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SMELLY TO SCENIC

When driving through Staten Island, you used to get a view plus a nostril full of one of the largest landfills on Earth. Today the 2,200-acre former dumping site is well on its way to becoming Freshkills Park, the largest landfill-to-park project in the world. This massive project is not slated to be completed until 2035, but some sections have already become accessible on a limited basis to tour and school groups. Many of those who remember its former purpose have said the transformation is truly remarkable.

The landfills 225-foot mountains of trash are now capped with a protective liner and a layer of clean soil. The once putrid smells that emitted from the mounds have been replaced with the **natural smells of the marshes as the tides rise and fall. One recent visitor said, "Once you get to the top of the mountains, you can look out at the industry in New Jersey and you can see the Freedom Tower in Manhattan and you realize you are in the middle of New York City."**

The gulls that once fed on 150 million tons of household trash have been replaced with nearly 200 species of birds. For five decades after its opening in 1948, trash was delivered here on a regular basis until 2001, when the site was closed in response to Staten Island residents who **complained about living in the city's dumping ground. Today, the city's garbage is sent to** landfills in South Carolina, Virginia and a waste-to-energy plant in New Jersey.

Three of the four mountains of trash in the landfill are currently capped. More than \$600 million has been spent cleaning and beautifying the place. Permanent public access to the park will be phased in with 21 acres of a larger 233-acre section opening in 2019. This section will include meadowlands, wetlands and creeks, a climbing tower, recreational paths and a seed farm of native plants. Another 482 acres will open the following year or two later and offer catch and release fishing among other activities.

If you have ever walked The Highline in New York City you see how visionaries transformed a rusting eyesore into something exquisite and accessible to the public. This project is transforming one of our **nation's** largest, acrid smelling dumping grounds into an oasis and an environmentally friendly place for the public to enjoy. The scale of this project is enormous, and so are the rewards!