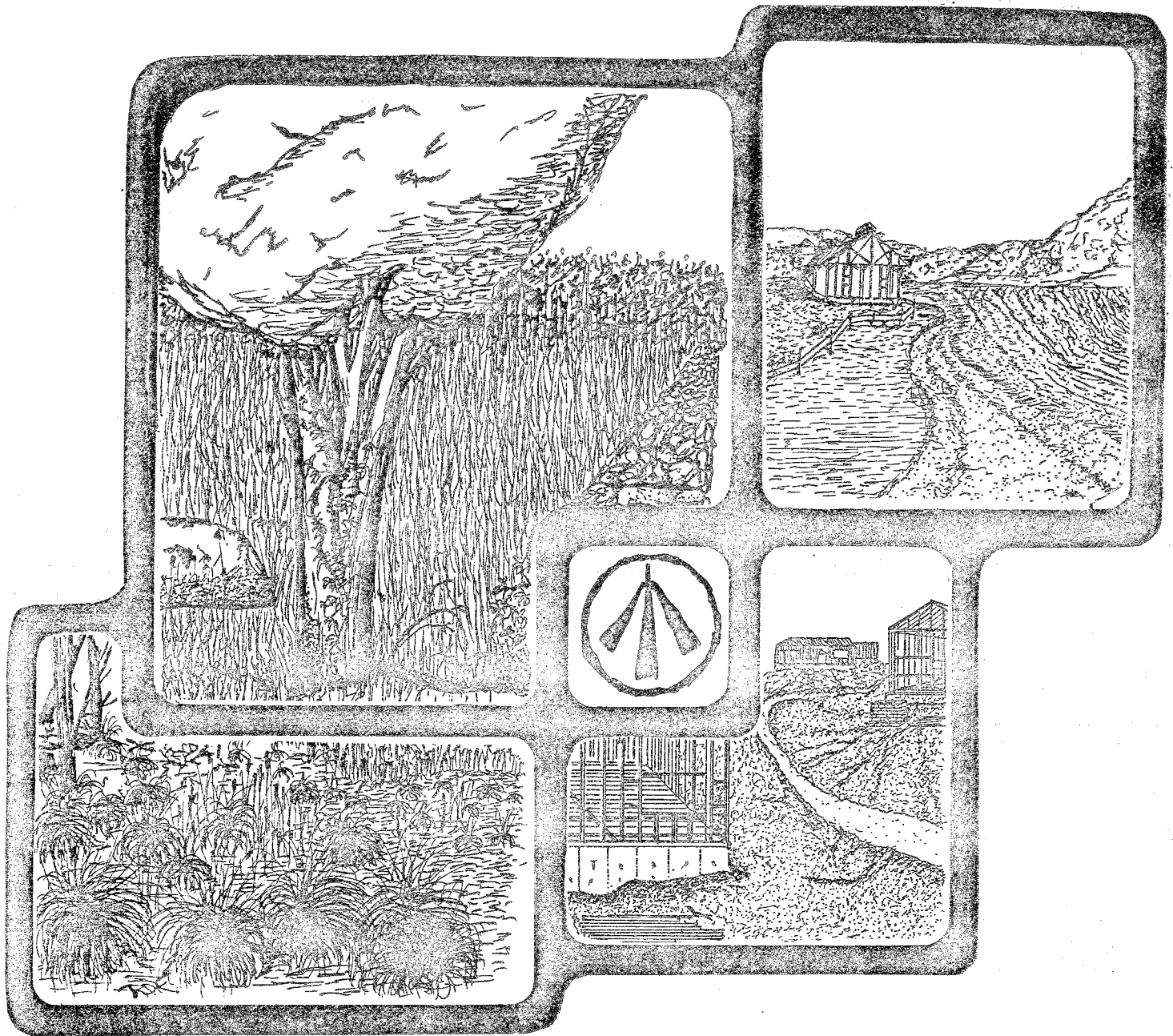


ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT



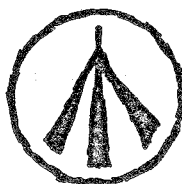
NEW IRVING SCHOOL PROPERTY
DERBY, CONNECTICUT

