



**The 57th Annual Meeting and
Shoreline/Wetlands/Woodlands Cleanup of the
Udalls Cove Preservation Committee**
will be held starting at 10 AM on
Saturday, April 25, 2026

Meet on the Back Road (Sandhill Road), west of the Little Neck LIRR station. We will provide trash bags, work gloves and maps advising where you can spend a productive hour or two collecting trash.
Then stay for the free picnic lunch at Memorial Field!



If at First You Don't Succeed, Try "PLAN B"

As we reported last year, the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee (UCPC) had been working since late 2023 on our ambitious plans for the ***Old Oak Pond Ecological Restoration Project***, intended to remove invasive Norway Maple trees and other invasive species from about 2.2 acres of woodlands west of the Joe Hellmann Overlook on Douglaston Parkway. The area would then have been re-planted with appropriate native tree and shrub species. We explained in last year's newsletter that in early 2025 we belatedly learned of a New York City law that made it effectively impossible to carry out the project. The City's "Tree Replacement Law" is a good one, but makes it almost impossibly expensive to do the kind of restoration work we had envisioned. (See our website for details.) In June 2025 we reluctantly abandoned this project, after having invested a lot of money on the design developed by our consultant.

In late 2023 we had received a generous \$40,000 grant from the Con Edison Company to help us with the cost of designing the Old Oak Pond project. In late 2024 we received a second, even more generous Con Ed grant of \$75,000 to help us with the costs of implementing that project. When it became clear that the Old Oak Pond project was not feasible, we offered to return this second grant to Con Ed. However, Con Ed graciously asked whether we might instead be able to use that money to develop an alternative restoration project – a ***"Plan B."*** **The answer is YES -- see the details on page 2!**

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Preservation
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“PLAN B”



North Ravine Invasive Species and Ecological Restoration Project

The central area outlined with cross-hatching is the site of our “Plan B” project, in the northern portion of the Ravine section of Udalls Cove Park Preserve. The LIRR tracks create the prominent diagonal line; Douglaston is on the left and Little Neck on the right. The area cross-hatched in white is almost entirely occupied by three invasive species – Japanese Knotweed (a reedy plant that grows 8’-10’ feet tall); Multiflora Rose (a thorny shrub); and Porcelainberry Vine (which tangles over and around both the others). These invasives have very little ecological value. The smaller area crosshatched in yellow shows where the neighboring residents have illegally encroached into City-owned land, in violation of New York State wetlands laws. The blue line is Gabler’s Creek which feeds Aurora Pond on the north side of the LIRR tracks and then continues out to Udalls Cove near Douglas Manor’s Memorial Field. The red line is the North Ravine Trail, created and maintained by UCPC. (The green cross-hatched areas are lands owned by the State but managed by the City Parks Department.)

The aim of our “Plan B” project is to remove the invasives and replant with appropriate native trees, shrubs and ground cover. There are only a few trees currently growing across the project site (mostly invasive Norway Maples); this means we’ll easily be able to satisfy the NYC Tree Replacement Law that made it impossible to pursue “Plan A.”

Before embarking on this project, we consulted with the NYC Parks Department and the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), which has jurisdiction over both freshwater and tidal (saltwater) wetlands – including the entire project site. Both agencies expressed support for the project. Our restoration plan will require permits from both agencies..

UCPC has hired GEI Consultants to prepare the professional design for our Plan B project. (They are the same company that designed the “Big Rock” project developed by our partners at the Douglas Manor Environmental Association – see page 6.)

(Continued on Page 4)

“Plan B” – North Ravine Invasives Removal & Restoration (con’t.)

(Continued from Page 2) Our Plan B project site is mostly flat, with easy access from 247th Street to the east. By replacing the invasive shrubs and vines with appropriate indigenous trees we will promote improved water quality in Gabler’s Creek and Aurora Pond; we will provide improved habitat for birds and other wildlife; and we will further New York City’s City’s Urban Forest Plan which aims to expand tree canopy to cover 30% of New York City, a significant increase from the 23.4% City-wide tree canopy in 2021.

We estimate that carrying out Plan B will cost around \$150,000 ... so it is not only easier to implement, but also much less expensive than Plan A would have been. But it isn’t *inexpensive*, and we will need substantial funding to get it done. In December 2025, we applied to the NYSDEC for an Invasive Species grant focused on “Restoration and Resiliency of Sites Impacted by Invasive Species.” We asked for a grant of \$125,000; if the grant is awarded, the program requires us to provide an additional 25% match – that is, a further \$31,250 -- for a total project budget of \$156,250.

The NYSDEC’s decision on our grant application is expected by the end of March, several weeks *after* this newsletter goes to print. We hope to have an answer by the time of our April 25 annual meeting and cleanup!

