



INSIDE QUEENS	
CIVIL SERVICE.....	page 4
ACTION LINE.....	page 5
QUEENSBEAT.....	page 6
SUBWAY CRIME.....	page 10
CARIBBEAT.....	page 12
CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING & REAL ESTATE INSIDE	

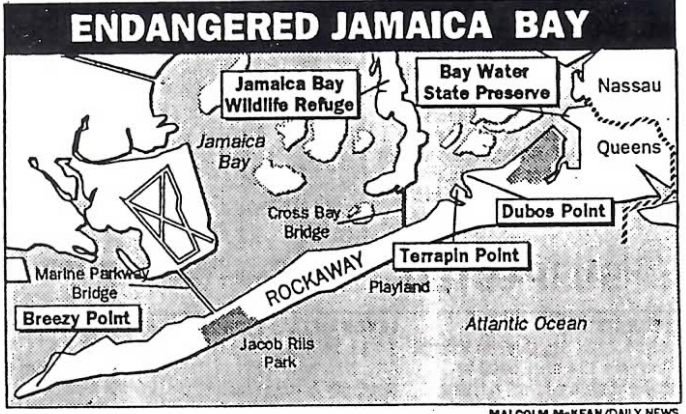
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The besieged Jamaica Bay



RANGER Meryl Golden displays bag of congealed oil globs which have adomed Queens beaches for the last month. Over a ton and a half of the goo has been collected from the sands of Breezy Point alone.

BILL TURNBULL DAILY NEWS



By **SAMME CHITTUM**
Daily News Staff Writer

DIGGING INTO THE SAND, Ranger Meryl Goldin retrieved another softball-sized glob of black goo.

In the last month, she and other National Park Service Rangers have collected more than a ton and a half of congealed oil from the sands of Breezy Point—the unwanted legacy from the recent oil spills near Staten Island.

The oil is both ugly and dangerous—a potential source of poison to the endangered piping plovers there, who ingest it when they clean their feet and feathers. It is also one of the least of the hazards threatening the bay and its wildlife.

Beautiful but besieged is the bay, a complex of deep and shallow waters, islands, tidal mud flats, and salt marshes that make up the largest natural area remaining in the city.

Located between the southern coast of mainland Queens and a barrier spit called the Rockaways, the bay is the borough's last outpost of untrammelled natural beauty. Home to a 9,000-acre wildlife refuge and the stop-over point for migrating birds, the bay is very much alive. But it is under assault from runoff from four sewage plants, housing and industrial development, and the city's 173-acre Edgemere Landfill, an identified toxic waste site.

"There's a lot of pollution that has occurred in the past and continues to occur in and around Jamaica Bay," said Don Riepe, a wildlife biologist and resource specialist for the National Park Service. The service manages the 26,000-acre Gateway National Recreation Area, which takes in Jamaica Bay.

Once a major oyster fishery, the bay has not made a comfortable bed for oysters in 70 years. "They just can't stand the pollution," said Bob Cook, also a wildlife biologist and resource specialist for the National Park Service. "If we have any hope of seeing these organisms return to Jamaica Bay, we have to try to improve the water quality, remove toxins, and preserve as much land as possible."

The biggest source of bacterial pollution is sewage from the city's overloaded system, which mixes raw sewage and rain-water run-off. When it rains hard, the overflow runs into the bay. The resulting bacteria chokes off vital oxygen in the water, Riepe said. Small sewer system improvements...

See **ENVIRONMENT** Page 2

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