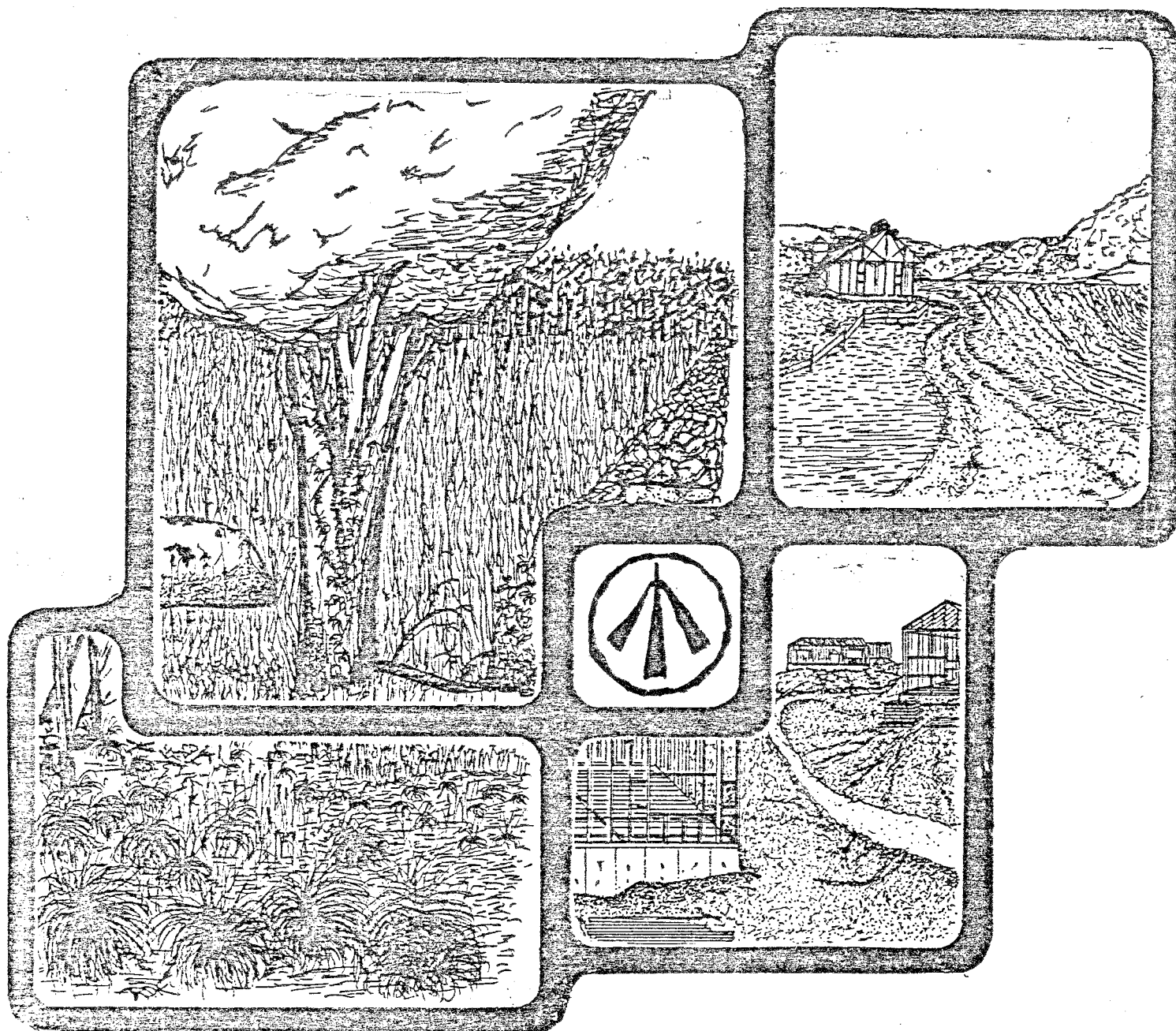


# ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT



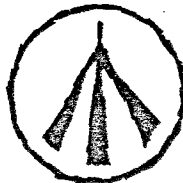
FAYERWEATHER ISLAND

BRIDGEPORT, CT

KING'S MARK  
RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT AREA

**KING'S MARK  
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT**

**FAYERWEATHER ISLAND  
BRIDGEPORT, CT  
MARCH 1985**



King's Mark Resource Conservation and Development Area  
Environmental Review Team  
Sackett Hill Road  
Warren, Connecticut 06754

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Federal Agencies

U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service

## State Agencies

Department of Environmental Protection  
Department of Health  
University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service  
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## Local Groups and Agencies

Litchfield County Soil and Water Conservation District  
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Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Planning Agency  
Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials  
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Regional Planning Agency of South Central Connecticut  
Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency  
American Indian Archaeological Institute  
Housatonic Valley Association

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. HIGHLIGHTS.....	3
III. TOPOGRAPHY AND SETTING.....	6
IV. NATURAL HISTORY.....	6
V. GEOLOGY.....	9
VI. HYDROLOGY AND WATER RESOURCES.....	11
VII. SOILS.....	13
VIII. EROSION CONTROL.....	14
IX. PLANT COMMUNITIES.....	14
X. RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES.....	17
XI. LANDSCAPING.....	18
XII. RECREATION POTENTIAL.....	23
XIII. ADDITIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS.....	25
XIIII. APPENDIX: PARTIAL LIST OF PLANTS GROWING ON FAYERWEATHER ISLAND.....	27

## LIST OF FIGURES

1	Topographic Map.....	1
2	Site Features.....	7
3	Soils.....	10
4	Vegetation Areas.....	16



# FAYERWEATHER ISLAND

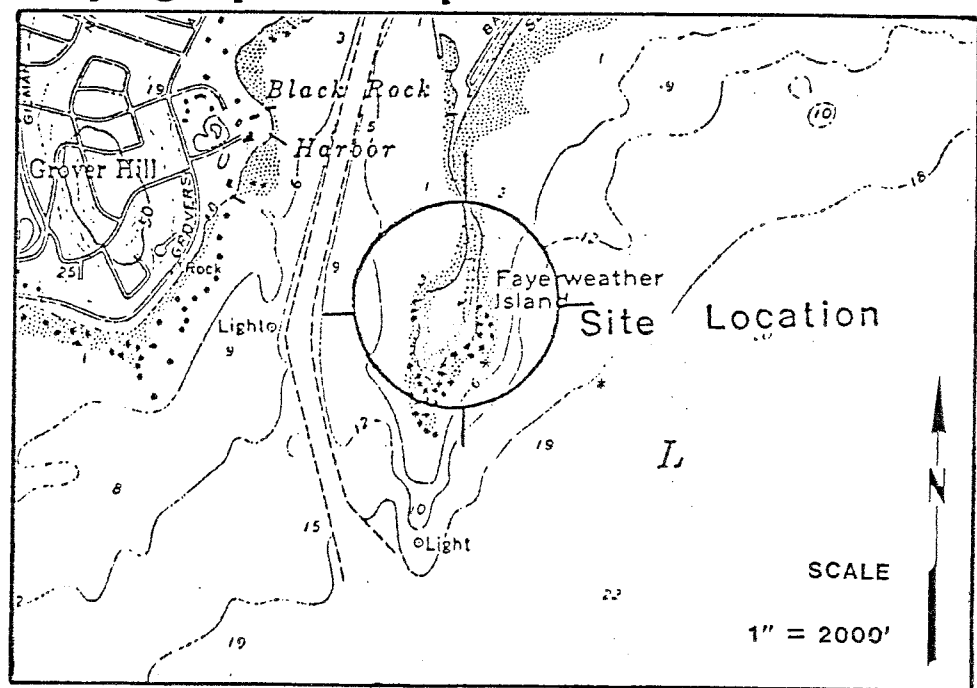
## I. Introduction

The preparation of this report on Fayerweather Island was requested by the Bridgeport Superintendent of Parks.

