

Norwalk Harbor Management Commission



The mission of the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission is to evaluate issues, make recommendations, and provide support to the City of Norwalk in preserving and enhancing the use, vitality, and quality of life associated with the Norwalk Harbor and Long Island Sound.

City of Norwalk, Connecticut

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Anchorage Aweigh...Dredging Finale for Norwalk Harbor?

By John Thomas Pinto, Ph.D. NHMC, Dredging Committee Chairman

In April, the City of Norwalk contracted with a local engineering company to collect sediment samples from North Cove Harbor in Old Saybrook and to have this material tested at a laboratory certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The purpose for this testing was to determine whether 75,000 cubic yards of sediment to be dredged from North Cove is suitable for "capping" Phase 2 of our harbor dredging project. For those of you who have not followed this saga, the mandate for capping our project was imposed by the Connecticut DEP without prudent consideration of the source or cost of this cap. Now critical to the success of Norwalk's dredging project, the only possible source of cap material is the pending dredging project in North Cove. Since the Army Corps and EPA have determined that capping of the Norwalk project is not required, it was up to the city to find the money to pay for the cap, estimated at about \$1 million. Thanks to our Mayor, our legislators, and our Governor, we acquired \$1 million from the Connecticut Bond Commission.

Then, in an unexpected twist of bureaucracy, the EPA wanted additional tests to make sure the North Cove sediment is not contaminated and can serve as cap for our project. If this sounds convoluted, it would require all of the 15 years since we began this project to explain the twists, turns, hoops and hurdles to which the city has responded, not to mention the exorbitant costs in terms of tempers, time and tax dollars. Since the state will not pay for the North Cove testing required by the EPA and the Army Corp could not complete the analyses in a timely manner, it was up to the city to do the tests or else the entire dredging project could not be accomplished.

The North Cove sediment was sampled in April and the EPA will evaluate the test results in May, so that the Army Corps can submit the entire Norwalk Dredging Project to bid by dredging contractors in June. This is critical in order for dredging to begin by October 1, 2008. We cannot miss this window of opportunity because dredging at North Cove is scheduled to begin at the same time and this is our only source of cap in the foreseeable future.

Of course, all of this work is contingent upon a great deal of cooperation among state and federal agencies as well as timely signing of contractual and other agreements. Therefore, exact details and questions regarding when the project will begin and concerns related to seasonal boating

activities cannot be addressed with certainty until later this summer.

In the interim and in order to comply with the Army Corps' schedules and requirements, including a pre-dredging survey, we have to assume that moorings and other structures within the East Norwalk Channel, City Marina, and South Anchorage areas must be removed by September 1st. No encumbrances can interfere with mobilization of dredging scows and equipment and obstruct the required pre-dredge survey prior to the October 1st start date. The Harbor Management Commission will convene a public

meeting in early August to provide additional information and address concerns and questions from commercial and recreational boaters.

Recreational and commercial boating traffic will be allowed to continue in and out of the East Basin during the dredging process with the necessary pre-cautions in navigating around working barges. However, no vessel will be allowed to moor or anchor in and around the federal dredging areas, including the city marina, which will have to be dismantled to allow for dredging to a depth of 6 feet at mean low water. Boaters who want to remain moored within their respective marinas and whose vessels are located out of but close to the channel might consider that dredging using a clam shell bucket can get very messy and splash mud and debris.

A certain amount of boating inconveniences and uncertainties are but a small burden that we all have to shoulder so that we can achieve maintenance dredging of Norwalk Harbor for the first time in 28 years. So, to assure that dredging is completed this year, we all need to cooperate and help get this project done ■



ANTICIPATED TIMELINE

Date	Event
June 10	ACOE sends out request for bids
July	ACOE reviews bids and selects contractor
Aug.	NHMC meets with boating community
Sept. 1	Moorings removed from areas to be dredged City Marina dismantled Pre-dredge survey begins
Oct. 1	Dredging begins
Jan. 31, 2009	Dredging ends Post-dredge survey begins

Aerial Photos Show Harbor Changes

By Geoff Steadman, NHMC Planning Consultant

Aerial photos of the harbor always seem to provoke new thoughts and ideas. From the air, the harbor is seen clearly as a natural system of interconnected parts—an estuary where the Norwalk River meets Long Island Sound. Aerial photos help the Commission with a variety of projects and decisions; they show how the harbor and waterfront change over time; and they have much educational value.