Even if we are fortunate enough to receive the NYSDEC grant, we will almost certainly have to seek additional grant funding to cover the costs of *long-term maintenance*. In order to give the restoration project the best chance of success, we will need to arrange for about ten years of annual maintenance to minimize re-invasion by non-native species, and promote survival of our new plantings. Our design contractor estimates that long-term maintenance may cost up to \$25,000/year for the first two or three years after plantings are completed, and probably a bit less in subsequent years. WE’RE KEEPING FINGERS CROSSED for this project to proceed!

Counting Crabs (well, not really...)

In May and June, 2026, our friends at the Douglas Manor Environmental Association (DMEA) will once again coordinate the annual **Horseshoe Crab Count**, with a number of UCPC members volunteering to help. ***Think you might like to participate? It’s interesting and fun! Send an email to waltermugdan@gmail.com and we’ll give you the details.***

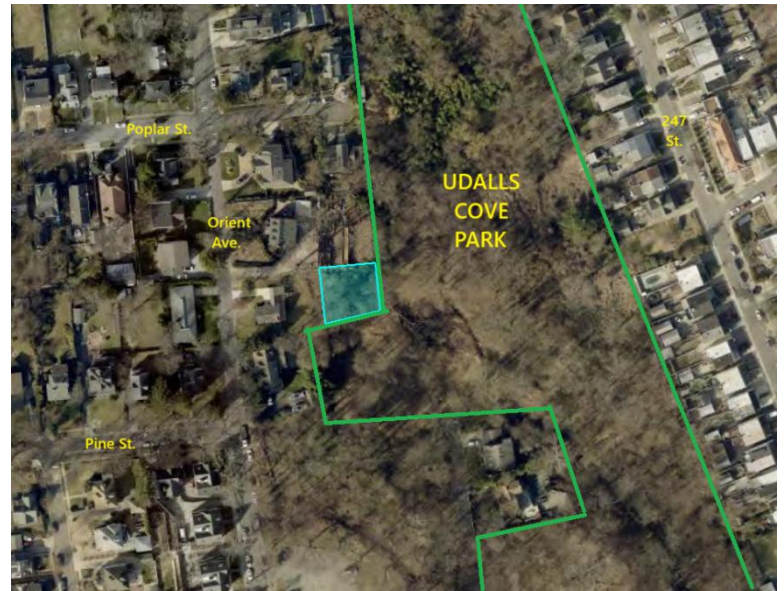


Horseshoe crabs are living fossils, virtually unchanged for 360 million years, long before the age of dinosaurs. **They aren’t really crabs** but are more closely related to spiders. They mate in May and June, usually at night at low tide near the time of a full moon. That’s why Horseshoe crab counting is done late at night (or very early in the morning), using flashlights. Counting is done at the Douglas Manor dock, on nights shortly before, during and after full moon and new moon. In past years, the volunteers counted as many as 200 crabs at the peak of mating season. Each night of counting takes about an hour; volunteers can sign up for one or two nights -- or for all 12 nights! -- over the seven week mating period.

And here’s some good news for these peaceful and completely harmless creatures: in December 2025, New York State enacted legislation to phase out commercial harvesting of crabs over the next 3 years. Horseshoe crab blood is extracted for drug safety testing, but synthetic alternatives are now available and are already widely used in Europe and Asia. The blood extraction is not intended to kill the animals, but up to 30% die anyway after being bled. They are also harvested as bait for eel and whelk fisheries. NY previously allowed 150,000 horseshoe crabs to be harvested yearly, but crab populations have fallen 70% in the past 25 years. “Citizen Science” monitoring, such as that done by DMEA volunteers, is a vital source of data to track Horseshoe crab populations and document what we hope will be their recovery.

A Generous Donation Helps Build our Park

The owners of a 6,000-square foot parcel of land adjacent to Udalls Cove Park have generously donated the property to the City of New York for inclusion in the park. The parcel is shown in blue on the adjacent map; Douglaston is to the left and Little Neck to the right. The offer to donate the lot was first made in February 2024; the donation was finally accepted by the City on Dec. 31, 2025 – almost two years later. UCPC facilitated the donation by working with the City agencies involved; paying for the required title certification; and preparing the deed and other necessary paperwork. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the donors! (And maybe the owners of a few other “park-adjacent” properties will follow their lead....)



Fantastic Turnout for Annual Cleanup(s)



We had our best turnout ever for our **56th Annual Cleanup** on May 3 of last year, with some 125 people participating! Our volunteers collected about 25 cubic yards of trash from the shoreline, wetlands and wooded uplands around our community. For the second year in a row, there was a little *LESS* trash than in previous years, which is good news of course!

