

# Sustainable Southeast Queens

*Balancing social, economic and environmental justice to promote the current and future health of our communities.*



A publication of the Eastern Queens Alliance, Inc.

Vol. 1, Issue No. 3, September, 2014



**Black-eyed Susan flowers in Idlewild Park Preserve.**  
We had an abundance of wildflowers this summer!

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## Slow the Demand! Only Fly When Necessary!

By: Barbara E. Brown, Chairperson

We complain about noise from aircraft and the concomitant air pollution that bombard our communities, yet we fly! We fly near and far! We are told that the demand for air travel is steadily increasing. That means more noise and air pollution! Yet we fly! Yet we drive up the demand for more and more air transportation to often save what really amounts to just a little time. We are willing to jump through all kinds of hoops to travel relatively short distances to get to destinations which are often fairly close, i.e., Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Syracuse, Albany, etc.

Just as cities are trying to curb the amount of vehicular traffic to reduce the carbon foot print, perhaps we need to think about reducing the amount of air travel to help reduce the aviation-related noise and air pollution which are making significant impacts on our health and peace of mind. We are told, "Aviation has reshaped the world we live in—allowing for affordable and rapid travel to almost any point on the globe. In recent years, economic growth and rapid globalization have made air travel affordable to an even larger part of the global population. In this context, demand for aviation, in terms of passenger-miles flown, has grown at a rapid pace..."<sup>1</sup> Just think, if people across the nation who are complaining about airport related noise and air pollution were willing to fly less, were willing to fly only when necessary, to take alternative forms of transportation such as trains, buses, and cars, we could actually slow the increase in demand for aviation.

*Continued on Page 2*

## About the Eastern Queens Alliance, Inc.

The Eastern Queens Alliance (EQA) is a coalition of civic associations that joined forces in 1989 to address problems, issues and concerns that defied boundaries and plagued all or most of our communities. We know that it is working together that we have the strength to confront the issues, negotiate viable solutions, and whenever necessary, agitate to bring pressure to bear to achieve our goals. We are a proactive organization, striving to be ever vigilant to prevent problems before they become entrenched. In doing so, we collectively enlist the aid of elected officials, as well as all of the government and private agencies who are charged with the responsibility and/or have the resources to assist us.

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**Our Vision: A Healthy Southeast Queens**

- Health & Wellness**
- Prosperity/Economic Development**
- Housing & Land Use**
- Peace & Safety**
- Senior Advocacy**
- Going Green/Healthy Environment**
- Community Spirit/Engagement**
- Youth Engagement**



**Envisioning a Sustainable Southeastern**

*The EQA envisions resilient communities armed with proactive members and assertive voices that advocate against everything that threatens to compromise the livelihood of Southeast Queens.*

**Slow the Demand! Only Fly When Necessary!**

*Continued*

If governments, both local and national, put just as much emphasis on investing in, improving and growing other modes of transportation as it does on aviation, we could also slow the demand for air travel.

“This growing demand for air travel has resulted in increasing levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the aviation sector, despite efficiency improvements. Currently, the aviation sector—including both domestic and international travel—accounts for approximately 1.5 percent of global anthropogenic GHG emissions per year. The U.S. accounts for nearly 40 percent of the global GHG emissions from aviation. Barring policy intervention, GHG emissions from aviation are projected to quadruple by 2050.”<sup>1</sup> It’s also wreaking havoc on the health and quality of life of those who live in close proximity (within a 20 mile radius) to airports particularly in large urban areas. Something needs to be done!!!

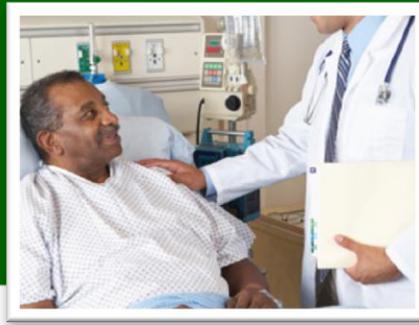
On Sunday, September 21, 2014, one of the largest demonstrations ever against climate change took place in Manhattan. We need to demonstrate against unbridled expansion of those things that are ruining the planet and sacrificing health and the environment for greed, all in the name of technological advancement. We need to not only demand that government and other powers-that-be find ways of making air transportation more palatable to the human environment, but we as human beings need to help in that process. Slow the demand! Only fly when necessary! Fly only when that is the most practicable way to travel! If we all did this, we could help to make a difference, too.