Fayerweather Island is approximately 9 acres in size and is located at the mouth of Black Rock Harbor in Long Island Sound. The site is characterized by a diverse landscape of beaches, wetlands, and uplands. The Island also contains a trail network, 160-year old lighthouse, old house foundation, and variety of flora and fauna. Access to the Island is available from the north off Barnum Boulevard (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

### Topographic Map



The Black Rock Community Council and the Friends of Seaside Park are seeking to have the Island preserved as a wildlife sanctuary and to enhance the public use and enjoyment of the Island. Towards this end, they have prepared a ten-point plan which includes cleanup of the Island, a planting plan, improvement of the present pathway system, an interpretive nature trail, preparation of a guidebook, establishment of a signpost, lighthouse restoration and securing, provision for two summer intern rangers, and

seawall repairs. The total project cost is estimated at \$26,900 (seawall repair not included). At this writing, a number of these projects have already been initiated or completed.

The Bridgeport Superintendent of Parks requested this ERT study to assist those parties working towards the protection and enhanced enjoyment of Fayerweather Island. Specifically, the ERT was asked to prepare a natural resource inventory of the Island, and to discuss the opportunities and limitations of the site for the envisioned uses.

The King's Mark Executive Committee considered the town's request and approved the project for review by the Team.

The ERT met and field reviewed the area on March 28, 1984. Team members participating on this review included Marc Beroz, Soil Scientist, U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service; Robert Dlugolenski, Recreation Specialist, CT Department of Environmental Protection; Shirley Rasmussen, Regional Planner, Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency; Ron Rosza, Coastal Ecologist, CT Department of Environmental Protection; Dave Thompson, District Conservationist, U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service; James T. Wang, Regional Planner, Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency; Bill Warzecha, Geohydrologist, CT Department of Environmental Protection.

Prior to the field review day, each team member was provided with a summary of the proposed project, a checklist of concerns to address, a topographic map, and an "outline of proposed plantings map". During the ERT's field review, team members met with representatives from the Bridgeport Department of Parks and the Friends of Seaside Park and walked the property. Following the field review individual reports were prepared by each team member and forwarded to the ERT Coordinator for compilation and editing into this final report.

This report presents the team's findings. The report identifies the natural resource base of Fayerweather Island and discusses opportunities and limitations for land management. All conclusions and final decisions with regard to future land use rest with the Friends of Seaside Park and the City of Bridgeport. It is hoped the information contained in this report will promote environmentally sound decision-making.

If any clarification of the Team's report is required, please contact Richard Lynn (868-7342), Environmental Review Team Coordinator, King's Mark RC&D Area, Sackett Hill Road, Warren, Connecticut 06754.

## II. Highlights

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1. Fayerweather Island is an earth surface feature referred to as a "spit". A spit may be defined as a small point of land, especially of sand and gravel, running into a body of water. Fayerweather Island contains another earth surface feature known as a "tombolo". A tombolo may be defined as a gravel or sand bar that connects an island with the mainland. (p. 1)
2. Fayerweather Island is an extremely vulnerable entity. The re-establishment of a perimeter defense system is essential for the long term protection of the island. Serious consideration should be given to extending the seawall along the eastern shore of the island to the lighthouse. This could be accomplished by utilizing a small bulldozer at the site and re-shaping the existing stone piles in this area to form a protective wall. Such a structure would break the force of the tidal waves in this vicinity and help ensure the future character of the island. Without such protection, the benefits derived from the ten items in the "Fayerweather Island Plan" may be of short duration. (p. 9)
3. The only soil map unit on the site that is poorly suited for paths and trails is a wetland soil in the southcentral portion of the island. Footpaths should not cross this area although an elevated boardwalk may be feasible. The layout and maintenance of any path on the island must be done carefully. The island is exposed to severe weather conditions. Anywhere that the soil surface is disturbed may be subject to severe wind or wave erosion. A thick ground cover of native species should be maintained on either side of the path surfaces. (p. 13)
4. If Fayerweather Island is to meet its full public use potential, it is imperative that improved pedestrian access be provided and that the integrity of the seawall be preserved. The top surface of the seawall is presently too hazardous to encourage public use. An inexpensive and sound procedure for repairing the seawall would be to fill the interstices between the rocks with modified riprap. This procedure would provide a safe walking surface and would tie the existing rocks into a more resistant network. Some annual repair would be required, but the cost of repair and maintenance combined would be less than the cost of conventional seawall construction. (p. 14)
5. The common plant communities at Fayerweather Island are briefly described and discussed in the text. (p. 14)
6. There are two rare species of concern at this location. The first is a coastal bird called the Piping Plover which nests on sandy beaches. While there is no confirmation that this



species nests at this location, the occurrence of its nesting habitat suggests that it may nest here. The Piping Plover is rare in Connecticut and is presently proposed to be listed as a national rare and endangered species. An effort should be made in early spring to survey the island, especially the gravelly beach areas, to search for this species. If Piping Plovers are found to nest on the island, some form of protection should be afforded to the nest. (p. 17)

7. The second rare species is a plant called Southern Sea Lavender. Sea Lavender grows along the upland border of the interior tidal wetlands. If the Lavender population is to be protected at Fayerweather Island, the public must be made aware of the importance of the colonies here and discouraged from harvesting Lavender at this site. Perhaps the simplest means of affording Lavender protection is by the construction of a sign. The sign could be erected near the parking lot and would simply indicate that the Sea Lavender is rare and should not be harvested. The sign would not lead vandals directly to the population but would inform people who currently know how to recognize Lavender, that this plant is rare and should not be collected. (p. 17)
8. Native plants adapted to exposed coastal locations in Connecticut should be the primary plants used in landscaping Fayerweather Island. Such plants are tolerant of exposure and their utilization avoids the introduction of exotic plants that have the potential to spread and displace native vegetation. The use of exotic plants does not serve the purpose of attempting to re-establish historic site conditions that once existed on the island. The primary trees and shrubs that should be used are as follows: Post Oak, Juneberry, Wild Black Cherry, Eastern Red Cedar, Beach Plum and Bayberry. (p. 21)
9. Tree-of-Heaven is a pestiferous plant that will continue to spread and perhaps even displace recent plantings. Consideration should be given toward the need to control this plant. Another plant that should be considered for eradication is Reed which grows along the borders of the tidal wetland and is displacing more typical vegetation types. (p. 22)
10. The overall plan for Fayerweather Island is a good one in the opinion of the Team's recreation specialist. Each of the projects proposed in the plan is important and will need to be accomplished to help reach the plan's intended goals. However, it is suggested that the development of an interpretive program be given a special emphasis and a high priority, as discussed in the text. (p. 23)

11. *The continuity of Fayerweather Island with Seaside Park is supported by planning documents at the municipal, regional and state level. This continuity should be reinforced, one possible means being to improve accommodations for bicycle riders. Parking and automobile access to the parking lot will be adequate once Barnum Boulevard is reopened. (p. 26)*

### III. Topography and Setting

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The ± 9 acre Fayerweather Island is located at the mouth of Black Rock Harbor in Long Island Sound. The site is characterized by a diverse landscape of beaches, uplands and wetlands. Land surface throughout the island ranges from relatively flat to gently sloping. Elevations on the site range from near sea level to probably not more than 20 feet above mean sea level.

Fayerweather Island is an earth surface feature referred to as a "spit". A spit may be defined as a small point of land, especially of sand and gravel, running into a body of water. Fayerweather Island contains another earth surface feature known as a "tombolo". A tombolo may be defined as a gravel or sand bar that connects an island with the mainland. A seawall (or breakwater) constructed of rocks indigenous to the State (e.g., schists, gneisses, pegmatites, brownstone) was built on top of the tombolo that connects Fayerweather Island to the mainland.

A small pond is located in the salt marsh at the western limits of the island (see Figure 2).

