

# A FANTASTIC NEW LAUNCH RAMP AND LANDING FOR THE HUDSON RIVER.



By John H. Vargo, Publisher

Tourism, boating and fishing have just gotten a big break on the Hudson River! A brand new launch ramp and landing site, located on the west side of the Hudson just north of Walkway over the Hudson will open in spring of 2013.

This is a step forward for anyone wishing to launch a boat to access the Hudson River or to travel by passenger vessel to visit Walkway Over the Hudson and the vineyards and orchards that dominate the landscape surrounding the Town of Lloyd, walk or bike the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, or seek out local historical sites.

The Town of Lloyd has been far and away one of the most innovative townships in developing new concepts and ideas that make solid, common

sense! This brand new park, called Bob Shepard Highland Landing Park, is just another example of a well thought out design, implemented by a man who has spent the last 20 years dreaming of it. I have known Matt Smith for 20 years. In all that time, in lunches and meetings, Matt would always bring up his idea to develop the Highland waterfront as a community riverfront park for the west side of the Hudson River. He is an honorable man who never gives up on an idea or project.

In 1994 Matt's vision took hold among a group of citizens in the town. Over the next decade, they drew up plans and found potential funding to purchase the property from an oil-storage company. Then the project stalled for a few

more years, under a new administration.

Fast forward to 2006. Matt and a group of volunteers convinced the Town Board to buy the land and the Town's citizens to ratify that decision in a referendum. In early spring of 2007, the Town finally closed on the property and authorized the volunteer group, named the Highland Landing Park Association, led by Matt, to develop and manage the park.

Now the really tough work began. There were grants to apply for, permits to file for, and more long waits until bids could be obtained and contracts signed. Work on the waterfront restoration began in summer of 2012.

With hard work by a dedicated group of volunteers, dreams really do come true. This spring will mark the beginning of new opportunities for boaters, tourists and anyone else wishing to get "on the river" by boat, or, for that matter, getting off the river by boat. Yes that's right; at least

it is in Highland, while in other communities along the river beauracrats, citizens and officials throw up barriers, such as exorbitant fees, permits, or anything else they can dream up to stop the use of their riverfront. (In one case the town officials actually dumped rocks in front of their new dock and had officials come and bless the project! And on top of that little insanity, they built a boat ramp that nobody can use...for any reason!) Matt Smith, on the other hand, has created a FREE BOAT RAMP and a landing site for passenger vessels, (with a reasonable landing fee) wishing to offload tourists who would like to visit the Walkway Over the Hudson bridge (it has had over a million visitors in just under four years), the orchards, wineries and vineyards and other tourist attractions on that side of the Hudson River opposite Poughkeepsie, New York.

As the new 2013 striped bass season opens on March 15th, the new ramp will quickly become a major access point to great fishing locations never before easily reached without driving your



Highland Launch Ramp with Walkway over the Hudson in background, photo taken January 10, 2013

boat up or down the Hudson River for at least ten miles, a great cost/benefit in time and fuel consumed.

One man could not do this alone, and Matt Smith, being the driving force behind this project, enlisted the aid of engineers, architects and companies to donate their services for this project or provide them at a reduced price. M.A. Bongiovanni of Syracuse, NY, a pile driving company, donated 120+ linear feet of sheet steel bulkhead and installed it on the south side of the ramp. Arold Construction of Kingston, NY, the general contractor on the project, donated fifty thousand dollars of work. Brooks and Brooks of Highland, NY, land surveyors, donated their work to the project. Bolder Architecture of Highland and Sal Cuciti, were volunteer architects on the project. Morris Associates of Poughkeepsie, NY, donated over one hundred thousand dollars' worth of bid/engineering work. The list is endless and truly shows the kind of volunteerism that America has always stood for when it comes time to "step up."

Further, the steel used in the project and everything else supplied came from New York State or American manufacturers and suppliers.

The ramp is 72' in length, 20' wide, depth of water at toe of ramp, 3 1/2' at low water, Percent grade, 12 1/2% (considered ideal)! Top section is of 4,000 psi concrete

poured in place with a heavy broom finish; balance of ramp is pre-cast 4,500 psi concrete with 1" vee grooves cast diagonally into the surface to help create a sluicing effect with the wave action to help keep it clean.

As the concept for the Bob Shepard Highland Landing Park began to be placed on paper, other features were incorporated into it. Besides the first class boat ramp, passenger vessel dock to off load visitors, and kayak launch ramp, an existing building on site is being renovated into an environmental education center with a small photovoltaic array on the roof. A seven thousand dollar Hudson River Foundation grant was obtained to supply specimen nets, environmental test kits, microscopes, binoculars etc. Plans call for a large aquarium for indigenous species, a solar science lab and much more. Recommendations on what equipment to purchase came from Mr. Kevin Rizzo, science teacher at Highland High School.

In addition, a pavilion is scheduled to be built, and there will be plenty of parking on the other side of the westshore railroad tracks. All this is going to make this location a very popular access point indeed!

Thank you Matt Smith and the Town of Lloyd, and all the volunteers that have made this possible, you've done it again!

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