KING'S MARK
RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT AREA

KING'S MARK
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT

NEW IRVING SCHOOL PROPERTY
DERBY, CONNECTICUT

JULY 1981



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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The King's Mark Environmental Review Team operates through the cooperative effort of a number of agencies and organizations including:

Federal Agencies

U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service

State Agencies

Department of Environmental Protection

Department of Health

University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service

Local Groups and Agencies

Litchfield County Soil and Water Conservation District

New Haven County Soil and Water Conservation District

Hartford County Soil and Water Conservation District

Fairfield County Soil and Water Conservation District

Northwestern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency

Valley Regional Planning Agency

Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Planning Agency

Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials

Southwestern Regional Planning Agency

Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency

Regional Planning Agency of South Central Connecticut

Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency

Capitol Regional Council of Governments

American Archaeological Institute

X X X X X

FUNDING PROVIDED BY

State of Connecticut

POLICY DETERMINED BY

King's Mark Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.

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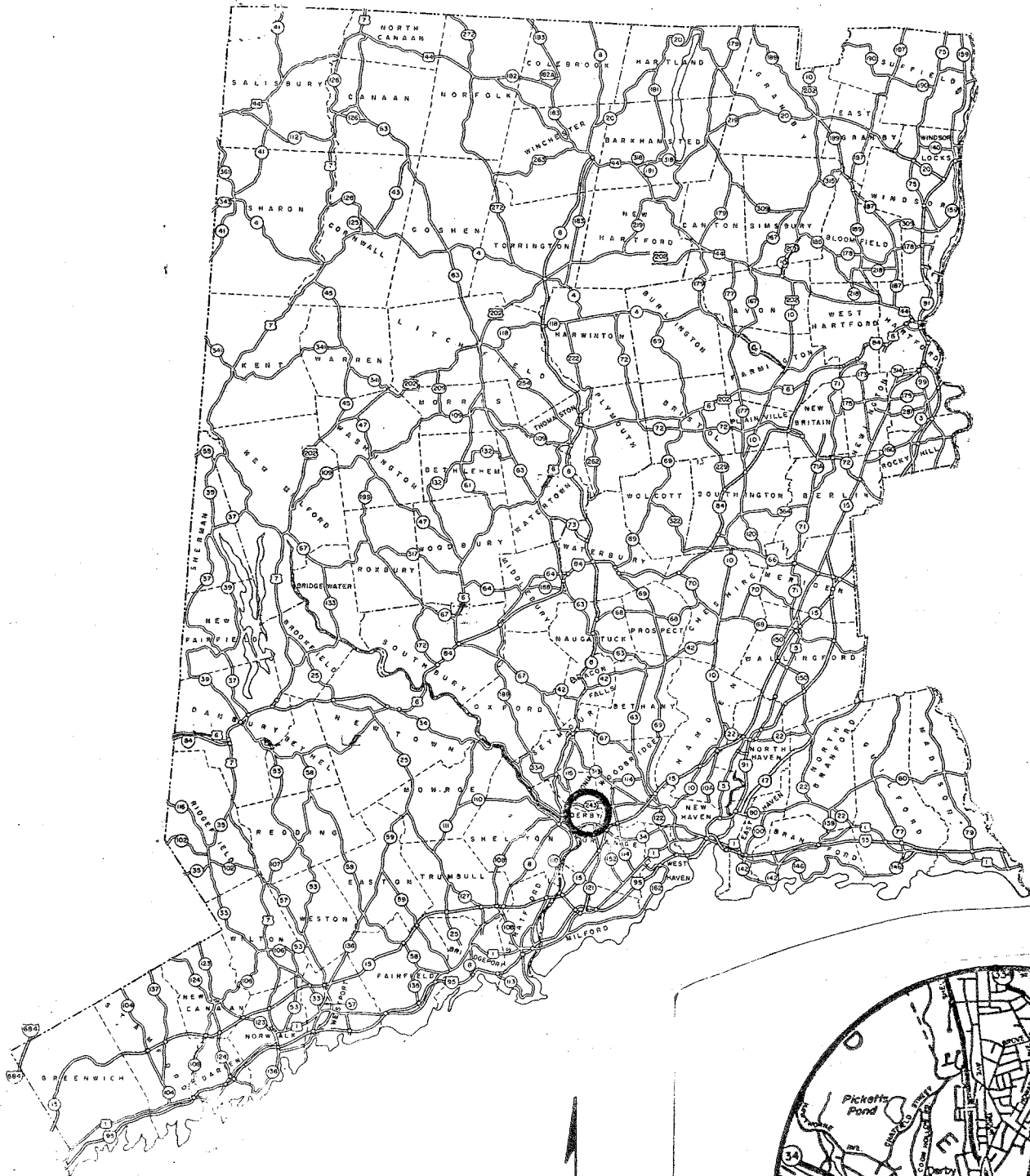
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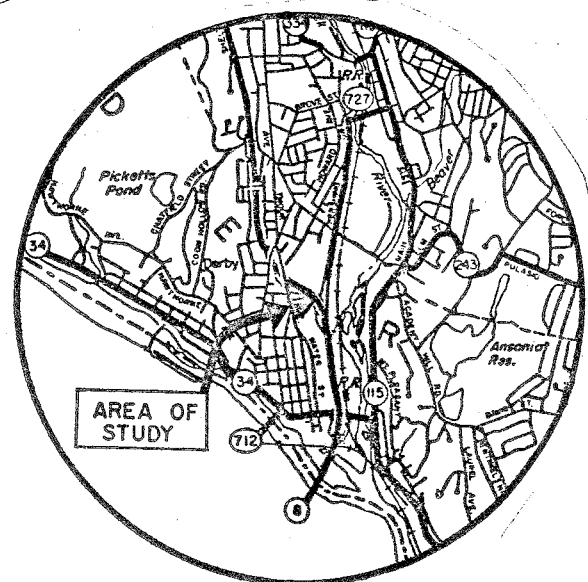
LOCATION OF STUDY SITE