### IV. Natural History

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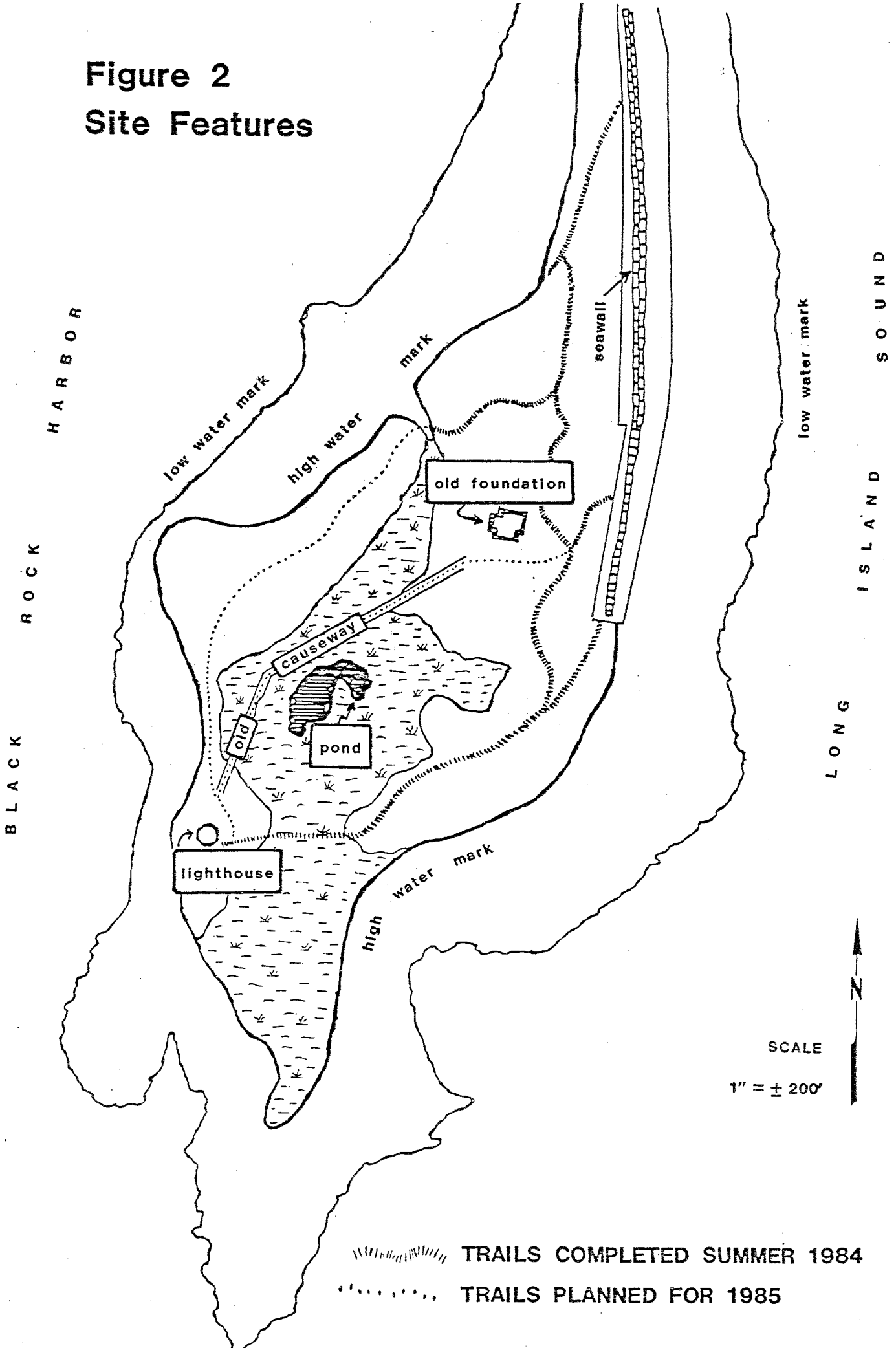
The following is a chronology of the alteration of Fayerweather Island over the past forty years based on observation of file aerial photography.

Summer 1941. The island is approximately twelve acres in area at the high tide line. Salt marshes extend seaward approximately fifty feet at the point of intersection of the seawall and the north end of the island, and at the southern terminus of the seawall. It appears this disturbance has been caused primarily by wave action, but also, to a much lesser extent, by an excavation, possibly for a small pond. There are three ponds on the island; one in the interior marsh west of the house, one at the westerly end of the stone causeway on the south side and the one mentioned above that is approximately two hundred feet due south of the house.

For reference, the pond at the westerly end of the causeway is 300' from the tide line on the easterly shore, 600' from the southern tip of the island, and 100' from the westerly tide line.

Fall 1951. The island now measures approximately 12.8 acres. This increase is due to the enrichment of the westerly shore line. The salt marshes still exist; the disturbed area has enlarged to 1.2 acres and is progressing

**Figure 2**  
**Site Features**



 TRAILS COMPLETED SUMMER 1984  
 TRAILS PLANNED FOR 1985

northerly and across the southern end of the island. Only two ponds remain. The pond south of the house has been engulfed by the enlarged disturbed area. The perimeter ridge on the south shore has been breached; tidal flow enters the central marsh from the south and flows out at the north into Black Rock Harbor. The only woody vegetation remaining is on the southern tip of the island and immediately adjacent to the house. The rest of the island, except the western perimeter ridge which is barren, has only herbaceous vegetation.

The reference pond is now 100' from the easterly tide line, 500' from the southern tip of the island and still 100' from the westerly tide line.

Summer 1963. The island once again is about 12 acres. All of the added shoreline along the westerly side has been washed away. The salt marshes are indistinct. The disturbed area is now 2.4 acres and advancing. A few trees remain around the house but the woody vegetation which existed at the tip of the island in 1951 is gone. Overall, the vegetation on the island is less dense. The land immediately south of the lighthouse is beginning to erode.

The reference pond is enlarging in an easterly direction. It appears that a channel is developing, connecting the pond to the sound. The pond is now 90' from the tide line on the easterly shore, 300' from the southern tip of the island and about 80' from the westerly tide line.

Spring 1976. The southern tip of the island has receded dramatically. The island is now about nine acres. The salt marshes are not visible. The disturbed area is now five acres and beginning to advance northerly along the inboard side of the seawall. Erosion south of the lighthouse is advancing north-easterly. Virtually all of the protective ridge along the south and south easterly perimeter of the island has disappeared. The reference pond is now subject to tidal flow from the south. The footprint of the island is greatly enlarged due to the distribution of the eroded soil around the shoreline.

The reference pond is still 90' from the tide line on the easterly shoreline, 250' from the southern tip of the island, and about 70' from the westerly tide line.

Spring 1980. The land mass inboard of the tide line is now approximately 8 acres. These eight acres consist of the western ridge and an area around the house. Tidal flows pass through the interior marsh on a regular basis. The tideline along the south end of the island has reached the causeway.

1984. The erosion of the southerly and southwesterly shoreline continues. The fact that the tide rises uniformly around the island has protected the outlet channel of the interior marsh from cutting. Should this balance be upset, and a tidal flow is created, the island will become divided.

The lighthouse location is in jeopardy; the tide line is virtually at the south side of the structure.

The Future. As can be seen from this brief discussion, Fayerweather Island is an extremely vulnerable entity. It is being assaulted from three sides by the waters of the Sound; its natural defenses have been penetrated, its future is uncertain.

The re-establishment of a perimeter defense system is essential for the long term protection of the island. Serious consideration should be given to extending the seawall along the eastern shore of the island to the lighthouse. This could be accomplished by utilizing a small bulldozer at the site and re-shaping the existing stone piles in this area to form a protective wall. Such a structure would break the force of the tidal waves in this vicinity and help ensure the future character of the island. Without such protection, the benefits derived from the ten items in the "Fayerweather Island Plan" may be of short duration.

