

# Gateway to Tomorrow

The Gateway National Recreation Area is a dream come true—or almost come true. This extraordinary 39-square-mile treasure of natural assets—ocean beaches, bayside shorefronts, wildlife preserves and unspoiled features from holly forests to wetlands and grassy dunes—is only twenty miles from Times Square and is readily available to twenty million people in a three-state region. In its first season as a national park in 1974, Gateway attracted five million visitors; eight million are expected this year. But the fate of Gateway is on the line right now.

In recognition of its qualities and prospects, Gateway has already received notable support from Congress and the Federal Government. It has been given funding and operating personnel and a high priority from the National Park Service. Congress now seems favorably disposed toward increasing that funding. The increase is an absolute necessity if even present operating levels are to be sustained. What is missing is the kind of vision that created Gateway in the first place. Attempts at master schemes by the Park Service have been a series of false starts and stops. No over-all priorities have been set for conservation or development, and existing problems remain unsolved. Threats arise continually in the form of proposals for housing, airports and roads.

Comprehensive planning must determine future needs and patterns in the unique terms of an urban population. It is only within appropriate long-range plans that proper short-range development can take place. Creative analysis has already been undertaken by New York's City Planning Commission and the Regional Plan Association, with private study by the Gateway Citizens Committee. But there appears to be a painfully slow meeting of Federal and local minds.

Most serious, there has been no adequate transportation planning at any level, without which Gateway will never be more than a dream for much of the population. There must be provision for better bus service, with route extensions and special lanes, the use of ferries and the directional control of roads. Basic transportation and master planning decisions will determine whom Gateway will serve, and what it will be. To put them off any longer is to spoil or squander this miracle of geography and pleasure.

