

# The Brooklyn Paper

**The Brooklyn Paper**  
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Today's news:



Check this! Hockey hits Barclays on Sept. 21



CLEANING OUR WATERWAYS: Red Hook activists to feds: Don't put sludge in our backyard



Trailer trash: Abandoned big rig left to rust on Flatbush Avenue

April 10, 2013 / Brooklyn news / Gowanus

## Row, row, row your boat — down the Gowanus Canal

By Natalie Musumeci

*The Brooklyn Paper*

Everyone is a winner at this boat race — so long as you don't get wet.

The toxic Gowanus Canal is the course for an upcoming non-motorized watercraft competition open to canoes, kayaks, paddleboats, and rowboats of all sizes.

Dubbed the “Gowanus Challenge,” the June jaunt will feature 2.5 miles of action on the foul-smelling waterway, which is laden with hazardous heavy metals, raw sewage, cancer-causing chemicals, and even gonorrhea — warranting a federal cleanup with a price tag of a half-billion dollars

“This is the first race that begins and ends on a Superfund site,” said Owen Foote, a founding member of the Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club, which organized the race.

Members of the Gowanus Dredgers have been racing each other on the canal for years, but this is the first time the pro-watersports group has challenged other boating organizations to test their speed. The course will start at the Dredgers's dock on Second Street, go all the way to the mouth of the canal near the Gowanus Bay, and loop back to the dock for the big finish, said Foote.

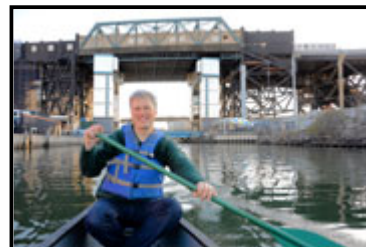


Photo by Elizabeth Graham

*Toxic raceway: Owen Foote, a co-founder of the Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club, is helping organize a boat race on the highly contaminated, sludge-filled Gowanus Canal on June 15.*

Boathouses across international waters have even expressed interest in the race, which will serve as a fund-raiser to support the group's work bringing free waterborne recreational activities to the city.

As such, each team must raise \$500 from pledgers and sponsors to compete, but squads can consist of however many people fit into the crew's vessel of choice.

Individuals brave enough to take on the Gowanus Canal who are not affiliated with boathouses or other aquatic groups are welcome to participate in the race, if they can come up with a canal-worthy craft.

The winner will likely receive a grand prize of a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

Foote hopes holding the race will help raise awareness of the fact that every time it rains, millions of gallons of raw sewage flood the waterway — which is why the feds will likely force the city to install massive \$78 million holding tanks to catch the runoff as part of the Superfund cleanup.

But organizers about aren't worried about any health risks from racing on the waterway.

"We don't have a lot of concerns," said Foote. "We've been exposing our hands and paddles and having casual contact with the water for 14 years."

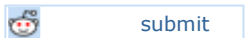

Federal advisories for kayakers or canoers on the Gowanus Canal recommend boaters to "minimize direct contact with the water" and to wash your body and clothing "soon after paddling," according to an advisory by the Environmental Protection Agency.

*The Gowanus Challenge [Second Street dock near Bond Street in Gowanus, (718) 243-0849, [www.gowanuscanal.org](http://www.gowanuscanal.org)] June 15, 11 am, \$500 entry fee.*

*Reach reporter Natalie Musumeci at [nmusumeci@cnglocal.com](mailto:nmusumeci@cnglocal.com) or by calling (718) 260-4505. Follow her at [twitter.com/souleddout](https://twitter.com/souleddout).*

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## READER FEEDBACK

### View discussion (19)

diehipster from Burying Brents says:

Although our raw sewage enthusiast friend here Owen doesn't resemble your typical bearded, disheveled, wanna be rockstar or art poseur - he still shares the incredibly idiotic desire to hang out around one of the most toxic waterways on earth.

This sh\*t puzzles me beyond belief. And even though he's not your typical hipster type - just imagine the other participants that are going to be in this "LOOK AT ME" race. Dozens of Masons, Joshes, Brents, and Calebs rowing down the canal with their pipe cleaner limbs; having fecal sludge splash them in their lice beards and child molester moustaches.