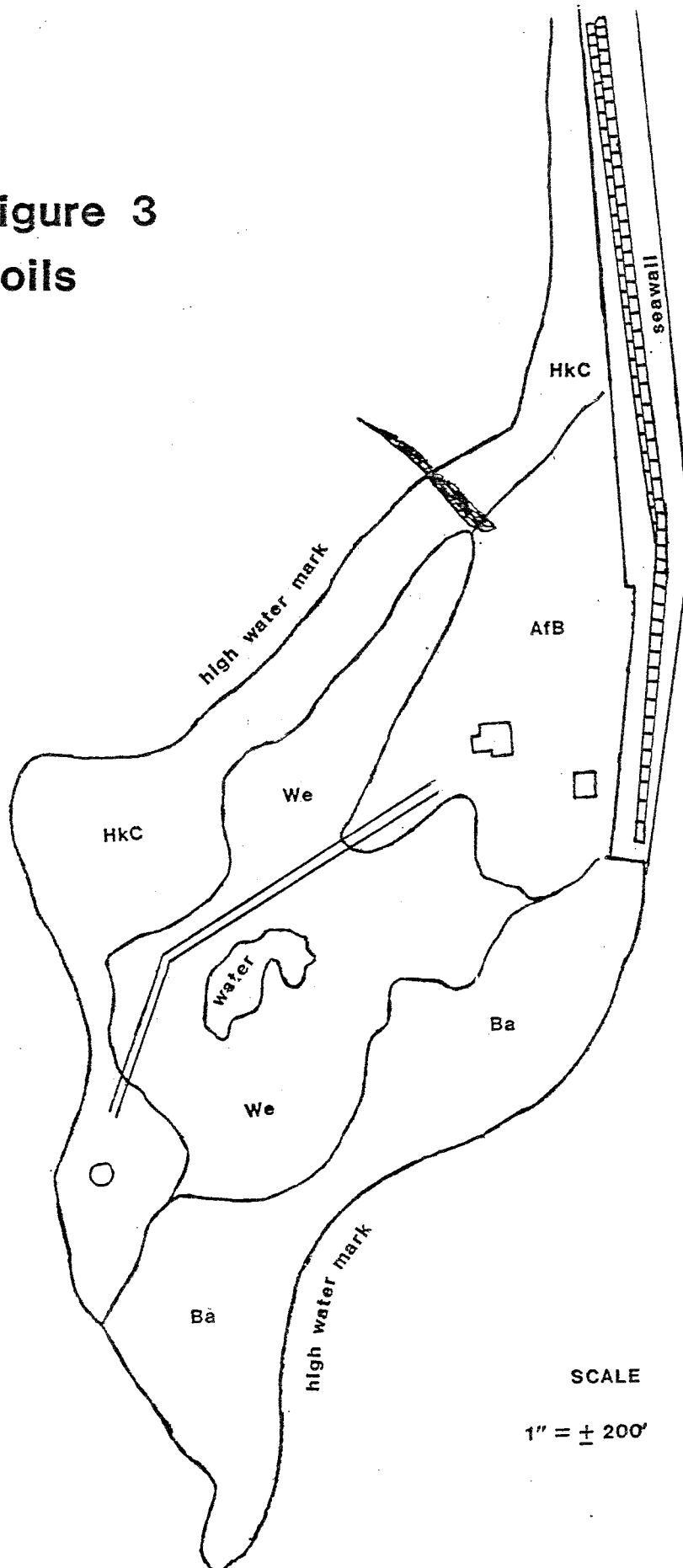
## V. Geology

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Fayerweather Island is located within the Bridgeport topographic quadrangle. The bedrock geology of the quadrangle was mapped by William P. Crowley and published by the Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey in 1968 as Quadrangle Report No. 24. The surficial geologic map for the quadrangle has not been published to date. Nevertheless, several publications which include surficial geologic information for the area were referenced in the preparation of this portion of the report. These publications include the following: Soil Survey for Fairfield County; soils map prepared by the Team's Soil Scientist (see Figure 3); Connecticut Water Resources Bulletin No. 17 (Southwestern Coastal River Basin); the Coastal Resources map prepared by the Coastal Area Management Program, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection; and "Glacial Geology of Connecticut", by Richard Foster Flint.

No bedrock exposures are visible on Fayerweather Island. Map QR-24 classifies the bedrock underlying the land as Cook's Pond schist. This rock consists of fine-grained, rusty-weathering schist and is composed of the minerals biotite, muscovite and quartz. The rock is

Figure 3  
Soils



characterized by a distinctive sheen due to the presence of fine-grained graphite interleaved with mica minerals (i.e., biotite and muscovite). The Cook's Pond schist trends through the Bridgeport quadrangle as a relatively thin band in a SW-NE direction. The term "schist" is used for metamorphic (geologically altered) rocks in which thin, elongate, platy or flaky minerals, (i.e., muscovite and biotite), are predominant and aligned giving the rocks a layered structure.

Most of Fayerweather Island is covered by sediments deposited by glacial meltwaters. These sediments, which are composed predominantly of silt, sand, and gravel-sized particles, were sorted by meltwater streams emanating from glacial ice. Because the island is often subjected to severe weather conditions (e.g., coastal storms, hurricanes, gales) most of the surficial deposits have been extensively re-worked by marine processes. Connecticut Water Resources Bulletin No. 17 suggests that the thickness of the meltwater deposits may be as much as 90 feet.

Overlying the stratified drift in the central parts of the Island are salt marsh deposits. They consist of partly decomposed organic material mixed or interbedded with estuarine silt, mud and sand. The water table is at or near ground surface throughout most of the year. Salt marsh deposits are delineated by the symbol We (Westbrook soils) in Figure 3.

The final surficial deposits found on the island are beach deposits. These deposits, which cover the southeast limits, consist chiefly of well sorted sand and pebble gravel interbedded with cobble sized rock. They were deposited by current and wave action.

#### GEOLOGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS

Passive recreation development appears to be the most appropriate use of the island. From a geological perspective, the upland areas appear to be the most suitable for construction of hiking trails or footpaths. Wetland areas, which are delineated by the symbol We on the soils map, should be avoided for the most part since water is at or near ground surface throughout most of the year. These areas can be successfully crossed, however, with elevated boardwalks. If sanitary facilities were to be made available on the island, it would require the extension of public utility lines (i.e., water, sewers, etc.) to service the island.

## **VI. Hydrology and Water Resources**

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Surface runoff in the eastern limits of the island is shed eastward into Long Island Sound. Surface runoff in the central and western portions is shed westward either direct-



ly into Black Rock Harbor or into the small pond and/or wetland system in the western limits of the island. Surface water in the pond and/or wetland system ultimately outlets into Black Rock Harbor. Rain falling on the island, which is not shed across the surface of the land toward Long Island Sound, percolates downward through the permeable soils until it reaches the groundwater table. Once it reaches the groundwater table it moves slowly by the force of gravity to discharge areas, where it flows or seeps out of the ground and becomes part of the surface water, such as Long Island Sound, the small pond in the western limits of the island or wetland areas.

A Flood Insurance Rate Map for the city of Bridgeport has been published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency/Federal Insurance Administration. This map identifies areas which would be subject to low frequency flooding and would lie within the 100-year and 500-year flood boundary. From time to time, major storms and related flooding do occur in these areas. According to historical information (Black Rock Lighthouse) supplied to Team members, the island has been hit by severe gales (storms) at least once every fifty years during the past 160 years. While it is impossible to predict exactly when such storms will occur, it is possible to make a correlation between the elevation of a given location and the probability that it will be flooded. Low-lying areas in the central and western portions of the island are clearly more likely to be flooded than for example the upland area of the island along the eastern limits. Geological research can determine the long term average probability that water will reach a given flood elevation. For instance, if the flooding probability is 1% in a given year, there will be a flood of that magnitude or greater on the average of once every 100 years (100-year flood). The area so defined lies within the "100-year flood boundary". If the probability is .2%, or one in five hundred, the location is within the 500-year flood boundary. According to the FEMA map, approximately one acre along the upland area in the eastern limits of the site lies within an area which would be subjected to flooding during a 100-year storm. The remaining portions of the island lie within the 500-year flood boundary.

Because the island is easily subject to coastal storms, the construction of buildings should be discouraged. Also, because access to the island is limited, emergency vehicles (fire trucks, ambulances, etc.) would have a difficult time responding to a possible emergency or emergencies on the island. Access to the island by boat would probably also be limited, since most of the island is surrounded by large rocks.

## VII. Soils

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Fayerweather Island is composed of three dominant soil types and recent beach deposits. These areas are delineated on Figure 3 and described below.

Ba - The beach area covers the southeast edge of the island. These beach deposits are composed of cobble sized rock that is dominantly less than 10 inches in diameter. There are some thin strata of medium sized sands interbedded with the rock.

Most of the area gets inundated by sea water daily and is devoid of vegetation. Some salt tolerant plants grow among the rocks. Plantings within the beach area are not recommended because of the droughty characteristics of the site in the higher positions and wave action on the lower portions of the site.

We - This area is composed of Westbrook soils on 0 to 1% slopes. These soils are very deep and very poorly drained. They are composed of organic materials 16 to 51 inches thick over loamy mineral deposits. These soils are subject to inundation by salt water with each high tide. The water table is always at or near the surface. Only salt tolerant species should be planted here. The wetness of these soils make them poorly suited for paths and trails.

AfB - Agawam soils are dominant here and occur on slopes of 3 to 8%. These soils are very deep and well drained. Typically they have fine sandy loam and very fine sandy loam textures on the top 35 inches overlying stratified sands and gravels to a depth of 60 inches or more. These soils are well suited for footpaths and other passive recreation.