NEW IRVING SCHOOL PROPERTY DERBY, CONNECTICUT



SCALE: 1" = 10 miles

10 0 5 10 miles



ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT
ON
NEW IRVING SCHOOL PROPERTY
DERBY, CT.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Derby Conservation Commission is interested in better utilizing the New Irving School Property. This town-owned property is + 8 acres in size and located in the center of town off Seymour Avenue and Garden Place. Route 8 abuts the eastern border of the property.

As shown in Figure 1, New Irving School is located on the western portion of the property. Directly south of the school is an open field used for outdoor recreational activities. To the south and east of the school and open field is steeply sloping wooded land. It is this steeply sloping wooded land which the town Conservation Commission is interested in managing for improved recreational and educational use.

As a first step in preparing a management plan for the property, the Conservation Commission requested this ERT study. The Team was asked to prepare a natural resources inventory of the property and to discuss the opportunities and limitations of the site for passive recreational use. The Conservation Commission expressed interest in developing a trail network on the property, including, perhaps, an interpretive nature trail.

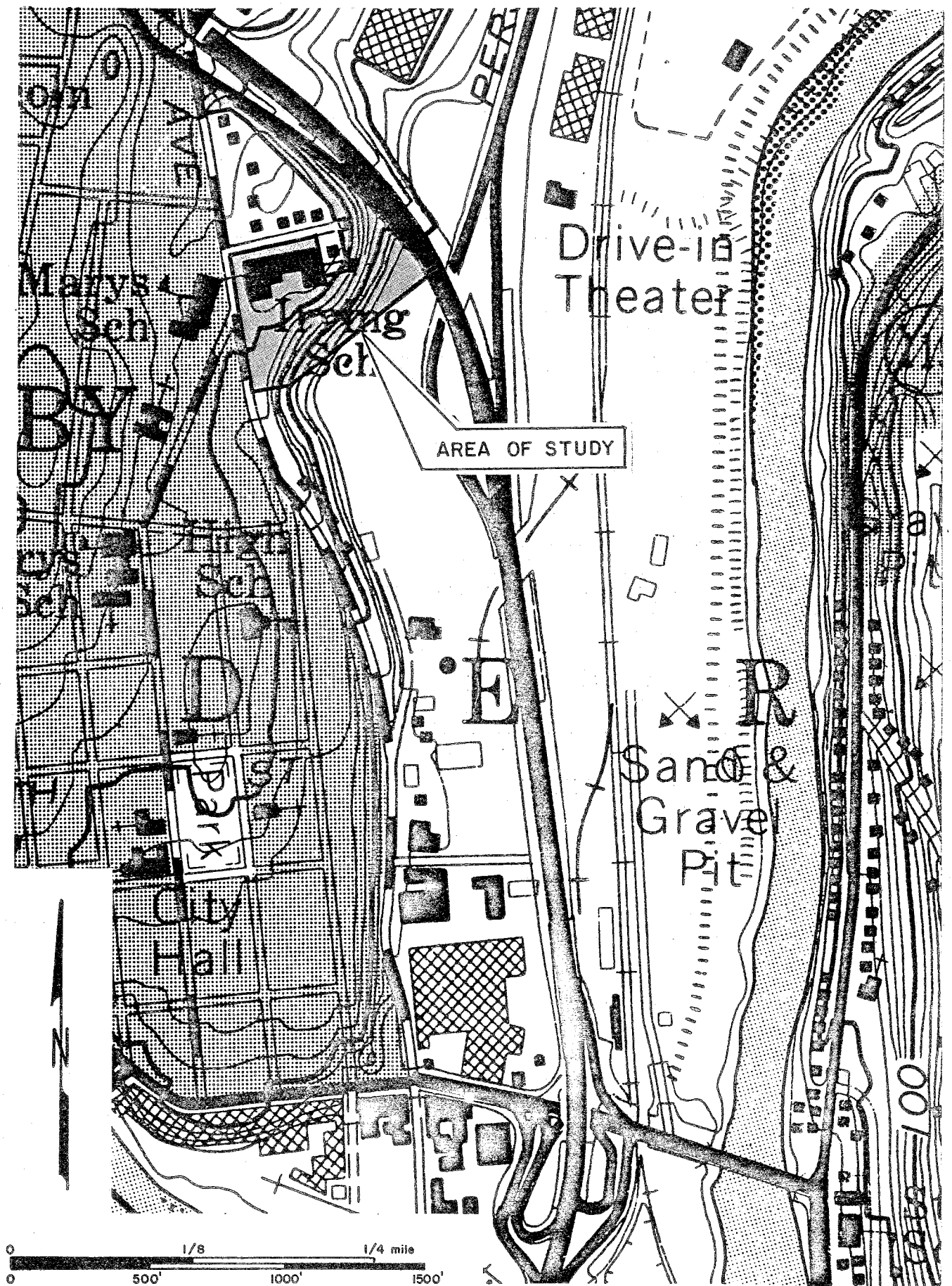
The King's Mark Executive Committee considered the Conservation Commission's request, and approved the project for review by the Team.

The ERT met and field reviewed the site on May 13, 1981. Team members participating on this review included:

Ed Burdell.....	Regional Planner.....	Valley Regional Planning Agency
Frank Indorf	District Conservationist.....	U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service
Mike Pochan.....	Forester	Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
Carl Stamm	Recreation Planner	Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
Mike Zizka	Geohydrologist	Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

Prior to the review day, each team member was provided with a summary of the proposed study, a checklist of concerns to address, a topographic map, a soils map, and a soils limitation chart. The day of the field review, team members met with representatives from the Conservation Commission and walked the site. 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.

FIGURE 1.
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP



SCALE: 1" = 500'

This report presents the team's findings. The report identifies the natural resource base of the Irving School property and discusses opportunities and limitations for land management. All conclusions and final decisions with regards to future land use rest with the Town of Derby. It is hoped the information contained in this report will assist the town in making environmentally sound decisions. If any additional information 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. SUMMARY

