



Teens from Rocking the Boat navigate what looks like an upstate stream, but actually it's the Bronx River.

A paddler's guide

to the city

Parks Dept. official, kayakers ply waterways

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HUNTS POINT. A group of teenagers from the educational group Rocking the Boat launched their handcrafted rowboats from the newly created \$3.3 million Hunts Point Riverside Park — which abuts a metal salvage and recycling yard — and paddled past cormorants perched on a rock.

The birds are a sign of ecological renewal around this section of the Bronx River, and Dorothy Lewandowski — who by day is the Queens Borough Parks Commissioner — has a vision that this and other city waterways will resurge as places for kayakers and canoeists.

The first step is finishing the Parks Dept.'s "NYC Water Trail" recreation and education guide for the 18 existing kayaking sites and nearly a dozen more that the city



Dorothy Lewandowski rides a motorboat up the Bronx River. Over her shoulder, the \$9.6 million Concrete Plant Park is being constructed with metal structures from the site's original industrial use.

plans to add by the time the trail launches in the spring.

"The city has been creating the greenway in all boroughs where the streets connect with the waterfront," Lewandowski said, "and in different areas, people were saying, 'I'd like a kayak launch here,' and they were popping up, but there was no connection between them."

Lewandowski, who's been working with community volunteers, hopes the trail will make it easier to navi-

gate the city's waters from Riverside Park in the Hudson River to Buttermilk Channel in Red Hook to Flushing Bay at the World's Fair Marina in Queens.

"In some ways it's a work in progress because the intention is to keep identifying and adding sites," Lewandowski said. "It's opening up a whole new recreational world."

At the recently opened \$7.2 million Barretto Point Park, there's a container

filled with kayaks for non-profit The Point. They are used by the organization's staffers to "get some exercise," explained community development associate Adam Leibowitz. "We don't have the capacity right now to staff an education program, but it's a hope for the future."

His group and others have been crucial in developing access to the South Bronx waterfront, but public transportation there is still lacking. And the neighborhood needs "someone to provide safer instruction and strategies to have watercraft," said Michael Hunter, recreation program coordinator for the Bronx River Alliance, which leads canoe tours on the Bronx River.

"Industry is cleaning up its act," Hunter said. "Some of the challenges here are that the Hunts Point neighborhood hasn't had [waterfront] access in at least 50 years."