I can imagine all these smelly bastards gathering at some gentrification watering hole/restaurant afterwards without showering or washing their hands at least and ingesting all their artisanal food and craft ales. Kind of negates all the organic, healthy, local, BLAH BLAH BLAHHH bullsh\*t they are always talking about.

No Sleep Til' BoCoCa! Like YAH!

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Today, 7:43 am

jjm from ch says:

I say let them do what they wanna do. the boat is gonna tip over at some point lol.

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Today, 8:10 am

jjm from ch says:

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Today, 8:11 am

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o3 from bk says:

next up - racing boogie boards across the sludge tanks at the sewage treatment plant...wet suit optional acourse.

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Today, 8:33 am

manposeur from brokenland says:

It looks fun but you better wear a space suit.

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Today, 9:41 am

JAZ from Hunting Redbeards says:

Just a matter of time until that walking gentrification postage stamp. Shane the interloping bearded \$12 soup salesman, will be using scoops from the Gowanus petri dish to give his bacon a more authentic Brooklyn credibility.

Shane: "Hello Monroe"

Monroe: "Hi Shane, do you have any new, exciting soups?"

Shane: "Like yah, I call this one Union Street Surprise"

Monroe: "Is it authentic Brooklyn, like I always read about back home in Ohio?"

Shane: "I've been here a long, long time - since 2005. And I tell you, this is the definition of Brooklyn; creative, whimsical and quirky! Do you want to buy a batch, served in this repurposed mason jar?"

Monroe: "Like yah!!"

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Today, 10:09 am

diehipster from Burying Brents says:  
LOL JAZ

That's sounds exactly right. I heard the Greenpoint Newtown Creek Oyster Shucking collective will be at the finish line with freshly caught Gowanus shellfish.

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Today, 10:31 am

JAZ from Hunting Redbeards says:  
And then Parker can make Gowanus Fish Tacos and walk with a double stack down Hamilton Ave. I doubt he could manage the strength to pick up a can of paint, so we'll leave that part out.

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Today, 10:42 am

John from Sunset Park says:  
why would anyone ever take this chance? I must be missing something. Are they getting paid to participate in this, does some of the money raised go directly to participants?  
If you fall in that nasty liquid I imagine you come out as the Toxic Avenger.  
I actually feel bad for all the dead bodies at the bottom of that "waterway".

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Today, 11:19 am

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Today, 11:19 am

John Wasserman from Windsor Terrace says:  
Pardon me, and I hate to be the person to have to finally ask this, but why do certain posters on this board feel that they can better get their point across by posting the same message several times in row? Now, nobody wants trouble here on this board, including myself, so I'm thanking you in advance for accepting my apology. Again, pardon the interruption.

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Today, 12:42 pm

Pat I from 70's Brooklyn says:  
JAZ, let's not forget Xanadu and Propecia handing out samples from the Gowanus Craft Absinthe Co.

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Today, 12:43 pm

Pat I from 70's Brooklyn says:  
HA! JAZ, can y7ou imagine Shane telling stories to newbies under an authentic, graffiti covered overpass ..all of them standing n a circle around a steel drum filled, filled with burning reclaimed lumber from YE Olde Bedord Asbestos Co.?:

SHANE: Yah....I remember when there were only six coffeeshops on each block and rents were a platry 2100/mo.

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Today, 12:49 pm

Pat I from 70's Brooklyn says:

HA! JAZ, can you imagine Shane telling stories to newbies under an authentic, graffiti covered overpass ..all of them standing in a circle around a steel drum filled, filled with burning reclaimed lumber from YE Olde Bedord Asbestos Co.?

SHANE: Yah....I remember when there were only six coffeeshops on each block and rents were a platty 2100/mo.

.....Today, 12:49 pm

Mike from Williamsburg says:

John, people post several comments by accident because the commenting system the Brooklyn Paper uses is truly awful. Sometimes when you hit comment, it looks like nothing happened for a minute, so you hit it again and then suddenly you see 3 or 4 comments.

.....Today, 12:57 pm

John Wasserman from Windsor Terrace says:

Why, that's just terrible. Thank you for your insight on this matter, Mike. Good day.

.....Today, 1:22 pm

"Interloper" from Kent Ave says:

We got a regular "Brooklyn local" circle jerk going on here. After you guys are done blowing each other you can all head down to the post office to apply for that mail room sorter job you've all been gunning for.

.....Today, 1:29 pm