HkC - This area is composed primarily of soils similar to Hinckly on 3 to 15% slopes. These soils are very deep and excessively drained. They have loamy fine sand and sand surface layers over gravelly and cobbly materials. The thickness of the surface layer is variable and ranges from 0 to 24 inches.

These soils are extremely droughty and plantings may be difficult to establish. In some places the stones and cobbles present on the soil surface make walking difficult.

Other Recommendations - The map unit "We" is the only map unit on the site that is poorly suited for paths and trails. Footpaths should not cross this area although an elevated boardwalk may be feasible. In addition, the layout and maintenance of any path on the island must be done carefully. The island is exposed to severe weather

conditions. Anywhere that the soil surface is disturbed may be subject to severe wind or wave erosion. A thick ground cover of native species should be maintained on either side of the path surfaces where they cross the AfB and HkC map units.

## VIII. Erosion Control

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In addition to the erosion of the shoreline and the remnant headlands, there is serious erosion occurring along the inboard side of the seawall. Surf flowing over the wall has dished out depressions at several points along the northern section. Overflow from these depressions has eroded channels to the interior marsh. Along the southern portion of the seawall, a large channel has been created by water flowing to the disturbed area at the end of the wall.

In both cases, the integrity of the seawall is threatened. These areas need to be restored and armoured to sustain the causal factors. As discussed previously, serious consideration should also be given to extending the seawall along the easterly shore of the Island to the lighthouse in order to better protect the long term integrity of the Island.

### REPAIR OF THE SEAWALL

If Fayerweather Island is to meet its full public use potential, it is imperative that improved pedestrian access be provided and that the integrity of the seawall be preserved. The top surface of the seawall is presently too hazardous to encourage public use. A second and equally important reason for repairing the wall is to allow light construction equipment to gain access to the island.

An inexpensive and sound procedure for repairing the seawall would be to fill the interstices between the rocks with modified riprap. This could be accomplished with a small backhoe-loader from a stockpile at the parking lot. This machine could both retrieve and transport large stones as required for major repairs.

This procedure would provide a safe walking surface and would tie the existing rocks into a more resistant network. Some annual repair would be required, but the cost of repair and maintenance combined would be less than the cost of conventional seawall construction.

## IX. Plant Communities

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The common plant communities are briefly described and discussed below. Appendix 1 includes a partial list of the plants observed growing on Fayerweather Island.

SWITCH GRASS  
COMMUNITY

The dominant upland vegetation type is a grassland dominated by Switch Grass (Panicum virgatum). This grassland reaches its optimum abundance in areas 1 and 2 (see Figure 4). Locally, the grassland cover is interrupted by thickets of Tree-of-Heaven (Ailanthus altissimus). Native plants that are recurring associates in the community include the following:

Small-flowering	Sweet Everlasting
Evening Primrose	Winged Sumac
Panic Grass	Trailing Wild Bean
Salt-meadow Cord- Grass	Sand Sedge
Purple-love Grass	

Also present are a large number of introduced or "exotic" species. Their presence reflects both historic land uses and man-made disturbances in addition to periodic wave erosion and scour which also disturbs the soil. Weeds are generally adapted to disturbed environments, independent of the cause of the disturbance. These are habitats where the biotic competition with native vegetation has been reduced.

BEACHGRASS  
COMMUNITY

The interior portions of the gravelly plain (area 3) have been covered with a mantle of wind blown sands, mostly medium to coarse in texture. On this soil type develops a coastal grassland dominated by American Beachgrass. Associates include Sand Sedge, Wild Rye, Horsetweed, Asparagus and Bouncing-Bet.

WEEDY COMMUNITIES

Over most of the gravelly plain and the gravelly beaches occurs a vegetation type composed primarily of introduced or weedy plants. The common plants here are Alfalfa, Bouncing-Bet, Horsetweed, Quackgrass, Asparagus, Clotbur, Downy Bromegrass and Tree-of-Heaven.

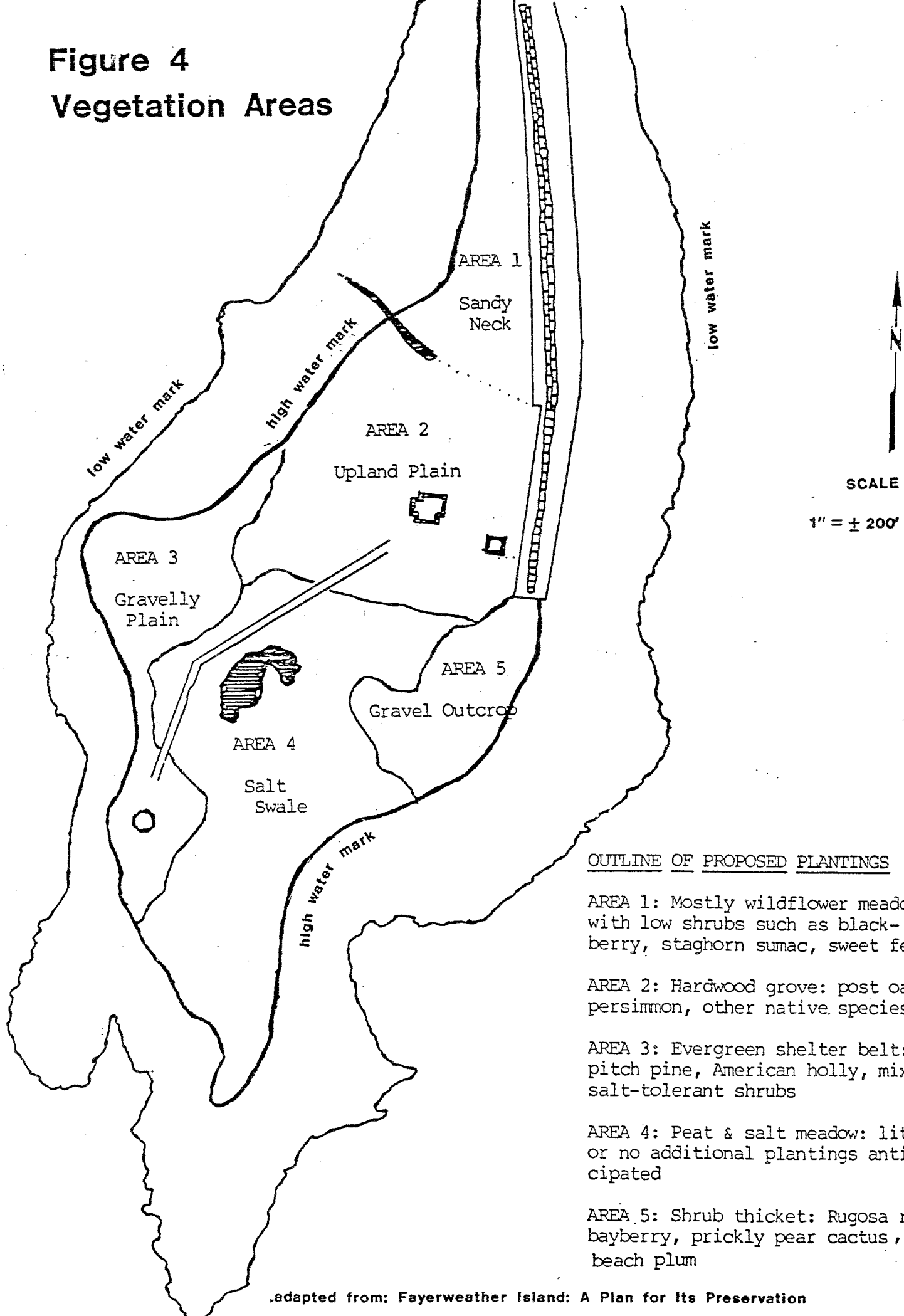
Weeds are prevalent in these areas due to the periodic flooding and wave action that disturbs the habitat. Such disturbance creates a habitat ideally suited for weedy vegetation.

TIDAL WETLAND  
VEGETATION

The tidal wetland vegetation contains a number of communities. The low marsh zone, which grows more or less between mean sea level and mean high water, supports pure colonies of Salt-water Cord-Grass. This vegetation forms a more or less linear and discontinuous zone about the island.