- . The steeply sloping wooded land on this property consists predominantly of sandy and gravelly soils. These soils are highly erodible and intensive conservation measures are necessary with any land disturbance.
- . The lower portion of this site consists of undifferentiated fill and a small swamp. The edges of the fill in this area are eroding, and efforts should be taken to stabilize these eroding areas by establishing a better cover. The small swamp may be a natural feature, but it more likely was created by the excavation of low lying sand and gravel deposits below the original level of the local water table. Efforts should be taken to clear the unsightly and hazardous debris from this swamp.
- . The parcel has no high quality surface water resources and probably has no high potential groundwater resources.
- . Due to past and present land practices, this property does not have the normal forest cover types indigenous to this area. Natural reproduction together with planted trees and shrubs have provided this small site with an unusual mix of a great number of species. Of major importance are the large maple, oak, beech, and ash trees present on this site. These trees are 100-150 years in age and up to 36" in diameter at breast height. Because of their size and age, these trees should be preserved as museum species for study and inspiration.
- . Management of this property should be geared towards maintaining it in as undeveloped a condition as possible. All trash should be cleaned up and any dumping areas sealed off. A row of evergreen trees should be planted along the south end of the small swamp to screen off the dump site to the south.
- . Management for enhanced wildlife use of this parcel should be focused on improving the area for songbirds. The wildlife plantings on this property should be encouraged and properly maintained. Consideration should also be given to constructing some bird houses on portions of the site.
- . Due to steep slopes and access considerations, the recreational potential of this property is very limited. The property does however have the potential for supporting a trail system for hiking and nature study. This trail system could include a nature trail with numbered stations telling in common language what one sees while traversing the trail.

III. GEOLOGY

The New Irving School site is located in an area that is encompassed by the Ansonia topographic quadrangle. A bedrock geologic map of the quadrangle, prepared by C. E. Fritts, has been published by the U.S. Geological Survey (Map GQ-426). No bedrock outcrops were conclusively identified on the site; the one large rock exposure observed may be only a boulder. It is unlikely that the steep slopes on the parcel are controlled by bedrock; it is more probable that they are ice-contact slopes, as described below.

The bedrock underlying the property has been identified as a quartz monzonite gneiss. The term "quartz monzonite" is used to describe the mineral composition of the rock. The major mineral constituents, in decreasing order of abundance, are oligoclase, microcline, quartz, muscovite, and biotite. The rock also contains numerous minor mineral components. The term "gneiss" is given to metamorphic rocks in which thin bands of platy, flaky, or elongate mineral grains alternate with layers of more granular mineral grains. Metamorphic rocks are those which have been structurally or mineralogically altered by intense pressure and/or heat within the earth's crust.

A surficial geologic map of the Ansonia quadrangle, prepared by R. F. Flint, has been published by the Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey (Quadrangle Report No. 23). The term "surficial geology" refers to the unconsolidated earth materials that overlie solid, continuous bedrock. On the New Irving School property, the surficial materials have been mapped as ice-contact stratified drift. This means that the deposits were emplaced by temporary streams that flowed from and against wasting masses of glacier ice. The glacial occupation of the Derby area probably ended between 12,000 and 18,000 years ago. During the "retreat" phase, as the active ice margin thinned, blocks of ice of widely varying size became stagnant. Meltwater streams carried debris that had become incorporated in the ice when it was expanding southward through Connecticut, scraping and breaking exposed rock surfaces and bulldozing preexisting soils. Much of the sediment, particularly the coarser, heavier particles, was quickly redeposited by the streams, in contact with the sides of the stagnant ice masses. Deposits were built up on both sides of an ice "tongue" that occupied the valley now traversed by the Naugatuck River. When the ice subsequently disappeared, the faces of the built-up stratified drift deposits collapsed, forming steep slopes at the margin of otherwise relatively flat topographic features. The New Irving School site is a portion of one such feature. The sediments themselves are largely sand and gravel, but many large boulders are included. Unfortunately, more recent man-made deposits, namely construction rubble and other miscellaneous trash, now line the surface of the slopes in many places.