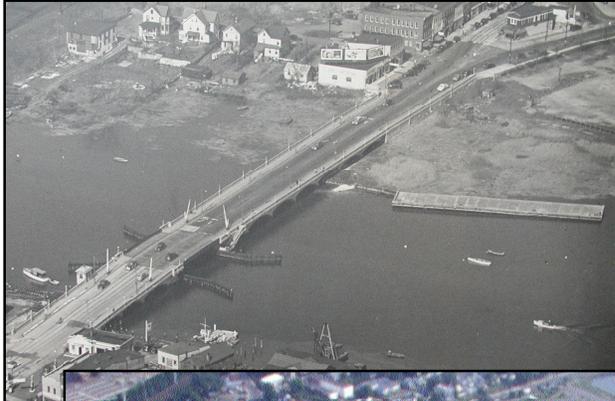
Keeping in mind that good stewardship involves constant development and sharing of information, the commission has prepared educational displays using its most recent photos, combining them with navigation charts. The displays are in the visitors' building at the David S. Dunavan Boating Center on the west side of Veteran's Memorial Park and fit in well with improvements constructed by the Recreation and Parks Department for the 2008 boating season. Thanks to the vision of Department Director Mike Mocciaie and the good work of the Department's staff, the building has been completely refurbished and restroom and shower facilities are now provided for visiting boaters.

When preparing the displays, the Commission found an aerial photo of the harbor thought to be from around 1940. This photo shows a much different shoreline along Seaview Avenue than the one we have now and helps us understand an important part of the harbor's history. In the photo, much of what's now Vet's Park seems surrounded by dikes, suggesting that landfill is being added to create parkland. Also,

a single dock is seen just south of Washington Street in the area of the present-day boating center.

One question that came to mind is "Are the landfill and dock related to past dredging of the harbor?" The answer is yes. We know that dredging

Photos courtesy of the Norwalk Museum



Geoff Steadman, 2007

occurred during the period of the photo and that dredged material was used to fill-in the Seaview Avenue garbage dump to create Seaview Avenue Park, later named Veteran's Memorial Park. The dump was an environmental liability that had

festered for decades, polluting the harbor until shellfishermen sued the city in 1929 and the dump was closed.



We also know that the city, as a condition of early federal dredging, was required to provide diked areas for disposal of dredged material. Apparently, those diked areas helped shape the park and "remediate" the dump.

As for the dock in the old photo, the city was also required by the federal government to provide public wharves and one of them was just south of the Washington Street bridge. Today, this area includes the boat launching ramps and the Norwalk Visitors' Dock which are part of the David S. Dunavan Boating Center.

Named for a former commission chairman whose contributions to harbor stewardship were unsurpassed, the boating center is today the city's focal point and central facility for public boating activities. In contrast to the effects of the old Seaview Avenue dump, the boating center's vessel-waste pump-out station now helps to maintain and improve water quality in the harbor and Long Island Sound.

Issues concerning dredging and dredged material disposal



David S. Dunavan Boating Center

are still with us in 2008, but opportunities to fill old garbage dumps and create parkland in the harbor are not. Today, the typical

method of disposing of dredged material is to place the material in designated sites in Long Island Sound. Our old photo helps us think about the many strides the city has since made with respect to managing the harbor in the public's interest. We're also reminded, however, that in 2008 the state and federal process now required to dredge the harbor (12 years and counting) is considerably more difficult than at any time in the past ■



Chairman Anthony Mabilia, left, presents The David S. Dunavan Award to John Frank.

