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## White Island Fact Sheet

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### **History** –

The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation has been funded to create new grassland habitat on the upland areas of White Island as mitigation for the construction of the nearby Gateway Retail Center. The project is a condition of permits issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for Gateway Center. The Parks Department's work seeks to support several important bird species by replacing low grassland bird habitat that was affected by the Gateway project.

There are 2 phases to the reconstruction of White Island. Phase 1, which is already complete, involved the clearing of all vegetation above the 10' contour line, except for the two existing grassland areas, so that an updated survey could be performed. This survey is being used to finalize designs for the habitat creation project. Phase 2 will involve the clearing of remaining phragmites, an exotic invasive wetland plant with low habitat value, as well as trees and shrubs below the 10' contour line. This phase of the project will also include the stabilization of the island's shoreline edges and the capping of the island with clean sand. The sand substrate will provide a more hospitable environment for the native grassland habitat that the project proposes to create and will deter the reemergence of phragmites. The final element of work will involve the installation of the desired grassland plants.

### **Project Goals**

1. To provide permanent solutions for stabilizing the edges of the island to ensure that garbage will not breach into the surrounding creeks.
2. Cap the Island with approximately 120,000 – 150,000 cubic yards of clean sand to create a low grassland habitat for nesting birds.

The following list contains the targeted species of birds for grassland mitigation:

- Upland Sandpiper
- Short-Eared Owl
- Vesper Sparrow
- Grasshopper Sparrow
- Bobolink
- Savannah Sparrow
- Henslow's Sparrow
- Northern Harrier
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Horned Lark

All of the above species are indigenous to the area and utilize grassland habitat for cover, foraging, or hunting. The White Island Mitigation project will provide grassland habitat to serve all of the targeted bird species listed above.

### **Project Timeline**

- September 2007 – All phragmites above the 10' contour line was sprayed by a NYSDEC certified applicator.
- Spraying performed on days with low wind and no expected rain for at least 24 hours to minimize the potential for drift and runoff.
- May 2008 – The phase one clearing of phragmites, trees and shrubs commences.
- June 2008 – Survey work begins.
- July 2008 – Clearing of vegetation above the 10' contour line is completed.
- August 2008 – Survey work is completed.
- Winter 2008 – Herbicide was applied with sponge and/or backpack sprayer to the stumps of the trees and shrubs which were cut down.
- Late September/October 2009 - A second application of herbicide for the *Phragmites* will be necessary this fall. Community members requested that a minimum 30 day notice be given to the community and that the spraying not commence until the end of the boating season.
- January 2009 - Community members requested additional soil / water testing be performed on White Island. Community members submitted a map with specific locations based on areas with visual concerns.
- May 2009 - DPR performs additional testing.
- July 2009 - Testing results forwarded to community members and discussed at the meeting with community, DPR and NYSDEC. NYSDEC confirms that levels do not pose any threat to the community or wildlife.
- July 2009 to September 2009 - Sand is currently being delivered to the island via dredge and barge
- August 15, 2009 – Final White Island Grassland Mitigation Design submission to NYSDEC.
- NYSDEC approval of the design for the reconstruction is required prior to the commencement of reconstruction.
- Construction is expected to begin in spring 2010 and last until spring 2011

### **Additional Information**

- A temporary bridge from the golf course to the Island WILL NOT be necessary since a marine based delivery system is being used to move sand onto the island.
  - The sand being delivered is from an Army Corps of Engineer's dredge contract within Rockaway Inlet.
  - Sand that is being stockpiled on the island will not and cannot be moved until plans are approved by NYSDEC and a permit is granted.
  - Community members have requested that the horizontal members from old bridge be removed due to safety concerns. DPR will include this scope as part of the Phase 2 reconstruction contract.
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- All woody material will be cut and grubbed from the island surface in preparation for the grassland creation.
- As part of the Phase 2 construction, the White Island shoreline will be reinforced with three slope treatments:
  1. Armor Stone
  2. Articulated Concrete Block
  3. Cellular Confinement Systems
- Four types of grassland habitat will be created over the island: tall grass meadow, short grass meadow, maritime grassland, and dune planting.