IV. WATER RESOURCES

The parcel has no high quality surface water resources and probably has no high potential groundwater resources. The principal surface water features are a swamp which has largely been filled off-site, and a piped drainage outlet whose origins are unclear. The swamp may be a natural feature, but it more likely was created by excavation of the low-lying sand and gravel deposits below the original level of the local water table. The fill that is being or has been placed in the swamp has an unknown composition. Water moving through the fill and into the swamp may be causing deterioration of the surface water quality. The piped drainage into

the swamp appears to include runoff received in one or more catch basins along Route 8. Certainly the introduction of highway debris, such as salts and oils, would do nothing to improve the quality of the swamp. As stated above, the most upstream sources of the piped flows are not known.

Although the site consists largely of glacial stratified sands and gravels, which commonly are useful for large scale groundwater supplies, Connecticut Water Resources Bulletin No. 19 indicates that the saturated thickness of these materials on the property is less than 10 feet. This would severely limit the yields obtainable from the deposits. In addition, the urban setting of the parcel, the trash visible on the slopes, and the minimal amounts of flat open land strongly suggest that the property would have no value for significant supplies of public drinking water. This does not mean that a small yielding well could not be successfully placed on the site; it merely states that this site would probably have no special attractiveness for water supply purposes.

V. SOILS

A Soils Map of the property is presented in the Appendix of this report. The Appendix also contains a Soils Limitation Chart which identifies limiting factors for various land uses. By comparing the Soils Map with the Soils Limitation Chart, one can gain an appreciation of the suitability of the various soils for different land uses.

The school and playground on this property have been developed atop Agawam fine sandy loam soils. These nearly level to gently sloping soils are well drained and have excellent potential for development.

The steeply sloping wooded portion of this property consists of Hinckley and Manchester soils of 15-35% slope. These soils have rapid permeability in the surface layer and very rapid permeability in the subsoil. These soils are droughty and unless limed are medium acid through strongly acid. These soils are easily excavated; however the steep slopes of excavations are unstable and cave-ins will occur. Intensive conservation measures are needed to prevent excessive runoff, erosion, and siltation during periods of construction.

The Hinckley and Manchester soils are not well suited to productive tree growth because they are droughty. The droughtiness makes the establishment of tree seedlings difficult. Also, the steep slopes hinder the use of most harvesting and planting equipment. Due to their steep slopes, however, woodland use may nonetheless be one of the best uses of these soils.

The lower area of this site, along the eastern and southern borders of the property, is classified as a fill area. This area is mainly level and consists of undifferentiated fill and a small swamp. It should be noted that erosion is occurring around the edges of the fill. A better cover should be applied to this eroding area, particularly if the area is to be used for passive recreation. Efforts should also be taken to clean the unsightly and hazardous debris from the small swamp.

VI. VEGETATION

The 8+ acre property under consideration does not have the normal forest cover types indigenous to this area. This condition is brought about through present and past practices on the land. One of the chief influences of the past has been repeated forest fires which eliminated the reproductive understory of the forest but allowed the thicker barked older trees to survive to this day. Some of the trees on this site are now 100+ years old. Some of the younger trees that managed to survive forest fires of the recent past have a legacy of badly fire-scared butts that can easily be seen from ground level up.

The present practices that have had an influence on the vegetation is the infusion of exotic species over most of the area. This infusion has been brought about chiefly in two ways. First, by the natural movement of seeds from trees established around home sites. These seeds have been brought to the site either being blown by the wind or carried in by the birds. Among the exotics, the ailanthus and the Norway maples are the two most common invaders being found singly or in patches over most of the area. Secondly, exotics (chiefly conifers) have been introduced by actually planting tree seedlings. This planting has been done in Areas A & B (see Vegetation Type Map) along the west side of Route 8. In addition to the evergreen plantings, several wildlife shrubs were planted; these include autumn olive, tartarian honeysuckle and multi-flora rose.

