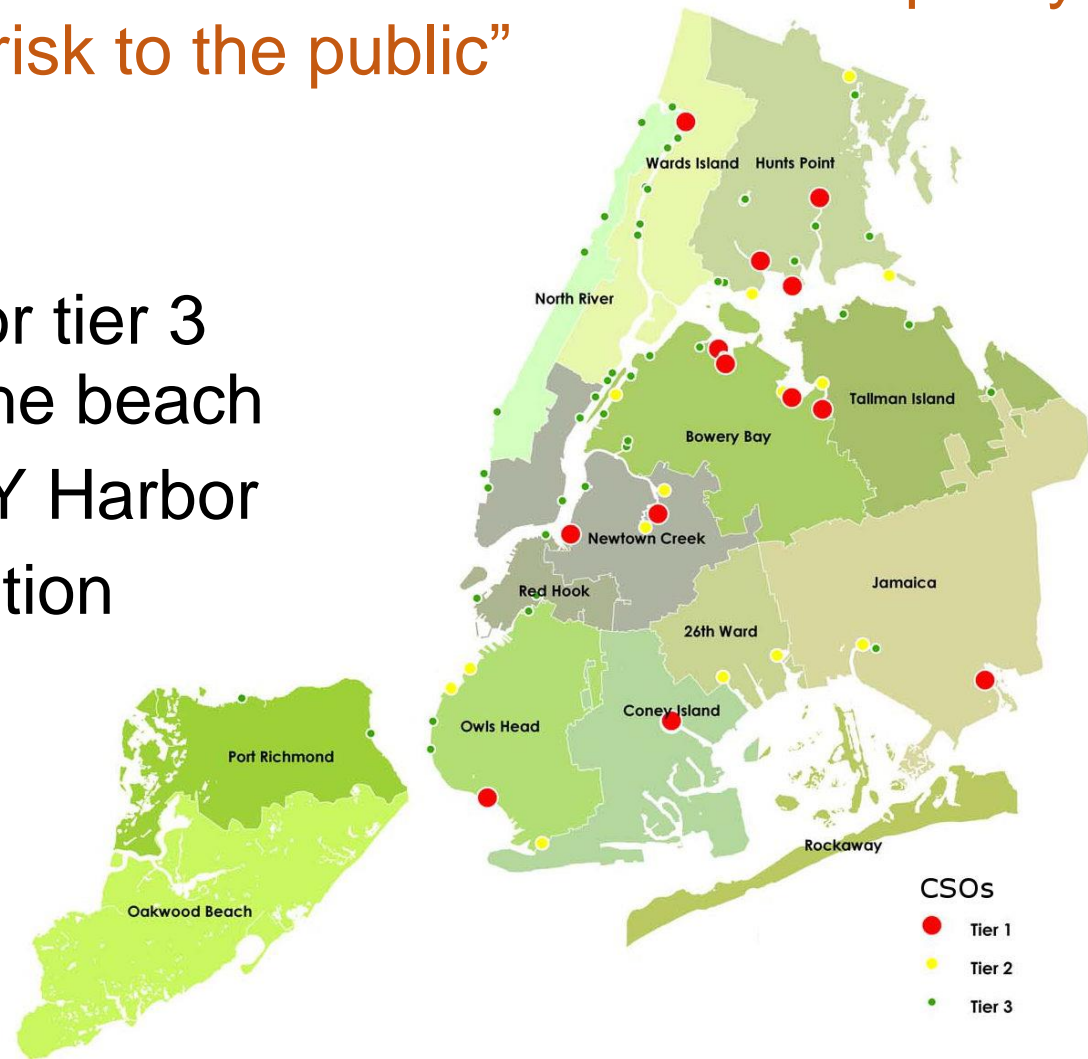
- Public funds should not be used for a private beach
- We should lower barriers to accessing the outdoors, especially to those who can least afford
- 40% of CB3 residents get public assistance
- A free beach would provide more economic value:
  - ◆ Attract tourists to area
  - ◆ Enhance “Green NYC” brand