And for the first time ever, we held a *second* cleanup in November with over 40 volunteers participating, who collected lots of smaller pieces of plastic covering much of the Udalls Cove shoreline. There will, of course, be plenty of new trash for our volunteers to collect by the time of our **57th Annual cleanup on April 25, 2026**. And all our volunteers and supporters are once again invited to the free picnic lunch at Douglas Manor’s Memorial Field, a long-standing post-cleanup tradition.



And the Eagles Keep Landing!

Since 2005, UCPC has hosted an extraordinary 33 Eagle Scout projects, with three completed since last year’s newsletter! In May 2025, Mark Milewski from Troop 71 (Plandome) built and installed 10 bat roosting boxes in various Udalls Cove and Alley Pond Park locations. In November 2025, George Drakoulis (*right*) and his team from Troop 268 (Queens) built and installed 60 linear feet of wooden walkway over a perpetually muddy section of trail in Alley Pond Park south of the Alley Pond Environmental Center. (UCPC also does stewardship work in this area.)



In December 2025, Max Tonorezos (*left*) became the 4th Eagle candidate from Troop 71 to complete a section of new trail in the Village of Great Neck Estates, through the woods lining the east side of the Udalls Cove salt marsh. Max’s project added 425 linear feet to the 1350 feet previously built by his 3 predecessors—including Max’s brother Nick (who built the first section in late 2024). Turn to **Page 6** for more about this project and to see an aerial photo showing the trail.



The Eagles Keep Landing! (Continued from Page 5.) Another pair of brothers, Chris and Nic Katsoulis, built the 2nd and 3rd segments in early 2025. The green circles in the aerial photo below show the locations of the four segments already constructed by the Eagle Scouts over the past 16 months. The dotted yellow line shows the final segment left to be built. We hope that a fifth Troop 71 Scout will step up to take on that project. When the final segment is completed, the entire trail will be nearly two thirds of a mile in length. Thank you to the Scouts for their hard work, and to the Village for its support!



But wait, there's more! In Spring 2026, after this newsletter goes to print, Marc Tsang (Troop 255-Queens) will build about 500 linear feet of new trail in the Old Oak Pond section of Alley Pond Park; Matthew Wu (Troop 153-Queens) will build an 18-foot wooden walkway over a muddy section of trail, and address invasive Norway Maples, also in the Old Oak Pond section; and Phoebe Paek (Troop 1923g-Queens) will build a number of Blue Bird nesting boxes that will be installed near the Alley Pond Environmental Center, possibly with a trail camera to show what's happening inside one of the boxes. These will be our 34th, 35th and 36th Eagle projects!

Out with the Old, in with the New: Many years ago, we installed a metal trash can in the Osprey Landing section of Udalls Cove Park, near the shoreline. The bottom of the can had rusted away, so we purchased a new one and installed it in May 2025 (*photo on left*).