A. Vegetation Type Descriptions (refer to Figure 2)

AREA A

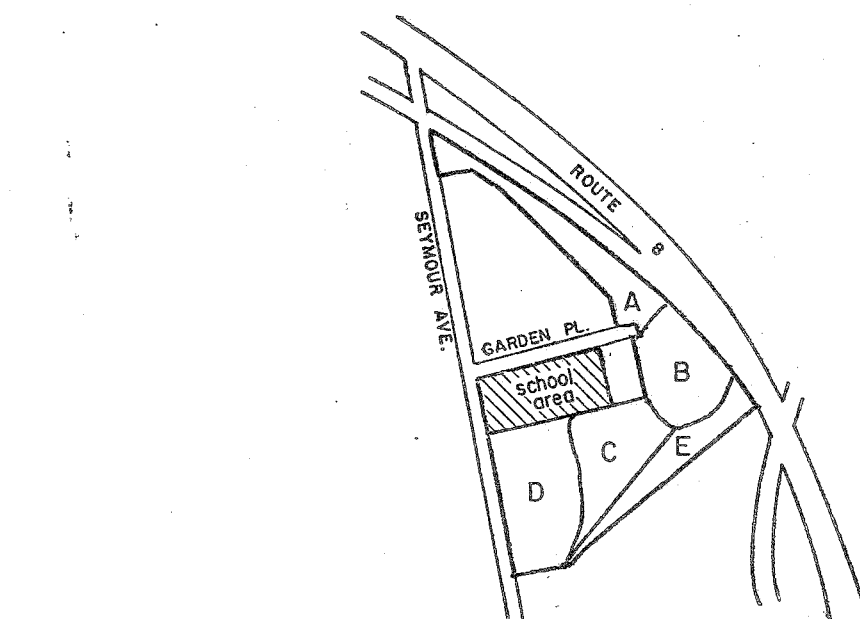
This elongated area that goes along the west side of the connector to Route 8 is an area in transition. It is passing from a 1-20 year age class to a 21 to 40 year age class, and from brush-land to beginning forest. Because of the presence of several large seed-producing white ash trees around this area, the reproduction in area A is heavy to ash. Ash is a species worthy of encouragement because of its resistance to defoliation by the gypsy moth.

Under the guidance of local resident Dr. Rentsch, trees were hand planted along the east sides of Areas A and B. Several varieties of conifers were planted along with wildlife shrubs. The tree species planted were red pine, Douglas fir, scotch pine and larch. A few hardwood trees were planted, which included black walnut, chestnut, sycamore and catalpa. The natural reproduction together with the planted trees and shrubs provide an unusual mix of a great number of species in this area. At ground level can be seen the original grasses and forbs of a former open field ecology. These islands of open fields are rapidly being closed out as the forest canopy begins to dominate the area. Should no disaster hit this area such as fire, wind, or drought, the final climax forest would be of the oak-hickory forest type. This forest type stretches all the way from Rhode Island to the Great Plains, following roughly the latitude of southern New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

AREA B

This area contains 12 large hard or sugar maples ranging in breast high diameter (4½ feet above the ground) from 18 to 36 inches. These trees appear in generally good health. Most of these trees are scattered from mid-slope to the top with only one or two at or near the bottom of the slope. This patch of mature

FIGURE 2.
VEGETATION TYPE MAP



SCALE: 1" = 500'

- Area A - 1 to 20 year old re-producing hardwoods
- Area B - Area of large hard maple
- Area C - Area of large oaks
- Area D - 40 to 60 year old mixed hardwood; school yard
- Area E - Wetland area

hard maples, which range in age from 100 to 150 years, can aspire to 250-300 years in age. These particular trees on this site are unique and should be preserved as museum pieces. Unfortunately the young reproduction that should be found in the openings among the trees is lacking with one large open area of about $\frac{1}{2}$ acre being taken over by invading ailanthus trees. With the presence of beech and birch in the area, these maple trees probably represent the remnants of the birch, beech, maple, northern hardwood forest type found to the north of Connecticut. The lower end of this area is open but has a spicebush shrub cover.

AREA C

This area has the steepest topography (40-45% slope) and contains 15 of the largest trees found on the entire tract, the largest being black and red oak measuring from 18" d.b.h. to 36" d.b.h., 100 to 120 feet in height, and from 100 to 150 years in age. In addition to the oaks, there are large sized specimen trees of beech and ash. Like the maples in Area B, the trees in Area C, because of their size and age, should be preserved as museum pieces for study and inspiration.

Because of the very steep slope here and the total absence of lesser vegetation, the bare slope is beginning to erode. If not attended to soon, erosion will threaten and undermine some of the large trees. The Soil Conservation Service office in Wallingford (269-7509) should be contacted for suggestions on how to cope with erosion in this area.