# East River Water Quality

“The presence of the CSOs and associate water quality may also present a risk to the public”

## Response

- No tier 1, tier 2, or tier 3 CSOs are near the beach
- >450 CSOs in NY Harbor
- Smartphone solution





# East River Currents

“High current speeds ... exceed the comfortable limit for recreational kayaking”

## Response

- The currents are the attraction, not the problem
- The fact that they go both ways is especially useful
- Hundreds of other recreational rivers are way faster

Faster than the East River



# East River Recreation

“The East River’s tides and currents are of concern when proposing programs that promote human activity on and in the water”

## Existing Boating Programs

- Brooklyn Bridge Park Boathouse
- Brooklyn Kayak Guides
- Downtown Boathouse (Governors Island)
- Harbor Lab, Long Island City
- Long Island City Community Boathouse
- North Brooklyn Boat Club
- Red Hook Boaters
- Rocking the Boat
- Stuyvesant Cove Kayaking

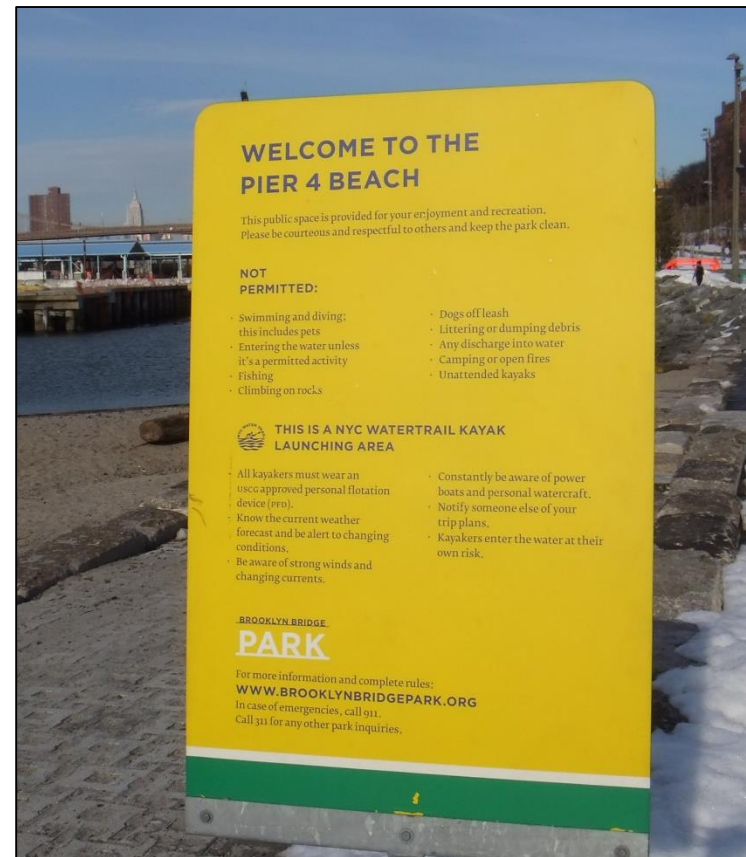
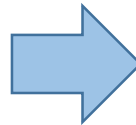
**Many thousands of people kayak on the East River every year**

# Signage

“Because of safety considerations, informational signage on currents and slack tide patterns should be provided for recreational boaters”

## Response

- Simple signage is better
- Brooklyn Bridge Park



# Commercial Water Traffic

“East River's busy vessel traffic ... a very challenging and dangerous condition for public access to the water”

## Response

- Irrelevant to use of the beach only
- Harbor is safer than the streets
- It is a big harbor with little traffic compared to the streets of NYC
- Other harbor cities:
  - ◆ Miami
  - ◆ Seattle
  - ◆ Sydney
  - ◆ Auckland