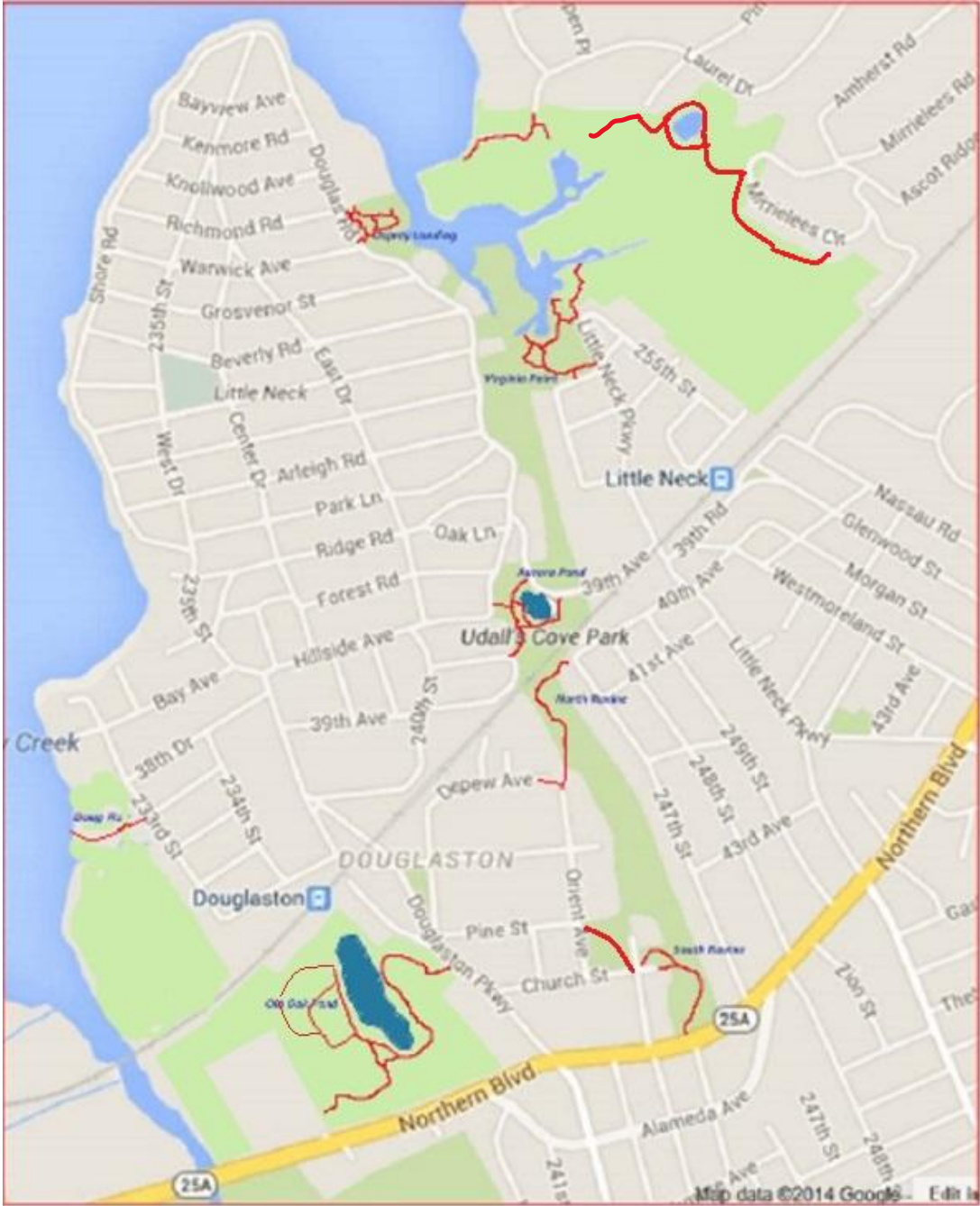


The Big Rock Project is Ready to Launch: The ambitious Big Rock project developed by our friends at the Douglas Manor Environmental Association is expected to finally be ready for the construction phase starting later in 2026. It will stabilize the shoreline and restore wetlands along the northwest portion of Udalls Cove, from Douglas Manor's Memorial Field to Big Rock, the large glacial erratic at Douglaston's Point. Learn more about it here: <https://thedmea.org/big-rock-wetland/>

Good News for Long Island Sound! In 2025, dangerous hypoxia (low oxygen) events in the Sound reached their lowest levels in 40 years, marking a major recovery milestone. The Sound's "dead zones," uninhabitable for marine life, shrank to 18.3 sq. miles and lasted only 40 days – among the smallest and shortest events since monitoring began in the late 1980s. This is a big decline from 43 sq. miles in 2024, and 127 sq. miles in 2023. Decades of costly efforts from every level of government led to substantial reductions in nitrogen pollution, which reduced algae growth across the Sound. Nitrogen acts as fertilizer that promotes algae growth; and decomposition of dead algae depletes oxygen in the water column. Read more here:

<https://lispartnership.org/2025/12/hypoxia-in-long-island-sound-drops-to-historic-low-in-2025/>


EXPLORE YOUR PARK!



During the past 27 years we've built or rehabilitated well over a mile of trails (shown in red on the map) across the various sections of Udalls Cove Park, and the nearby Doug-Bay and Old Oak Pond sections of Alley Pond Park. (That pond lies between Douglaston Pkwy. and the Golf Driving Range.)

Foot-bridges cross streams & there are wooden walkways over muddy trail areas.

Take a stroll, bring the kids, walk the dog, admire the wildflowers, do a bit of bird watching, snap some photos, or just enjoy the scenery!

You can find this trail map on our website, along with descriptions of the trails and information about how to see and enjoy them. Point your camera here and click → 

Re-Wilding our Area: Cell phones and doorbell cams are documenting the resurgence of wildlife in our area: deer (including at least two bucks, one a 6-pointer); coyotes (there are at least 3); muskrat; fox; falcons; bald eagles; dolphins; sharks (really!); and, of course, the osprey that have been nesting since 1997 on platforms built by UCPC. Udalls Cove Park and other area parks provide habitat and a wildlife corridor.

The Udalls Cove Preservation Committee ...



... working since 1969 to **C**onserve, **P**reserve and **R**estore the wetlands and woodlands in the Udalls Cove watershed.

*Join our 57th Annual Cleanup
on Saturday, April 25, 2026 – Details Inside!*

The Udalls Cove Preservation Committee
251-31 42nd Avenue
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