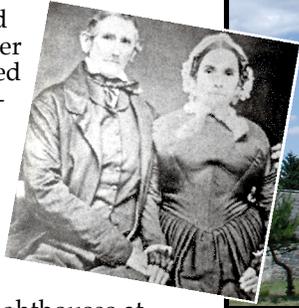
AT THE 2007 ANNUAL STATE OF THE HARBOR MEETING, THE COMMISSION GAVE ITS DAVID S. DUNAVAN NORWALK HARBOR STEWARDSHIP AWARD TO JOHN FRANK, CHAIRMAN OF THE NORWALK SHELLFISH COMMISSION. MR. FRANK HAS LONG DEMONSTRATED HIS COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.

Lighting the Way for 140 Years

"A morsel of genuine history is a thing so rare as to be always valuable" Thomas Jefferson (in a letter to John Adams 1817)

By Susan A. Snider, Executive Director, Norwalk Seaport Association

In 1804, a Revolutionary War veteran named Captain Robert Sheffield purchased what became known as Sheffield and Tavern Islands. Sheffield married a Mayflower descendant named Temperance Doty. They had a daughter, also named Temperance, who married Gershom Smith, a widower with one son. Smith moved to the island, and the couple eventually had a total of twelve children. Smith would become the first Keeper of the Sheffield Island Lighthouse.



Temperance and Gershom Smith



In 1826, agents of the US Treasury Department (which was in charge of lighthouses at that time) decided that the western end of Sheffield Island was the most suitable spot for a Norwalk Harbor light. By the middle of the next year, a 30-foot stone tower had been constructed. Eight people applied for the Keeper position for the new lighthouse, and Gershom Smith was chosen.

There had long been complaints from mariners that the lights at Sheffield

Island station were not bright enough, and that the tower was too short for the light to be properly seen. With the end of the Civil War, shipping traffic in the harbor increased, and in 1867 Congress appropriated funds to build a new lighthouse and keeper's quarters.

And so was built the current Sheffield Island Lighthouse. The Lighthouse is a

two and a half story, ten room structure built of granite blocks. The cast-iron light tower rises to a height of 46 feet. The beacon was a fourth order Fresnel lens apparently transferred from the original lighthouse built on Sheffield Island. To this day the mystery remains of what happened to the Beacon's lens.

The Norwalk Seaport Association purchased the lighthouse from the Stabell family in 1986. Since that time our mission has been to increase awareness, appreciation and consideration for our environment and how the preservation of historic buildings and nature contribute to our quality of life.

It is our belief that preservation strengthens the perpetual partnership between the past, the present and the future. The combination of the Lighthouse and the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge offers an unparalleled opportunity to educate both children and adults about the importance of preserving Long Island Sound, our environment and maritime heritage. For more information please visit our website www.seaport.org or call (203) 838-9444 ■

The Drain Project Remains the Largest Federally Funded Program of its Kind

By Tony D'Andrea, Mayor's Water Quality Committee Chairman

The City of Norwalk's storm-drain filter project started as a concept developed by the Soundkeeper and the City. Terry Backer, joined with the City of Norwalk, the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative and the Maritime Aquarium to protect Norwalk's fragile harbor ecosystem and Long Island Sound. All parties have stated and demonstrated their support to reduce and eliminate nonpoint source pollution and have committed time, manpower and resources to clean up local waterways.

The over \$500,000 project involved installing catch basin filters into storm drains in South Norwalk. These filters catch trash, debris, animal waste, hydrocarbons, oil, grease, bacteria and toxins before they enter the harbor.

In large part, the cost of the project was underwritten by the U.S. EPA as a result of legislation sponsored by U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman. Other funds were raised by private organizations and local environmental groups. The Norwalk DPW manages, oversees and coordinates all issues for this project.

The Filter Project remains the largest federally funded program of its kind. Special thanks also go out to the folks at Abtech, the manufacturer of the catch basin filters (used in this project) for their guidance, advice and support.