*“Aviation is one of the fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions.”*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/transport/aviation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/transport/aviation/index_en.htm)

<sup>1-2</sup><http://www.c2es.org/technology/factsheet/Aviation>

**By: Barbara E. Brown, Chairperson**





## The Forbidden Talk

### *Holding the Aviation Industry Responsible for its share of Rising Health Care Costs*

By Tamara J. Mitchell

There is an unprecedented, yet underrated, issue facing Americans today that requires immediate attention and advocacy. Look up in the sky. It's no bird, it's a plane! And it may be one of the most underrated causes of our poor health and exhaustion of our health care resources.

Aviation pollution is one of the most prominent environmental and public health issues facing the world today—its top three causes of mortality are cardiovascular disease, cancer and chronic lower respiratory diseases. To put this further into perspective, plane exhaust kills more people than plane crashes; in fact its toxic pollutants kill more than 10,000 annually. With over 70 percent of US population residing

within 20 miles of a major airport and their communities facing a plethora of health problems sourced from the airport industry (especially noise and air pollution), an important question must be asked...Who should bear the burden of the costs? It is imperative that this issue is addressed and this question answered. In the age of health care reform, it will be untenable to not address this problem since it could possibly compromise any resiliency that any reform tries to establish.

Although airports continue to be epicenters of poison circles, holding the industry accountable can only be done through federal agencies and the power of the people. Surprisingly unlike other industries, the aviation industry has

avoided strict regulations that would mandate and incentivize the industry to become more environmentally friendly.

It is imperative that this be addressed since the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that air pollution was the cause of seven million deaths in 2012. This is significant and it's time to make the call for action because the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) projects that air travel will nearly double in the next 20 years.

Advocacy for stricter regulations under the current Clean Air Act (CAA) and the establishment of a health fund through aviation taxes will significantly help affected communities. Due to recent amendments, the CAA will yield more than \$82 billion in Medicare,

***“The Aviation Industry’s profit is up 74 percent from last year’s record of \$10.6 billion; it’s time health care got its cut of the profit.” ---Tamara J. Mitchell***

Medicaid and other health care savings for America through 2021, but this is less than 2 percent of the \$4.8 trillion in costs the United States will spend on healthcare in the same year. This is almost 20 percent, or one-fifth, of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States economy. The aviation industry highlighted post-tax profits of \$18 billion this year (now accounting for 1 percent of global GDP). This is up 74 percent from last year's record of \$10.6 billion; it's time health care got its cut of the profit.

Airport operations are an important factor in our economy, for business, employment, exports, imports and tourism. However, these benefits must be weighed against the impact air travel is having on the quality of life and the health of the public on the local and global level. It's only fair that we start balancing aviation liability with our healthcare checkbooks and the best way to do that is through an established health fund. Certainly this will not solve the healthcare crisis, but it will definitely help. Taxation will promote clean air technologies, despite the aviation

industry's ability to keep up due to overwhelming demand.

It's time to face the inconvenient truth and address aviation pollution and its impact on our health care system. We must unite as a community and write our Senators' and other officials, before we're left gasping for air without a healthcare system built to assist us. It's time for the aviation industry to claim their baggage and pay the overweight fees for the burdens placed on healthcare costs. We need an aviation industry sponsored health care fund now!

# Did You Get Your Dose Of Nature Today?

## How 20 Minutes of Nature a Day, Keeps Mental Illness at Bay

By Shannon Hall

Did you know that spending more time outdoors can positively affect and improve your mental health? Years ago such a claim would have been hard to believe, but we now have the science to support it. Breakthrough studies performed in the field of neuroscience showcases a world of possibilities exists for all those affected with mental health illnesses and those who are undiagnosed.

A study performed in January of 2014 by the American Chemical Society concluded that exposure to nature directly improves mental health. One experiment included students taking a 15-minute walk-through indoor hallways or outside along a tree-lined river path. A second experiment consisted of students examining photographic scenes of buildings or landscapes, while the third experiment asked students to imagine themselves in a variety of scenarios including being both indoors and outdoors, active and inactive and with others or alone. The final part of the experiment recorded the students' mood and energy levels, which were then documented through diary entries. The results were individuals who spent time in nature experienced improved energy levels and increased feelings of happiness. Researchers noted that just 20 minutes outdoors a day greatly boosted energy levels and improved one's mood.

