

ISLAND PLAN

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF THE VINEYARD

c/o MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION
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Natural Environment Work Group on Recreation Subtopic Meeting Notes of
February 13, 2007, 12 noon, MVC

Present – Work Group Members: Leah Smith (Core) (lead on Recreation), Tom Wallace (Core)(Chair), Tim Boland (Core), Dick Johnson (Core), Will Geresy, David Nash, John Varkonda, Donald Liptak, Chris Kennedy, Janet Messineo-Israel, John Dropick, Megan Ottens-Sargent
Present – MVC Staff: Jo-Ann Taylor, Mark London

1. Introduction

Leah Smith introduced the draft Recreation Summary and invited general comment. Receiving none, she invited comments on the goals in turn.

2. Goal #1 Residents and visitors should have access to the Vineyard's beaches and shoreline for a variety of recreational activities in a diverse array of settings. These activities include fishing, shellfishing, walking, sitting and swimming.

- Terms of access were discussed – access should be by road, so that elderly and immobile can reach the shore – point access should be about every 5 miles – this should be mapped, and it's possible that there is access every 5 miles for most of the Vineyard – should be legal public access.
- The fishermen were asked to identify spots that would be particularly good to gain access, aside from the general every five miles point.
- In addition to mapping access, the public should be informed of hours and seasons of availability, Squibnocket Beach access to general public before 9 A.M. and after 5 P.M., e.g.
- Particular concern was expressed for lack of public access on the North Shore between Tashmoo and Menemsha.
- The Island Plan could provide information to the public, promote general recreational access and note what is inappropriate access.
- Access to great ponds is important too, particularly for shellfishing.
 - Upon citizen initiative, there may soon be a petition submitted to request a hearing regarding great pond access, utilizing Chapter 91 Section 18A.
 - There was a comment that this method was used on Cape Cod, so there should be case studies available.

- On Cape Cod, there has also been research into finding old town accesses that have been encroached... this can be done by title searches, the historical museum, and anecdotal sources.
- On Nantucket, public access is celebrated in contrast to the lack and resistance here. On Nantucket, beach access was secured informally by almost militant opposition to owners' trying to keep people off.
- Kayaking and canoeing were also mentioned as activities requiring access to ocean and great ponds.

3. Goal # 2 Residents and visitors should enjoy a diverse experience of walking, cycling and horseback riding trails, with cross connections.

- There are existing regulations for some special ways, through the MVC's Island Road District, that primarily address construction in the vicinity, rather than creating physical access.
- The trails committee of the Chappaquiddick Island Association has had success with a community-based outreach program to link trails on Chappy, based on a good neighbor policy. This approach could be encouraged to link connections elsewhere on the Vineyard. We could explore how much of the Island is covered by neighborhood associations to help in such and outreach program.
- The "bold idea" of greenways should be explored early in the Island Plan process (alternative to trails), if the Work Group is interested, because that can't be wedged in as an afterthought.

4. Goal #3 Encourage landowners to allow access for those who would use the land lightly and respect the property.

- There was a discussion of what the impediments are to owners' allowing access.
 - Financial incentive might be helpful for land-rich and cash-poor owners, but not for the very wealthy waterfront owners. Cape towns give 90% reduction of appraisal when public access is provided, e.g.
 - The MVC has adopted an Open Space Policy for open space in subdivisions and other DRI projects.
 - Liability and damage issues could be addressed in a risk management plan that could include an insurance pool.
 - Privacy is an issue for some owners.
 - A package could be prepared outlining liability issues and realities, etc. for owners to consider providing access.
 - Some landowners' experience with the Land Bank has given them reassurance about risks and has helped establish ameliorating green screening to help with privacy. This could be considered as a model of how to proceed with landowners.
- There was some discussion of the perceived trend for owners to not allow informal access as in years past. There was some disagreement that there really was free and easy access, but more that people knew each other and allowed hunters etc. on their land because they knew

them. We are getting to be less and less a community where everyone knows everyone else, and new owners are more reluctant to allow access.

5. Others

- There was a brief discussion of including some reference to motorized recreation such as dirt bikes, ATV's, snowmobiles and jet skis.
 - The users could secure a designated area, like the skateboarders did, but it would be difficult for most users who don't drive to get to such a place. They tend to go to the nearest place, and trespass.
 - The Island Plan could identify places where they should NOT go, such as the State Forest (where Comm. Mass standards rule out the area).

6. Next Meetings

- Core – Wednesday, March 7, 11:00 A.M., upstairs at MVC – review work group progress
- *Biodiversity meeting subsequently set for February 23, 12-1:30 at MVC*
- *Character meeting subsequently set for March 5, 12-1:30 at MVC*

Notes prepared by Jo-Ann Taylor