The Filter Project is a part of DPW's storm water management improvement program and involved fitting over 275 storm drains with high-technology filtration systems. The filters do not allow sediment, silt, leaves etc.. to enter the storm

water system thereby removing them from the Sound. The filtering material is "chemically selective", absorbing pollutants and permanently locking them inside the filter system. Once contaminants are absorbed they cannot leak back into the environment. It has also been demonstrated that the filter technology destroys bacteria and reduces fungi.

There are an estimated 10,000 drains in the city. If the city were to retrofit the most critical areas that lead to the Long Island Sound, which is approximately 25% or 2,500 drains, it is estimated that over 172,000 pounds of trash and debris would be removed from storm water runoff over the period of one year. This equates to 1,550 cubic feet or 57 cubic yards of trash, sediment and debris, that would otherwise have to be dredged from the Sound.

Several other storm drain filter projects are in the works. Both Marvin Beach and Veteran's Park areas currently have different

manufacturers' storm filter systems installed. Evaluations and comparisons are being developed.

The precious jewel that is Long Island Sound is worth saving. If pollutants cannot be eliminated at their source, programs such as the Filter Project are imperative to the continued viability, health and future of Norwalk, its citizens and its harbor ■



DPW workers installing filter



Four Decades Later, Seven Becomes Three

By Michael Griffin, Harbor Master

...when we're talking about the power cables between Norwalk's Manresa Island power station and the Northport Long Island power station. In 1969 almost four decades ago seven power cables manufactured, delivered and installed by Pirelli Cable Systems were placed into service between the Connecticut and New York power stations.

The original seven cables containing insulating fluid had reached or exceeded their anticipated life-expectancy and had been physically damaged over fifty times in their service history. In most cases damage was caused by external forces such as anchors or steel tow line being dragged across the cable corridor. On two occasions all seven cables were damaged by anchor strikes resulting in repair costs averaging \$15 million per incident. In all instances, cables were damaged by strikes in areas of the seabed where they were not buried.

Damage to the cables caused the release of insulating fluid into the environment. In 1994 and 1995 the Connecticut Health Department closed the shellfish beds in Norwalk Harbor for eight months while they investigated the potential negative effects of this fluid on shellfish. The original seven cables when installed were buried by clamshell bucket in open water from the installation barge and by backhoe in near shore areas.

The original seven cables that now have been totally removed were replaced with three solid-core conductors, each operating independently of each other. Within these cables there are no insulating fluids used. Instead, a polyethylene product is woven in to help cool the cables.

The cable removal and replacement project began in September, 2007. The first step was the draining of all fluid from the system. This was accomplished by pressure being applied on the Connecticut side of the cables forcing the fluid to be captured on the Long Island side. After the fluid

was fully evacuated, the seven cables were flushed repeatedly, and the flushing liquid captured and disposed of in an environmentally safe manner. In October the cable removal project by Nexan's Norway AS / Durocher Marine began. The cables were cut on both sides of the Sound with an end raised up on a float barge. At that point, the cables were extracted from the seabed using a silt containment device and cut into manageable lengths for later transfer and disposition at a scrap yard.

In the winter, the three new cables arrived from Norway aboard the vessel C/S Skagerrak, a 328' cable laying-ship weighing 6600 metric tons. A one piece cable was housed in a drum type devise and then wheeled out, allowing for three continuous solid cables from station to station, that were cut to length with no splices or joints.

Burying the cables lying on the seabed floor was the next challenge. The cables needed to be buried below the seabed for protection from strikes by external sources. This was accomplished with the use of waterjetting equipment. The burying process was accomplished with a minimal amount of disturbance to the bottom environment. The process successfully managed the volume of silt released into the water column through the effective use of a silt containment system.

The project is in its final stage with a full return to customer service expected by July of 2008. The project when finished will have taken approximately ten months at a cost of nearly one hundred and fifty million dollars ■



Harbor Master Griffin with the vessel C/S Skagerrak



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For state information: www.ctharbormanagement.org

Norwalk Harbor: The Jewel of Long Island Sound