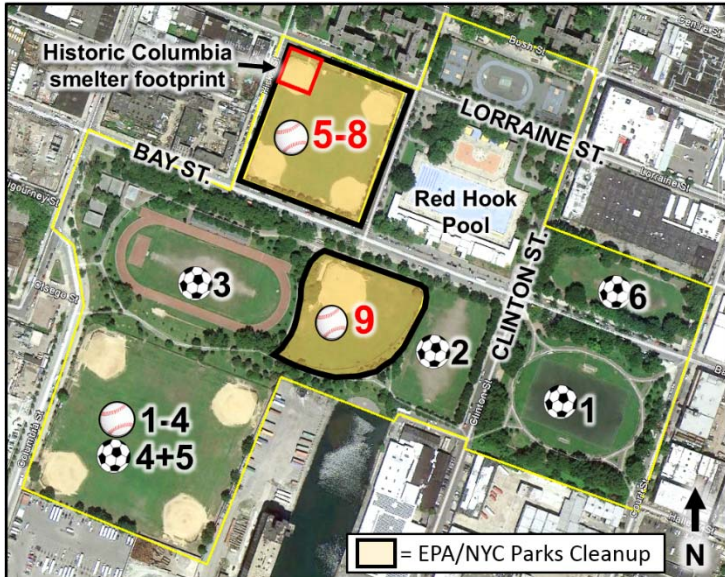




# Columbia Smelting Cleanup Order Signed, Ball Fields Construction to Start in 2017

Community Update No. 5

August 2016



Red Hook Park Ball Fields to be cleaned up by NYC Parks under EPA oversight.

## WHAT IS SECONDARY LEAD SMELTING?

Secondary lead smelting plants refine scrap or used lead materials into metallic lead of a higher purity. Such materials can include the lead plates from batteries, lead pipe or metal sheets that contain lead.

Secondary smelting can be responsible for releasing lead into the surrounding environment through lead fume emissions. Lead dust and smoke can be released during the smelting process, and slag contaminated with lead may be left over after the smelting process.

## WHY IS LEAD A PROBLEM?

Lead is a toxic metal that was used for many years in paint and leaded gasoline. Lead poisoning can cause a number of harmful health effects, particularly in children under the age of six.

Exposure to lead in soil can occur when children play in the dirt and put their hands or dusty toys in their mouths. Lead can also get into your body by breathing or swallowing lead dust, or by eating soil containing lead.

## WHY DO THE FIELDS NEED TO BE CLEANED UP?

As part of an investigation of the former Columbia Smelting and Refining Works (Columbia) smelting plant, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sampled soil from the block where Columbia once stood. Soil samples were also collected from other areas, including several athletic fields throughout Red Hook Park.

The results of the sampling showed lead in the surface soils from the former Columbia facility at elevated levels across Ball Fields 5, 6, 7 and 8. Because of this, Ball Fields 5-8 were closed, and will remain closed until the cleanup is completed. Lead from Columbia was also found in the soils at Ball Field 9. However, the results did not show elevated levels of lead in the surface soils of this field.

Because lead levels in the soils at Ball Field 9 do not pose an immediate health risk, it will remain open for public use until cleanup of that field begins.

## WHO WILL CONDUCT THE CLEANUP OF BALL FIELDS 5-8 AND 9, AND WHEN?

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) will be cleaning up Ball Fields 5-8 and 9, under EPA oversight. Because this is a large, complex engineering and construction project, it will take several years to finish. Once the design work, which has been ongoing since fall 2015, is complete, NYC Parks will hire a construction contractor. Construction will then take about 12-18 months. Details on all the steps involved in the cleanup process can be found on EPA's webpage for the project (see link below).

To reduce disturbing athletic schedules, Ball Fields 5 through 8 will be cleaned up first, and once they are re-opened, Ball Field 9 will be cleaned up. NYC Parks expects to start the cleanup of Ball Fields 5-8 in late summer 2017 and complete it in fall 2018. NYC Parks estimates that Ball Field 9 will be cleaned up by spring 2020. All work on these fields is being done under a Consent Order between EPA and NYC Parks, a legal document about the cleanup finalized in July 2016.

**If you would like information about the site please contact:**

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**If you would like information on other environmental concerns or the Superfund hazardous waste program contact:**

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**Visit the EPA's website at:**

<https://www3.epa.gov/region02/superfund/removal/columbia/>

## **CLEANUP PLANS**

The cleanup of Ball Fields 5-8 and 9 under EPA oversight will involve removing all park features such as fencing, some of the trees, curbing and other structures, adding a physical and visual barrier to contaminated soil, and then covering the barrier with one foot of clean soil and natural or artificial turf over the entire area. A bioswale and other improvements will be added. The baseball diamonds, grass cover, fencing, walkways, and associated structures will then be reinstalled. Controls will be put in place to make sure the public is not exposed to any contaminants during construction. This cleanup method will permanently eliminate public contact with contaminants by isolating them under the barrier, one foot of clean soil and turf. This will also serve to prevent any future spread of contaminated soils from these ball fields. The new layers will then be monitored and inspected over the years.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER FIELDS?**

EPA's sampling results show contamination from historic fill, not from the Columbia facility, in deeper soils within Soccer Fields 2, 6 and surrounding Soccer Field 1 (which is turf). Additionally, contaminants from historic fill were found by NYC Parks in a separate investigation in the soil at Soccer Field 3, Ball Fields 1-4, and Soccer Fields 4 and 5. The fill was added in the 1800s to expand the ground surface towards the Gowanus Bay, since this area of Red Hook was originally a tidal marsh.

Based on the findings, NYC Parks closed several of the other fields, and plans to remediate all remaining fields within Red Hook Park by 2022 to the same standards as Ball Fields 5-9. As this is unrelated to the Columbia Site, these fields will be addressed by NYC Parks and NYC Health outside of the Consent Order; however, EPA will be available for consultation. Currently, only Soccer Fields 1 and 6 (as well as Ball Field 9) remain open. For more information on remediation of Soccer Fields 1 through 6 and Ball Fields 1 through 4, see NYC Parks' website on the cleanup at: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/about/whats-happening/red-hook-park-remediation>.

## **HOW WILL I GET UPDATES?**

EPA and NYC Parks will provide updates on the status of the Ball Field 5-9 cleanup efforts to the community in various ways, including fact sheets, letters to park users, updates to the websites, and public information sessions where EPA and NYC Parks will be available to present plans and answer questions. EPA has established an Information Repository at the Red Hook Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, where the public can review and copy records related to EPA's investigation and the cleanup of Ball Fields 5 through 9.

## **SIMPLE STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR LEAD EXPOSURE**

The following steps are recommended to reduce your potential exposure to lead contamination that may be present in urban soils.

- Remove shoes at the door before entering your home to prevent tracking in any dirt that may be on your shoes. Clean the bottom of your shoes with a wet wipe or paper towel.
- Wash your hands and face after visiting these ball fields and always before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- Avoid digging into or disturbing soil below the surface of the ball fields.