The interior portion of the island contains two more or less discrete tidal wetland areas. Both support mostly high marsh vegetation containing Salt-meadow Cord-Grass and Spike Grass. The area nearest the lighthouse

**Figure 4**  
**Vegetation Areas**



OUTLINE OF PROPOSED PLANTINGS

AREA 1: Mostly wildflower meadow with low shrubs such as black-berry, staghorn sumac, sweet fern

AREA 2: Hardwood grove: post oak, persimmon, other native species

AREA 3: Evergreen shelter belt: pitch pine, American holly, mixed salt-tolerant shrubs

AREA 4: Peat & salt meadow: little or no additional plantings anticipated

AREA 5: Shrub thicket: Rugosa rose bayberry, prickly pear cactus, beach plum

contains a series of small and shallow pools and ponds.

Vegetation along the upland border is variable. The primary border plants are either colonies of the tall grass Reed or thickets of Marsh Elder.

#### WRACKLINE VEGETATION

There is a vegetation that is patchy in its distribution and occupies the upper limits of the beach proper. This is the zone of the beach which is periodically inundated by storm wave activity, especially during the winter season, and is known as the winter wrackline. The inherent instability of the soil by wave action prevents perennial plants from becoming established. Only annual plants occur here, especially Common Saltwort and Pigweed.

### X. Rare and Endangered Species

There are two rare species of concern at this location. The first is a coastal bird called the Piping Plover which nests on sandy beaches. While there is no confirmation that this species nests at this location, the occurrence of its nesting habitat suggests that it may nest here. The Piping Plover is rare in Connecticut and is presently proposed to be listed as a national rare and endangered species. This small shorebird nests exclusively on open sands and gravels of beaches and occasionally dunes. A simple, shallow depression is made in the sand and the nest is lined with shell fragments. Four eggs are usually present in the nest. The eggs are cryptically colored and match the pattern of the sand as a means of camouflage against predators. Nesting takes place in April and May.

The location of the nest on the ground, the simplicity of the nest construction and the cryptic coloration of the eggs makes it difficult to locate; making the nest eggs and young highly vulnerable to pedestrian traffic and activities such as sunbathing. Unleashed dogs are also a serious threat to nesting birds. An effort should be made in early spring to survey the island, especially the gravelly beach areas, to search for this species. If Piping Plovers are found to nest on the island, some form of protection should be afforded to the nest. Given the remote location of the island and the popularity of it for various forms of coastal recreation, this important safeguard may be difficult to implement.

The second rare species is a plant called Southern Sea Lavender (Limonium carolinianum). Sea Lavender grows along the upland border of the interior tidal wetlands. This is a southern coastal species which reportedly reaches its northern range limits on Long Island. The discovery of Lavender at this site represents a minor northward range extension and a new record for Connecticut. The common

lavender in Connecticut called Northern Sea Lavender (Limonium nashii) was not seen on the Island. Since the discovery of Southern Sea Lavender at Fayerweather Island, a second population has been located in Stratford. It is very likely that this plant will be confined to southwestern Connecticut, especially the Bridgeport area, but at this time there is no means of assessing its abundance until additional field surveys are conducted.

Generally, the location of rare and endangered species information is not made public for fear of collecting by botanists, gardeners and developers, to name but a few. However, Sea Lavender is a plant commonly harvested for dry flower arrangements. At times, nurserymen have been observed to collect hundreds of plants from Connecticut's marshes. If the Lavender population is to be protected at Fayerweather Island, the public must be made aware of the importance of the colonies here and discouraged from harvesting Lavender at this site. Perhaps the simplest means of affording Lavender protection is by the construction of a sign. The sign could be erected near the parking lot and would simply indicate that the Sea Lavender is rare and should not be harvested. There are no state laws that protect this species although the City's Park Department could prepare a regulation that would prohibit the collection of Sea Lavender. The sign would not lead vandals directly to the population but would inform people, who currently know how to recognize Lavender, that this plant is rare and should not be collected. Invariably, some casual harvesting will occur but this should not adversely affect the population. Further, Sea Lavender is a perennial and so long as the flowers are harvested and the root system is left intact, the plant will prosper.

## **XI. Landscaping**

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A number of local special interest groups have advocated the restoration of the Island's natural vegetation as it existed in precolonial times. It has been proposed that this would be accomplished by planting or landscaping with native or indigenous plants that once grew on islands like this. According to a recent Fayerweather Island project update, a number of species have been planted on the Island and a number are proposed to be planted. These species can be segregated into a number of groups based upon their origin (e.g., native or introduced) and their geographical distribution in the state. The following is an analysis of the species planted or proposed for planting at Fayerweather Island together with comments on the suitability of certain plants for an exposed coastal site such as this.

a. Plants native to Connecticut's coastal regions

Eastern Red Cedar	Bayberry
Red Maple	Wild Black Cherry
Sweet Pepperbush	Oaks (certain species)
Shadblow or Juneberry	Wild Grape
Gray Birch	Basswood
Beach Plum	Salt Spray Rose

The present planting list for Fayerweather does not specify which species of oaks were planted. The oaks which commonly occur along the coast are Black Oak, Scarlet Oak, Red Oak, Chestnut Oak (patchy distribution along the coast) and Post Oak. The latter is the most salt tolerant species and is therefore the recommended Oak for planting on an exposed coastal island like this one. Also unspecified are the species of Shadblow and grape. The most likely species of Juneberry to be encountered along the coast are Amelanchier canadensis and Amelanchier stolonifera. The former is the taller of the two species and can form dense colonies. Grapes found in the coastal regions include Fox and Summer Grapes. Summer Grape generally has a preference for sunlit sites and hence may be the choice species for the island.

A hardwood grove has been proposed to be established in area 2. This is undoubtedly the best location for such a project given the stable soil conditions and available soil moisture. The best trees for this project are Post Oak, Wild Black Cherry, Juneberry (Amelanchier canadensis) and Red Cedar. The latter is the most salt tolerant of all the native evergreen trees. The best planting strategy might be to establish an evergreen buffer zone of Red Cedar at least on the southern and eastern perimeter of the plain. This would afford the trees planted interior to the buffer additional protection from salt spray. Also, Red Cedar is an attractive diet plant to many types of wintering birds and frequently serves as a roosting site for owls such as Short-eared, Long-eared and Saw-Whet Owls. The tolerance of Red Cedar for dry, coarse textured soils would also make it a preferred plant for the elevated gravel areas such as areas 3 and 5.

Bayberry and Beach Plum are native shrubs that should prosper on the elevated gravel areas and especially the upland plain. Salt Spray or Rugosa Rose is especially tolerant of dry sandy and gravelly areas. It would be the preferred shrub for planting on the gravel areas (3 and 5). Technically, this rose is not an indigenous species but is of Asian origin which has become naturalized in Connecticut and elsewhere. A native rose that possesses some tolerance to salt spray is the Seaside Rose (Rosa virginiana). If selected for planting on the island, this rose should be planted in sheltered locations on area 2.



- b. Plants native to Connecticut but not likely to have been found on Fayerweather Island or neighboring islands in precolonial times

Witch Hazel	Persimmon
Sweet Gum	White Pine
Prickly Pear Cactus	Elderberry
Bur Oak	Willow Oak
American Holly	

Plants like Witch Hazel and Elderberry, while common throughout Connecticut, are not commonly encountered on exposed coastal sites like this. White Pine is also not commonly encountered along the immediate shore which is partially a function of its sensitivity to salt. Coastal trees such as Sweet Gum, Persimmon and American Holly are rare along the coast and there are no historic records for these plants near Fayerweather Island. Persimmon is only known from a single site in the New Haven area and at least one site exists for this plant in Westchester County, New York. The western limits of Sweet Gum in Connecticut is Norwalk and Holly is known from three scattered locations, the nearest being Milford. None of the Holly sites are known to be reported. Bur Oak, if native to Connecticut, has only been reported from limestone areas located in northwestern Connecticut. Willow Oak, a southern coastal oak is known only from one location in eastern Connecticut where it is believed to be planted.

