





more
seaway.



Past the Riding Academy, I go by the bonkers
seaside suburban mansions of Hill Basin, with
their towering additions and private docks,
heading towards Canarsie. The road crosses the
bike path here to the parking lot for Canarsie Pier,
built on a concrete peninsula into the bay in 1923
by the New York City Department of Docks as
part of a scheme to bring a commercial port to
Jamaica Bay. The bay was dredged and the
coastline was extended with sand. But the port
never materialized, and the pier, along with most
of the rest of the coastline here, was incorpor-
ated into the National Parks System in the 1970s.
Today fishermen are out on the piercasting lines.
Park rangers lead kayaking trips out on the bay
in the summer. I eat lunch on a bench, fight off
a yellowjacket, and continue on my way.



more
eenway.



Past the Riding Academy, I go by the bonkers
seaside suburban mansions of Mill Basin, with
their towering additions and private docks, with
heading towards Canarsie. The road crosses the
bike path here to the parking lot for Canarsie Pier,
built on a concrete peninsula into the bay in 1923
by the New York City Department of Docks as
part of a scheme to bring a commercial port to
Jamaica Bay. The bay was dredged and the
coastline was extended with sand, but the port
never materialized, and the pier along with most
of the rest of the coastline here, was incorpor-
ated into the National Parks System in the 1920s.
Today fishermen are out on the pier casting lines.
In the summer, I eat lunch on a bench right off
a yellow jacket, and continue on my way.

Fresh Creek

more
conway.

On my right side the bay opens up, on the left
is a six lane highway. The bays are sometimes
overloaded with the traffic and I can see birds flying
overhead, this patch of land contains fuel for
them, it's a tall and many of them are feeding for
their migrations south. If I had turned south at
Flatbush I could have gone over the bridge to
Rockaway and Fort Tilden, where there's a spot
for watching hawks side the thermals south. But
that's for a different day. Today I'm just enjoying
the shade a bit - rest of this spot, that it con-
tains both highway and ecosystem, and has
room for horse, car, and bike.

The bridges over the Gerritsen, Mill Basin, and
Poodogut Basin Inlets were recently rebuilt. For
a long while whole stretches of the bike trail
mainly consisted of narrow spaces between
plastic barriers next to the highway - not my
favorite thing. The new bridges are open now
and the land next to the road has been restored
to a mix of maritime forest and coastal meadows.
Holly is one of the native salt-tolerant species
that grow here.

Fresh Creek

Phragmites australis, known as the common reed, grows in dense groups of stems called stands, which can crowd out other plants in estuaries and wetlands. The most common kind of *Phragmites* found in New York is a non-native strain, introduced from Europe in the late 18th or early 19th century through ships' ballast. They grow tall, up to 15 feet in height, with green or yellow stems, which spread their seeds in late summer through purple flowers at the top of the stem, and are dispersed by long, silky hairs.

The Greenway makes a 19 mile loop around the Bay, linking Brooklyn and southern Queens with the Rockaway Peninsula. The entrance here starts out right near Flushing Beach, a popular spot for kiteboarding; there's a rest stop here where the sand from the beach spills out on the pids. Horseshoe crabs come up onto the sand here to mate in May and June. There's a lot of salt-resistant Goldenrod, and we're low, right next to the water. This part of the path floods during storms, and there's often puddles and debris on the path. Up ahead it narrows a bit, and the fishermen who come to this part of the Bay leave their bikes next to the shoreline with their nets. There's clover, goldenrod, mugwort, and aster growing here, next to large patches of *Phragmites*, the common reed.

The thick stems can block light to other nearby plants, and they can change the ecosystem in saltwater marshes, by out-competing other species of plants, changing the salinity of the margin, and changing the local topography. These changes can then threaten the wildlife that live there. But removing *Phragmites* can make the soil more vulnerable to erosion. The plants are capable of living anywhere that stagnant or slow-moving fresh water is found, including vacant lots, ditches, and along roads, which has helped them to flourish in human-centered landscapes. *Phragmites* will take over any area where the soil has been disturbed.

I cross the inlet known as Fresh Creek into East New York, the farthest edge of Brooklyn. In 1981 it marks the end of Fountain Avenue, where a new trash dump, was designated by the city as a Fresh Creek. Across the next inlet known as Fresh Creek, the Pennsylvania Avenue landfill has been open since 1955. New York has variously dumped its trash directly into the ocean, baled it into fertilizer, burned it, and used it to create real estate. Today we mostly ship our trash somewhere else. But in the twentieth century we mostly left it in piles in obscure parts of the city. The Fountain Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue landfills held residential trash, construction debris, and asbestos incinerator ash. East New York is one of the poorest and most isolated sections of Brooklyn. It's not surprising that this is where the city chose to put its landfills.

Across the highway, residents of the largest affordable housing complex in the U.S. Starrett City, lived. When planning began on the complex residents were going to be able to enjoy the natural beauty of Jamaica Bay. But by the time the complex opened in 1974, they lived next door to a place that housed some 40% of the city's trash. Fires were common, and heavy metals, oil, pesticides, and PCB's ran into the bay. Both landfills were supposed to close in 1974, but the lack of alternative places to send the city's trash delayed their closing. Residents complained to the city for years. Finally in 1995 the landfills were closed, and an agreement to rehabilitate the site was signed.

1995 in Pennsylvania Avenue
Starrett City
Jamaica Bay