Another study from Holland in October of 2009 bolstered this notion. Dutch researchers reported that individuals who lived within 1 kilometer (.6 miles) of a park or wooded area experienced less anxiety and depression. People living in more urban environments had a higher prevalence of 15 of the 24 conditions they were documenting, with the relationship strongest for anxiety disorder and depression. In areas with only 10% of



green space, about 2.6% of people experienced anxiety disorders, compared to 1.8% of people in areas with 90% green space. This was evident for depression as well — 3.2% of people living in more urbanized areas had depression versus 2.4% of those in more rural areas. Children and poor people suffered disproportionately from lack of green acres, the researchers found additionally.

Fortunately for Southeast Queens residents, we have 346 acres of nature that we can take advantage of...Idlewild Park Preserve. The Idlewild Park Preserve System is made up of Springfield Parks, Brookville Park, Public Lands, Hook Creek Wildlife Sanctuary and last but not least, Idlewild Park. The preserve contains both freshwater and tidal wetlands, woodland, meadow, and grassland dune-scrub habitat. Taking advantage of such resources will benefit both of physical and mental health. Get your dose of happiness by visiting one of the Idlewild Park Preserve parks!

### Facts to Support the Theory

- Nature helps to restore the mind from work or studies, helping to improve work performance and satisfaction.
- Urban nature provides a calming and environment and encourages learning, and alertness.
- Green spaces provide places and opportunities for physical activity. Exercise improves cognitive function, learning, and memory.
- Outdoor activities can help alleviate symptoms of Alzheimers, dementia, stress, and depression and improve cognitive function in those recently diagnosed with breast cancer
- Contact with nature helps children to develop cognitive, emotional, and behavioral connections to their nearby environments.
- Nature experiences are important for encouraging imagination and creativity, cognitive and intellectual development, and social relationships
- Symptoms of ADD in children can be reduced through activity in green settings; “green time” can act as an effective supplement to traditional medicinal and behavioral treatments.

Source: University of Washington

# The Importance of Wetlands for Hurricane Protection

By Selina Ortiz

As hurricane season rolls around, it is important to think about how you will go about protecting your family and home. You may be surprised to hear that the conservation of wetlands has a lot to do with that process.

Wetlands provide many ecological services, such as water filtering or purification, shoreline stabilization, flood protection, and groundwater recharge. They also provide a habitat and spawning ground for many types of fish and wildlife. These natural benefits of wetlands hold great economic value, although I must admit you cannot put an accurate economic value on the environment.

Wetlands are a community's first defense against a hurricane. Wetland vegetation act as a natural barrier and buffer, reducing the height and intensity of waves. The slowing of the incoming waters promotes sedimentation, or depositing/ "fall out" of small particles in the water, which provides positive feedback and sediments for the marsh plants. This sedimentation helps promote root stabilization and thus, indefinitely stabilizing our coastline, preventing erosion and building our coastlines.

Wetlands protect against flooding by preventing water intrusion, providing groundwater storage in their deep rooted matted systems which act like natural sponges. No other environment



compares to Wetlands when it comes to water storage.

Wetlands are unique because they regulate the natural flow and release of water over time, reducing peak flood levels. These natural flood protection services reduce the risk of property damage and more importantly, loss of lives.

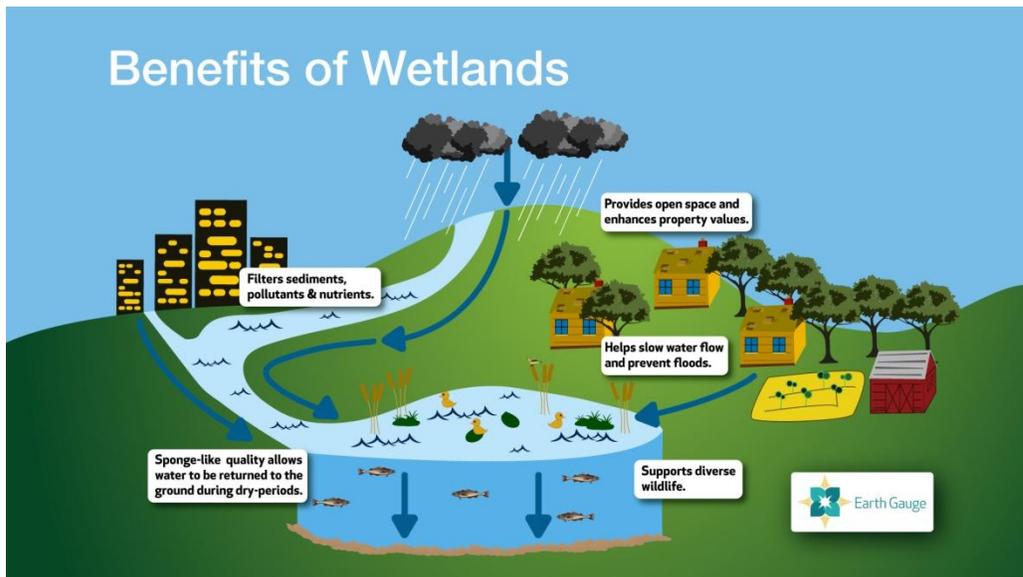
While wetlands provide many protective and valuable services, a wetland that is damaged or degraded can only partially do its job. Many wetland environments are lost by human actions such as agricultural development; the introduction of non-native species; logging, mining or construction; and, hazardous run off,

