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Commentary/Op-Ed - March 2022

Strengthening Natural Areas to Tackle Unemployment and Climate Change

In this Gotham Gazette op-ed, CUF Editorial and Policy Director Eli Dvorkin makes a case for the city to invest in NYC's natural areas to spark thousands of green jobs while strengthening the city's forests and wetlands.

by Eli Dvorkin

NYC's 20,000 acres of natural areas have been a lifeline for New Yorkers throughout the pandemic and form the first line of defense against the harms of climate change. But decades of underinvestment in the care and preservation of these vital open spaces threatens their longevity, even as surging visitation adds new stresses and environmental threats exacerbated by climate change have only grown.

At a time when NYC is still down nearly 388,000 jobs, and unemployment is painfully high in many of the city's lowest-income communities, investing in NYC's natural areas now could spark thousands of new—and necessary—green jobs, while strengthening the city's forests and wetlands for years to come.

In this op-ed for Gotham Gazette, CUF Editorial and Policy Director Eli Dvorkin makes the case that Mayor Adams and the City Council should work with the Parks Department to launch a natural areas revitalization program to help train and employ New Yorkers to care for the city's ecosystems—from tree planting and wetland restoration to trail marking and invasive species management.

You can read the full op-ed here.

This op-ed builds on the Center's ongoing research on revitalizing aging parks infrastructure and adapting to the effects of climate change through sustainability and resilience projects, including the reports *Before the Next Flood: NYC Needs More Progress Building Green Infrastructure*, *A Green Public Works Program for NYC: 40 Ideas from Experts*, *A New Leaf: Revitalizing New York City's Aging Parks Infrastructure*, and the op-ed "New York City Should Start Preparing Now for a Biden Infrastructure Plan."

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Gotham Gazette, by Samar Khurshid, April 18, 2022

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