This list does not represent plants indigenous to Fayerweather Island or the neighboring coastal sites and it would alter their native distribution. It would be important, if these rarities are planted here, to place a specimen of each in the herbarium at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. Botanists analyzing the distribution of rare species in the future could establish then, without a doubt, that the Fayerweather Island populations were cultivated and did not establish spontaneously.

c. Plants not native to Connecticut

Jerusalem Artichoke	Japanese Black Pine
Sweet Bay Magnolia	Coralberry
Snowberry	Catalpa
Yucca	Sea Buckthorn
Rosemary	Oswego Tea

In addition to the above, Jack Pine and Trumpet Vine, also exotic species, are proposed to be planted on the Island. Generally, in a natural setting such as this, the sole use of native vegetation would be generally advocated. This avoids the possible introduction of an exotic plant

that would become a pest and displace native vegetation. For example, the colonies of Tree-of-Heaven that exist on the site are presently displacing native vegetation, difficult to eradicate, and will continue to increase in size. As more desirable shrubs and trees are established, the eradication of this tree should be considered. This will require cutting down the trees and any sprouts that are subsequently produced by the roots.

### Recommendations

In reviewing the list of species that have been planted to date, it would appear that a number of plants, exotic both to Connecticut and probably the Island, have been planted. Introduction of exotic plants is a contradiction of the basic goal of the landscaping project especially since there are a number of native plants that will survive and prosper on some of the islands more inhospitable environments. It is impossible to reconstruct the actual precolonial composition of the vegetation due to the lack of detailed descriptions of vegetation for that era. Moreover, native indians are known to have modified the vegetation along the coast. It was not uncommon for indians to set ground fires which did not destroy trees but removed unwanted ground vegetation. Burning also fertilized the soil which contributed to greater productivity of berries from shrubs like Lowbush Blueberry and Huckleberry.

Native plants adapted to exposed coastal locations in Connecticut should be the primary plants used in landscaping Fayerweather Island. Such plants are tolerant of exposure and their utilization avoids the introduction of exotic plants that have the potential to spread and displace native vegetation. Similarly, the use of exotic plants does not serve the purpose of attempting to re-establish historic site conditions that once existed on the island. The primary trees and shrubs that should be used are as follows: Post Oak, Juneberry, Wild Black Cherry, Eastern Red Cedar, Beach Plum and Bayberry. As noted earlier, Salt Spray Rose is a naturalized plant that is routinely encountered along the coast especially on sand and gravel deposits. It generally does not become a pestiferous species and would therefore be a practical plant on the elevated portions of the dry gravel beaches and plains. Coastal islands in general rarely contain a diverse vegetation but rather support a vegetation dominated by a limited number of hardy plants. It is advisable to use a large number of a few hardy species rather than plant a large variety of species, many of which are not as hardy as the plants noted above.

A landscaping plan including a map should be prepared identifying all activities to be conducted on the

island including the location and layout of walkways, trails, and location and types of plantings. Only in this manner can a proper environmental assessment be made. It is important for example to protect the existing colonies of beach grass that are stabilizing wind blown sand areas. If plantings of salt spray rose were proposed for such areas, then these shrubs should be placed in the unvegetated gaps among the beach grass. The construction of wooden walkways across tidal wetland is a practical means of controlling pedestrian traffic and reducing wetland impacts such as destruction of vegetation, compaction of the peat and the formation of ruts. However, if not properly designed or located, the wetland could be destroyed and the rare wetland plant threatened or destroyed. Also, construction of wooden walkways in tidal wetlands requires state and federal permits. The Water Resources Unit of the DEP has certain specifications and requirements for the construction of walkways through tidal wetlands. The advice of this unit should be sought in the planning of these walkways across wetlands. Restoration of the seawall may also require state and federal permits. In planning the restoration of the seawall, the Water Resources Unit should again be consulted.

A record should be maintained on all plantings especially the plantings of species not typically found in exposed coastal locations like this. A record of successes and failures on the various soil types will be extremely helpful in future planting projects. As noted above, Tree-of-Heaven is a pestiferous plant that will continue to spread and perhaps even displace recent plantings. Consideration should be given toward the need to control this plant. Another plant that should be considered for eradication is Reed which grows along the borders of the tidal wetland and is displacing more typical vegetation types. Colonies of this grass should be cut in early July. Any new sprouts that occur following the initial cutting should also be cut. During the following year or two, additional cutting will be necessary. Thereafter, cutting should be conducted as necessary and the wetland edges should be monitored routinely for newly establishing colonies. One must be careful, however, to not cut neighboring Sea Lavender plants.

There have been proposals by the Parks Department of the City of Bridgeport to locate a beach facility on the sandflats at Pleasure Beach. Since the herbaceous vegetation located below this facility would be destroyed during construction, it may be wise to harvest these native plants and transplant them to similar habitat on Fayerweather Island. This would include Wormwood (Artemisia caudata), Beachgrass and Pinweed (Lechea maritima) to name but a few.

## **XII. Recreation Potential**

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Fayerweather Island is a rare and unique resource. The five (5) year restoration plan for the island, proposed by the Friends of Seaside Park and the Black Rock Community Council, will help preserve this "park treasure" and enhance its use for leisure and enjoyment by the public.

The 9 acre island, with its interesting historic background; its diverse landscapes of beaches, marshes and uplands; its different forms of vegetation; and its wide variety of bird and marine life, provide the potential to offer a broad range of leisure opportunities.

The island could be an attraction for history buffs; naturalists; conservationists; photographers; artists; birdwatchers; those interested in interpretive experiences; and for people who may just wish to experience the enjoyment, relaxation and solitude of a walk.

The ten (10) point plan proposed to realize the island's potential and its preservation includes: 1) clean-up of the island; 2) a planting program; 3) improvement of the present pathway system; 4) development of an interpretive program; 5) preparation of a guidebook; 6) installation of a sign post at the entrance; 7) restoration of the lighthouse; 8) vandalism reduction measures for the lighthouse; 9) employment of seasonal rangers on the island; and 10) the repair of the island's seawall.

The overall plan is a good one in the opinion of the Team's recreation specialist. Each of the projects proposed in the plan is important and will need to be accomplished to help reach the plan's intended goals. However, it is suggested that the development of an interpretive program be given a special emphasis and a high priority.

The objectives referred to in several areas of the ten point plan, i.e., visitor awareness and appreciation; considerate treatment of the island; lessen human encroachment, vandalism reduction, and public understanding and support of the programs and projects of the Friends of Seaside Park, are objectives an interpretive program specifically seeks to achieve.

Grant W. Sharpe, describes in his book "Interpreting the Environment", the objective of interpretation as follows:

*"Interpretation seeks to achieve three objectives. The first or primary objective of interpretation is to assist the visitor in developing a keener awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the area he or she is visiting. Interpretation should help to make the visit a rich and enjoyable experience.*

*The second objective of interpretation is to accomplish management goals. It can be done in two ways. First, interpretation can encourage thoughtful use of the recreation resource on the part of the visitor, helping*

reinforce the idea that parks are special places requiring special behavior.

Second, interpretation can be used to minimize human impact on the resource by guiding people away from fragile or overused areas into areas that can withstand heavier use.

The third objective of interpretation is to promote public understanding of an agency and its programs. Every agency or corporation has a message to convey. Well-done interpretation favorably promotes the image of the agency which supplies it".\*

The interpretive program could be implemented through the development of a self-guided trail using a leaflet or guidebook for the message which is keyed to numbered or lettered markers along the trail. During the summer, the interpretive program could be conducted in a guided tour form having the intern rangers perform the interpretation.

The development of a formal trail or system of trails will be necessary if an interpretive program is to be implemented. Planning for the eventual trail's placement should begin with a complete inventory of all the island's assets or features which would be of interpretive interest.

These might include trees, shrubs, flowers, the beach, wetlands and upland habitats, wildlife, aesthetic vistas, the lighthouse and island's history and much more.

These should be identified on a map of the island to use in plotting a final trail design plan.

The lighthouse would probably be the highlight or special feature of interest of the tour. The construction of an elevated boardwalk across the wetland area leading to the lighthouse would be an added trail attraction.

The guidebook in addition to a narrative covering the island's geology and natural history, might also include a map of the trail system, identification of the feature being interpreted, an interpretive text, and an illustration or photograph of the item being interpreted.

Other items which might be considered for inclusion in the brochure are: a message of welcome to Fayerweather Island, an environmental message, and a brief overview of the Friends of Seaside Park Organization and its work.

