

Environmentally-friendly green space opens in Hunts Point to educate about storm water runoff

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Originally Published: Wednesday, October 26 2011, 4:00 AM

Updated: Wednesday, October 26 2011, 3:49 PM

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Joaquin Cotton/Rocking the Boat

Rocking the Boat workers transform an overgrown lot into a wetlands area in the Bronx.

A formerly overgrown lot in [Hunts Point](#) has been transformed into the borough's newest public space - and it's good for the environment, too.

Dubbed Waterwash ABC, the area includes a 10,000-square-foot wetland and grassland, a picnic area and interpretive signs that will teach the public about storm water runoff.

"We're trying to educate the public and make storm water sexy," said [Lillian Ball](#), who designed the wetland project.

Project organizers gathered Tuesday for a ceremonial opening of Waterwash ABC, which sits in the backyard of [ABC Carpet and Home](#) warehouse.

The area will officially open to the public next spring.

The \$350,000 restoration project, funded by the [New York State Attorney General's Office](#), started with a simple boat ride down the [Bronx River](#) in December 2009.

Ball and [Adam Green](#), of the nonprofit Rocking the Boat, were on the hunt for "a rough piece of land."

"ABC's backyard just jumped out at us," Green said. "Turning the area into wetlands that could process all that storm water seemed like a great idea. And what we have now is a landscape that is not only physically beautiful, but ...a working tool that does an important job on the river."

A team of 20 youths from Rocking the Boat installed 8,000 plants, which will help filter rainwater from the nearby 30,000-square-foot parking lot before it enters the river.

"Wetlands are one of the most important buffer zones to our cities," Ball said. "But when we pave the world in concrete and asphalt, we damage nature's ability to heal itself and protect us. That's why we do these wetland projects."

[Brian Santos](#), 20, of Hunts Point, helped with the plantings this past summer.

"I feel like it's a pretty amazing accomplishment," Santos said. "It's pretty cool because we built our own botanical garden along the Bronx River, and it will help the environment."

[Amy Chender](#), chief operating officer for ABC Home and Carpet, heaped praise on the effort.

"It's a great example of the kind of work that can be done," she said. "And hopefully, it sets a model for other environmental projects along the river."

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