

Wildland Fire in New York City Gateway National Recreation Area, New York National Fire Plan – Firefighting

Seven fires burned over 175 acres of the Jamaica Bay and Staten Island Units of Gateway National Recreation Area in March and April. The main fuel was phragmites, a common reed that grows over seven feet tall. Pushed by 25-35 mph winds, one fire in Great Kills blistered paint on some houses near the park until engines of the New York City Fire Department doused the flames.

In cooperation with local officials, the Gateway NRA draft Fire Management Plan was put into effect for, “red flag,” days, when particularly low humidity and high winds were forecast. Another contributing factor was the suspicion of arson as the ignition source of some fires in and around the park. Park employees performed pre-suppression patrols and related activities. At least two of the fires were contained sooner as a direct result of the NPS firefighters’ readiness and quick response.

The active fire season created the opportunity for the park to reach out to its neighbors one more way. In conjunction with local government actions, the park will be offering information to homeowners on what they can do to help protect their homes from wildland fire.

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Great Kills Fire viewed from Brooklyn, New York. March 11, 2006 by Michael Williams.