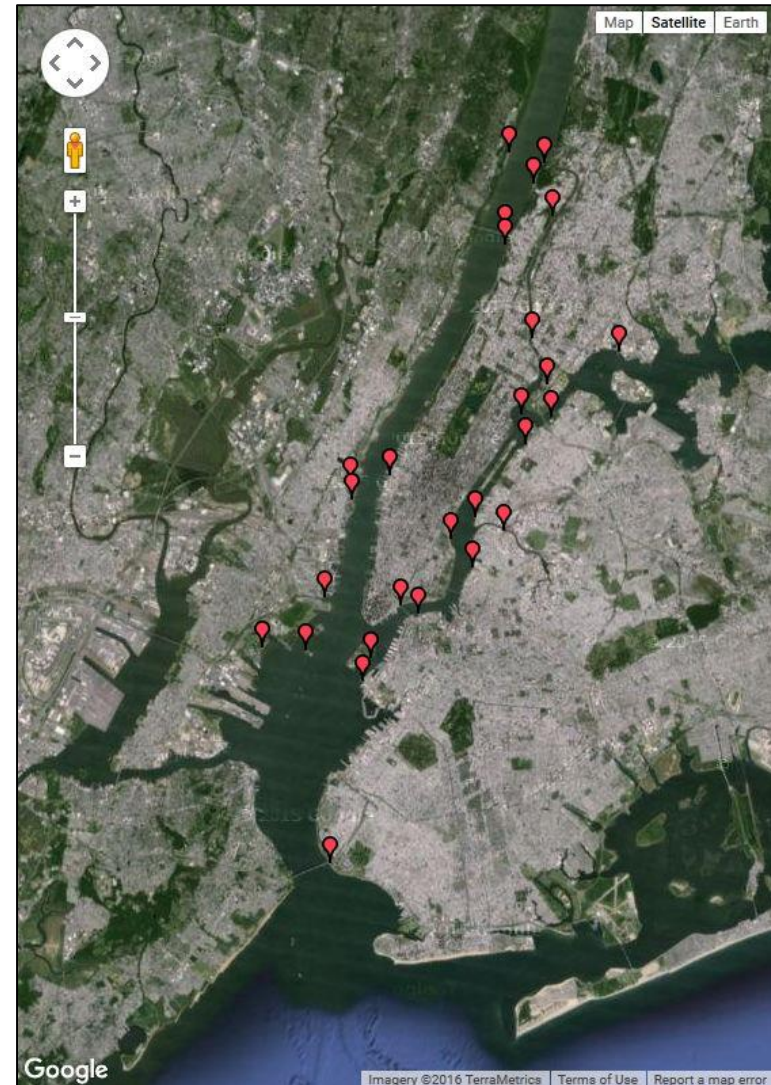
If this is safe, then using the beach is safe



# NY Harbor Beaches

## Nearby Beaches

- There are four popular public beaches within two miles of Brooklyn Bridge Beach:
  - ◆ Brooklyn Bridge Park (3)
  - ◆ Red Hook (1)
- Others on East River:
  - ◆ Stuyvesant Cove
  - ◆ Astoria