of nutrients and an increase in pollutants in the water.

Wetlands are at particular risk for destruction, as they are not typically spoken about as much as other habitats or considered as valuable. This stigma makes education very important in the conservation of wetlands.



If you are interested in keeping your coastal community safe, such as the Springfield Gardens/Rosedale area, research and volunteerism is key. Contact us to join the Idlewild Park Preservation Committee. Check online for local wetland or coastal restoration projects. Stop by or write to your nearest wetland park or preserve, like Idlewild Park Preserve in Springfield Gardens, N.Y. to see if there's any way you can volunteer and get involved in conservation efforts. Encourage and educate your neighbors to do the same. Remember, it is only joined together that we have the power to make a change for the better.



# Is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Effective in the United States? By Bradley Landau



In the late 1960's and early 1970's Congress recognized that the Federal Government's actions may cause significant environmental effects. To check and balance their actions, Congress enacted the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** in December, 1969 and was later signed into law by President Nixon on January 1, 1970.

NEPA became the first major environmental law in the United States, establishing an interdisciplinary framework for environmental planning by Federal agencies, and providing environmental policy, goals, and action-forcing procedures to ensure that the Federal agency decision-makers took environmental factors into account. Although NEPA serves as our country's basic national charter for protection of the environment and is often called the "Magna Carta" of environmental laws, one must question its effectiveness after of its inception over 40 years ago.

To implement NEPA's policies, Congress prescribed a procedure, commonly referred to as "the NEPA process" or "the

environmental impact assessment process." Two major purposes of the NEPA environmental review process are (1) better informed decisions, and (2) citizen involvement, both of which should lead to implementation of NEPA's policies. Congress directed that, to the fullest extent possible, the policies, regulations, and public laws of the United States shall be interpreted and administered in accordance with the policies set forth in NEPA.

In recent times there have been major criticisms of NEPA and its effectiveness, but the question whether NEPA is a true safeguard against the Federal Government's actions is not a hard one to figure out. The realization that the Federal Government acknowledges the important responsibility of NEPA can be seen through the implementation of specific offices dedicated to NEPA policy, a "do, check, recheck" philosophy, and the acknowledgement of environmental awareness, shows that it can be theoretically effective. But is this truly the belief of the majority... who are classified as minority when considering ethnic backgrounds? This is the

to develop their own capacity within a NEPA program in order to develop analyses and documents (or review those prepared by others) to ensure informed decision-making. Although this policy was built in to gain trust of the people, many times over, it not surprisingly creates skepticism. NEPA is built on a strong foundation, but what good is it if polluting parties can manipulate data to their own advantage?

A review of the United States' Federal Courts of Appeal (Federal courts that pertain to NEPA cases), can elucidate the effectiveness of NEPA. In the past decade (2004 to 2013) Federal Courts of Appeal have issued 201 substantive decisions involving implementation of the NEPA by federal agencies. These cases have involved 11 different agencies, including but not limited to, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The government prevailed in 138 of these cases, or 45 percent.



population most often affected by environmental injustice.

Although employees in NEPA offices provide guidance, policy, and procedures for the agency, and often make this information available to the public through sources such as Internet websites, many think this is still not enough. Federal agencies are required

This should provide optimism to communities who are often discouraged from pursuing environmental justice appeals, who may feel like David going up against Goliath. But our power is that we are the majority. The "Magna Carta" of environmental laws in the United States can be effective if we continue to use, understand and challenge it.