The contents of the guidebook should seek to achieve the three objectives of interpretation outlined earlier in this report.

The plan for the island's restoration involves two major areas of expense. They are the seawall and the lighthouse restoration. The present funding sources for the plan has been through private donations and proceeds

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\*Sharpe, Grant W. 1976. Interpreting the Environment  
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York

from fund raising activities of the Friends of Seaside Park.

Other sources of funding which should be pursued are the Department of Interior's Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Historic Preservation Fund. Inquiries might also be made to determine if the lighthouse, or perhaps the entire Fayerweather Island, might qualify for inclusion in the National Register of the Historic Places.

Potential problems which the restoration plan should take into consideration are adequate visitor parking and perhaps some policies or regulations concerning fishing.

A restricted parking area, which allows easy access and proximity to the island, should be provided for visitor convenience. Otherwise desirable parking for the island may be lost to beach parking.

The current kinds of use of the island may pose some conflicts after the plan of restoration is completed. Restricted areas for fishing may have to be imposed for visitor safety. Dangerous areas would include the access to the island along the seawall and perhaps some areas along the pathway system.

### **XIII. Additional Planning Considerations**

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#### PLAN CONSISTENCY

Preservation of Fayerweather Island as a historical and environmental public open space is consistent with both the Bridgeport Master Plan (1971) and the Regional Plan of Development (1968). Land use maps for both plans show the island as existing open space. Specific supportive goals and policies from the Bridgeport Master Plan (p. 21) are:

- Protection and preservation of scenic areas, major public places, historic sites, watersheds and drainage ways.
- Retention or expansion where possible of large recreational and park facilities along waterbodies, shorelines and ponds.

The Regional Plan of Development includes the following as a major open space goal (p. 35):

- to emphasize the importance of multi-purpose open-space systems along the shore of Long Island Sound.

#### SURROUNDING LAND USE

Land use in the vicinity of Fayerweather Island is mixed, with significant industrial concentrations; high, moderate and low income housing; the University of Bridgeport, Seaside Park, and the municipal landfill all within viewing distance of the island. Seaside Park is a particularly important influence in that local, regional and state plans all show Fayerweather Island as part of a continuous coastal park system, though in actuality the island is not maintained as part of the park. It would be advantageous

to Fayerweather Island to emphasize its linkage with Seaside Park not only for maintenance purposes, but also to improve its competitive edge in funding, since the emphasis in recent years has been to fund urban parks which have active recreational facilities. Fayerweather Island by itself is not suitable for intensive recreational facilities, but in conjunction with Seaside Park it could legitimately be considered a passive recreational area of an important multi-purpose regional park. One possibility for emphasizing the linkage between Seaside Park and Fayerweather Island would be to extend the Seaside Park bicycle trail into the parking lot near Fayerweather Island and provide bicycle racks for bicyclists who wish to walk out to the island.

In contrast to Seaside Park, the municipal landfill exerts a strong negative influence. Since the only land access to the island is by way of Barnum Boulevard, which runs the length of the landfill, anyone approaching the island is exposed to an unmitigated visual blight. Successful closure and revegetation of the landfill is a key to maintaining continuity between Seaside Park and Fayerweather Island.

#### SITE ACCESS

At the present time, the only road leading to the island, Barnum Boulevard, is closed to the general public due to landfill operations. Assuming this situation will be remedied with the closure of the landfill, Barnum Boulevard is adequate for the moderate amount of traffic which Fayerweather Island would attract. Likewise, the existing parking lot at the "neck" of the island is approximately one acre in size and could accommodate approximately 125 cars. The distance between the parking lot and the lighthouse is approximately 2,000 feet, along the top of the seawall. As discussed previously in this report, repair of the seawall is needed to provide safe access to the Island. Filling the gaps in the seawall with modified rip-rap would be an inexpensive means of locking the stones in place and enhancing safe access to the Island.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The continuity of Fayerweather Island with Seaside Park is supported by planning documents at the municipal, regional and state level. This continuity should be reinforced, one possible means being to improve accommodations for bicycle riders.

Municipal landfill operations disrupt both the aesthetic continuity and physical access to Fayerweather Island. Although the landfill is beyond the scope of this review, proper closure of the facility is essential to public enjoyment of the island.

Parking and automobile access to the parking lot will be adequate once Barnum Boulevard is reopened.

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APPENDIX



# XIII. Appendix: Partial List of Plants Growing on Fayerweather Island

## PARTIAL LIST OF PLANTS GROWING ON FAYERWEATHER ISLAND\*

Agrophyron repens - Quackgrass  
Ailanthus altissima - Tree-of-Heaven  
Ammophila breviligulata - American Beachgrass  
Ambrosia artemisiifolia - Ragweed  
Asclepias syriaca - Common Milkweed  
Asparagus officinalis - Asparagus  
Bromus tectorum - Bromegrass  
Carex silicea - Sedge  
Chenopodium cf. macrocalycium - Pigweed  
Cyperus spp. - Umbrella-Sedge  
Dactylis glomerata - Orchard Grass  
Datura strumarium - Jimsonweed  
Distichlis spicata - Spike Grass  
Elymus virginicus - Wild Rye  
Eragrostis spectabilis - Purple Love-grass  
Erigeron cf. pusillus - Small Horseweed  
Gnaphalium obtusifolium - Sweet Everlasting  
Iva frutescens - Marsh Elder  
Lactuca canadensis - Wild Lettuce  
Lepidium virginicum - Poor-man's Pepper  
Lespedeza hirta - Hairy Bush-Clover  
Linaria vulgaris - Butter-and-eggs  
Medicago sativa - Alfalfa  
Melilotus alba - White Sweet Clover  
Oenothera parviflora - Small flowering Evening Primrose  
Panicum lanuginosum - Panic-grass  
Panicum virgatum - Switch Grass  
Phragmites australis - Reed  
Rosa rugosa - Salt spray Rose  
Rumex crispus - Dock  
Salsola kali - Common Saltwort  
Saponaria officinalis - Bouncing Bet  
Silene vulgaris - Bladder Champion  
Solidago sempervirens - Seaside Goldenrod  
Spartina patens - Salt-meadow Cord-grass  
Spartina pectinata - Freshwater Cord-grass  
Strophostyles helvola - Trailing Wild Bean  
Teucrium canadensis - Germander  
Xanthium strumarium - Cocklebur

\*Nomenclature follows that of Dowhan, J.J. 1979. Preliminary Checklist of the Vascular Flora of Connecticut (Growing Without Cultivation). Conn. Geol. Nat. Hist. Surv. Rpt. Invest. No. 8.

# ABOUT THE TEAM

The King's Mark Environmental Review Team (ERT) is a group of environmental professionals drawn together from a variety of federal, state, and regional agencies. Specialists on the team include geologists, biologists, foresters, climatologists, soil scientists, landscape architects, recreation specialists, engineers, and planners. The ERT operates with state funding under the aegis of the King's Mark Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area - a 47 town area in western Connecticut.

As a public service activity, the team is available to serve towns and developers within the King's Mark Area --- free of charge.

## PURPOSE OF THE TEAM

The Environmental Review Team is available to help towns and developers in the review of sites proposed for major land use activities. To date, the ERT has been involved in the review of a wide range of significant activities including subdivisions, sanitary landfills, commercial and industrial developments, and recreation/open space projects.

Reviews are conducted in the interest of providing information and analysis that will assist towns and developers in environmentally sound decision-making. This is done through identifying the natural resource base of the project site and highlighting opportunities and limitations for the proposed land use.

## REQUESTING A REVIEW

Environmental Reviews may be requested by the chief elected official of a municipality or the chairman of an administration agency such as planning and zoning, conservation, or inland wetlands. Requests for reviews should be directed to the Chairman of your local Soil and Water Conservation District. This request letter must include a summary of the proposed project, a location map of the project site, written permission from the landowner/developer allowing the team to enter the property for purposes of review, and a statement identifying the specific areas of concern the team should address. When this request is approved by the local Soil and Water Conservation District and the King's Mark RC&D Executive Committee, the team will undertake the review. At present, the ERT can undertake two reviews per month.

For additional information regarding the Environmental Review Team, please contact your local Soil Conservation District Office or Richard Lynn (868-7342), Environmental Review Team Coordinator, King's Mark RC&D Area, P.O. Box 30, Warren, Connecticut 06754.