# NY Harbor Beaches

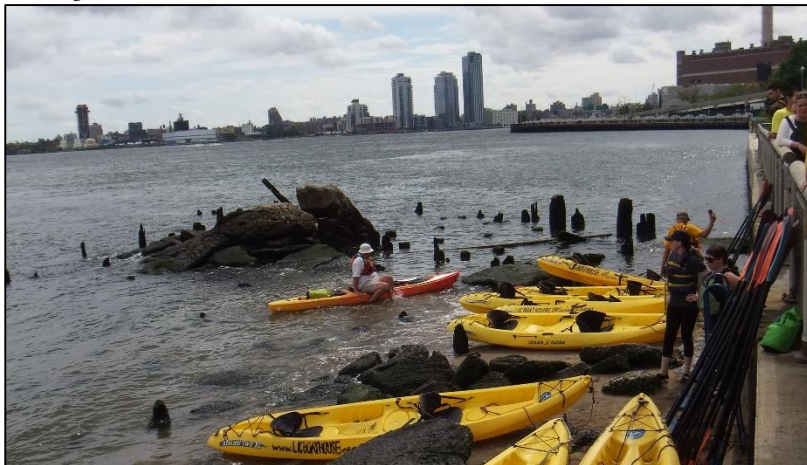
Hoboken Cove Park, NJ



Valentino Park, Red Hook



Stuyvesant Cove, Manhattan



Hallet's Cove, Astoria



# Beaches for Everybody

Brooklyn Bridge Park



Brooklyn Bridge Beach

Page 15 of 19

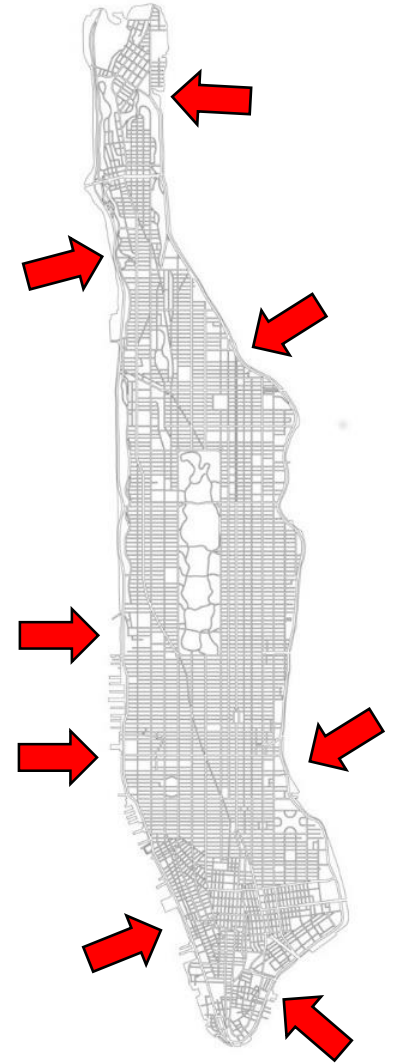
# Protecting Manhattan

## Problem

- Decaying concrete bulkheads
- Lack of recreational space
- Not enough money

## Solution

- Install small groynes in coves
- Let beaches form naturally
- Open beaches to public





# Safe Urban Harbors

The safe capacity of any body of water (for recreational use) is limited by how many people can get off the water in five minutes

## Numbers

- Population of Manhattan: 1,600,000
- Safe capacity, Central Park: > 100,000 people
- Safe capacity, Manhattan waters: < 1,000 people
- Latent demand (to use the harbor) is enormous
- Beaches have higher capacity than docks
- Beaches better for beginner kayakers

>50,000 kayakers  
in Manhattan 2015

# Design for Health

## Issues

- Making safe public spaces for seniors
- Gender equity – recreational spaces
- Encourage an active outdoor lifestyle

## Finally

- The waterfront we build today will last 50 years
- Do not assume technological stasis
- Plan for the future



# References

## Links

- CB1 Population & Park Space: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/lucds/mn1profile.pdf>
- CB3 Population & Park Space: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/lucds/mn3profile.pdf>
- Recommended Park Space per Person: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/cb3docs/fy\\_2017\\_needs\\_statement.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/cb3docs/fy_2017_needs_statement.pdf)
- Whitewater kayaking image: <http://www.wetplanetwhitewater.com/package/sit-on-top-kayaking-trips/>
- Population of Manhattan: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan>
- #Kayakers from CB1 & CB3 in 2015: [www.downtownboathouse.org](http://www.downtownboathouse.org)
- Coney Island Image: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coney\\_Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coney_Island)
- Beaches of NY Harbor: <http://www.newyorkharborbeaches.org/>
- NYC DEP CSO Listing: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/stormwater/combined\\_sewer\\_overflow.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/stormwater/combined_sewer_overflow.shtml)
- Number of CSOs: <http://www.riverkeeper.org/campaigns/stop-polluters/sewage-contamination/cso/>
- Packlite kayak: <http://www.advancedelements.com/packliteqr.html>

## Author

Graeme Birchall

Email: [Graeme\\_Birchall@verizon.net](mailto:Graeme_Birchall@verizon.net)

Phone: (201) 963-0071

7-Feb-2016