# From Garbage to Garden

## A Quick Guide to Composting

By Brandon Anavitate



Imagine moving into a home with a potentially nice backyard, but nothing grows in it but unwanted weeds. That was my home a little less than five years ago. My backyard was nothing, but pebbles. Ok, so that might be a bit of an exaggeration, but it took years of hard back breaking work to make it grow just a bit of grass and some choice flowers. Even to this day my backyard still needs plenty of work to be done on it. However if I was to do a little bit of composting, the amount of work that I would have to do in my backyard would be that much less.

Composting is a nice simple technique used to turn your dying grass into the envy of the neighborhood. Composting is the use of your everyday items and turning them into the cheapest nutrient rich fertilizer you can get. However, if you do not compost correctly, you will be left with nothing, but a pile of muck. If you want to compost for a pretty backyard, you just need to know the basics.

To start a compost pile you will need a place to store your compost and a compost bin for your compost. Most bins can be brought for at lowered prices, but it is possible to make one at home. From my understanding of compost bins, you can use an old garbage bin for storage if you add a few holes to it, but if you want a better idea on how to make a compost bin you can try going to Eartheasy.com for details. It is important to remember that whatever you decide to put into your bin needs a lot of attention. Now that you know that you need a bin, you need to know that autumn is your friend.

The kinds of things that you want to put in your compost bin are easy household items to obtain. If you are making a compost pile then it is safe to assume you have a backyard or at least a front yard, some of your most important materials will be taken from there. Grass cuttings and leaves of all types are easy to use, but weeds are a little more difficult. The weeds can only be used if you take them for your compost pile before they seed and only if you maintain your compost bin. Autumn is the best season for composting for many reasons, but most importantly, it is the time we have the highest abundance of fallen leaves. Your compost pile can never have too many leaves to it. There are more things than leaves that you can add to your compost if you want.

Most food scraps make a good addition to a compost pile unless it is meat, essentially you want to add vegetables and fruit peels to your compost. If you are using corn, make sure to remove it from the cob for the best use. Eggshells make for a good addition to compost, but make sure you are just adding the shell. You can also use old pieces of newspaper and most other types of paper for your compost. If you are a tea drinker then you can add your used tea leaves to your compost pile. Now that you know what to add to your compost, you need to know how much to add.

The rule of thumb for a compost pile is that you need more carbon than nitrogen for your soil. To make it easy to determine if you have the right amount of both just remember that you need more brown material than green. If your bin starts to smell just add some lime or

calcium to it. Your bin needs to be lightly watered and turned on normal basis. If you start your compost pile by the end of autumn, you'll have usable compost by mid-spring. When your compost is ready, just throw it on your yard and wait for the green to grow.

Source:

[http://eartheasy.com/grow\\_compost.html](http://eartheasy.com/grow_compost.html)

COMPOST	
YES	NO
<p>NAPKINS PLATES STRAW COFFEE CUPS CUP SLEEVES LIDS PLASTIC CUPS BOWLS</p>	<p>MEAT DAIRY FOOD COOKED IN OIL RECYCABLES NON-BIODEGRADABLE WASTE</p>

**\*It is important to note that depending on the type of gardening, soil composition and achieved produce, your composting composition may vary. For example, some composting allows for the addition of cooked food and dairy products.**

*A Special Thanks to all EQA Summer Interns!*



**Selina Ortiz**  
Title: SYEP Intern  
Career Goal:  
Neurological  
Specialist



**Brandon Anavitate**  
Title: SYEP Intern  
Career Goal:  
Biology  
Field Educator



**Saha Salim**  
Title: SYEP Intern  
Career Goal:  
Aeronautical  
Engineer



**Brian Eisner**  
Title: Legal Intern  
Career Goal:  
Environmental  
Lawyer

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**Bradley Landau**  
Title: Legal Intern  
Career Goal:  
Animal Rights  
Lawyer

 **October 18, 2014 —10am-2pm**  
*Idlewild Park Preserve's "It's My Park Day!"*

 **October 25, 2014— 1pm-5pm**  
*The Idlewild Wetland and Wildlife Preserve Benefit and Awards Luncheon*  
*Inn at New Hyde Park*  
*214 Jericho Turnpike*  
*New Hyde Park, New York 11040*  
*Call 347-824-2301 for more details.*

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