At the top of the slope near a corner of the school is a flat area which has the following great number of different trees: white pine, hemlock, honey locust, hackberry, norway maple, black birch, ailanthus and red oak. Across the fence in the school yard portion of Area D are the following: ginkgo trees, copper beech, Norway spruce, flowering dogwood, horse chestnut, and European basswood. These two areas, in close proximity to each other, are a veritable arboretum in themselves.

AREA D

The wooded portion of this area, to the south of the school yard, comes nearest to being a native forest type: the trees are all-aged and include one or two of the oldest age classes found in the C area. A heavy in-growth of Norway maple however precludes it from being classified as a native forest type. At the southwestern end of Area D are several fine specimens of heavily spined honey locust trees. Honey locust are not a native of this region but an introduction from further west.

The dominant species in this area are the oaks, hickories, hard and soft maples, black cherry, elm, beech plus a few other lesser known species.

AREA E

This wetland area at the southern end of the property has some interesting wet area plants including wild iris, cattail, phragmites, and lemna, the duck weed floating on top of the water in the quieter recesses of the wetlands. In the filled-in area to the south, several specimens of ash-leaved maple (*Acer Negundo*) were noted along with hundreds of cottonwood saplings (*Populus Caroliniana*) which dominate the area.

This area is developing a heavy infestation of Japanese knotwood on the east side. Efforts should be made to control or eliminate this noxious weed before it takes over the entire area.

In addition to the lower vegetation mentioned in Area E, the following are other plants of this category noted over the entire area:

<u>Shrubs</u>	<u>Herbaceous Plants</u>	<u>Vines</u>
Mock orange (an escapee)	Dutchman's breeches	Virginia Creeper
Japanese barberry (an escapee)	Solomon's seal	Poison Ivy
Spicebush	False Solomon's seal	Wild Grape
Red elderberry	Jack-in-the-pulpit	Bittersweet
Red alder	Jewelweed	
Maple-leaved viburnum	Moon seed	
Dentate viburnum		
Multi-flora rose		
Autumn olive		

An in-depth study of the area would probably yield more plants.

B. Aesthetic Considerations

Since the entire area is unique to the Town of Derby, it should be maintained in as undefiled condition as possible. All trash should be cleaned up and any dumping areas sealed off. A row of evergreen trees should be planted along the south end of Area E to screen off the dump site to the south.

Along with encouraging hardwood reproduction in Areas B, C, and D, an evergreen underplanting of hemlock, pine and or Norway spruce would be highly desirable to further enhance the aesthetics of the area.

C. Forest Management

Because of the steep topography of the area the forest cover can be classed as Protection Forest and its status quo maintained as such. No harvesting should be permitted of the standing trees except in the possible removal of dead or downed trees in a sanitation cut.

Area A offers a good study zone to observe the successional changes that occur on open land that has been abandoned in Connecticut. These changes will also show what happens to any inter-planted conifers in a predominant hardwood site. An in-depth ecological map can be made of this area and updated every 5 to 10 years to follow and record the changes.

On areas B and C all forestry efforts should be concentrated on maintaining the 25 to 30 large trees found in this area. Stabilizing the hillside to hold the tree roots in place would be a highly desirable management practice. The upper part of the trees should be checked by an arborist for insects, diseases, broken branches, etc., and necessary remedial work done to maintain the trees.

The wooded portion of Area D, which is approaching mid-life like Area A, should be allowed to head on to maturity without too much interference. Since this area is close to a heavily populated section of town, hazardous trees should be removed in the interest of public safety.

Management for enhanced wildlife use of this parcel should be focused on improving the area for songbirds. The wildlife plantings on this property (autumn olive, tartarian honeysuckle, multiflora rose) should be encouraged and properly maintained. Consideration should also be given to constructing some bird houses on portions of the site.

VII. RECREATION, ACCESS, AND PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Due to steep slopes and access considerations, the recreational potential of this property is very limited. The property does, however, have the potential for supporting a trail system for hiking and nature study. Figure 3 of this report presents a suggested trail layout.

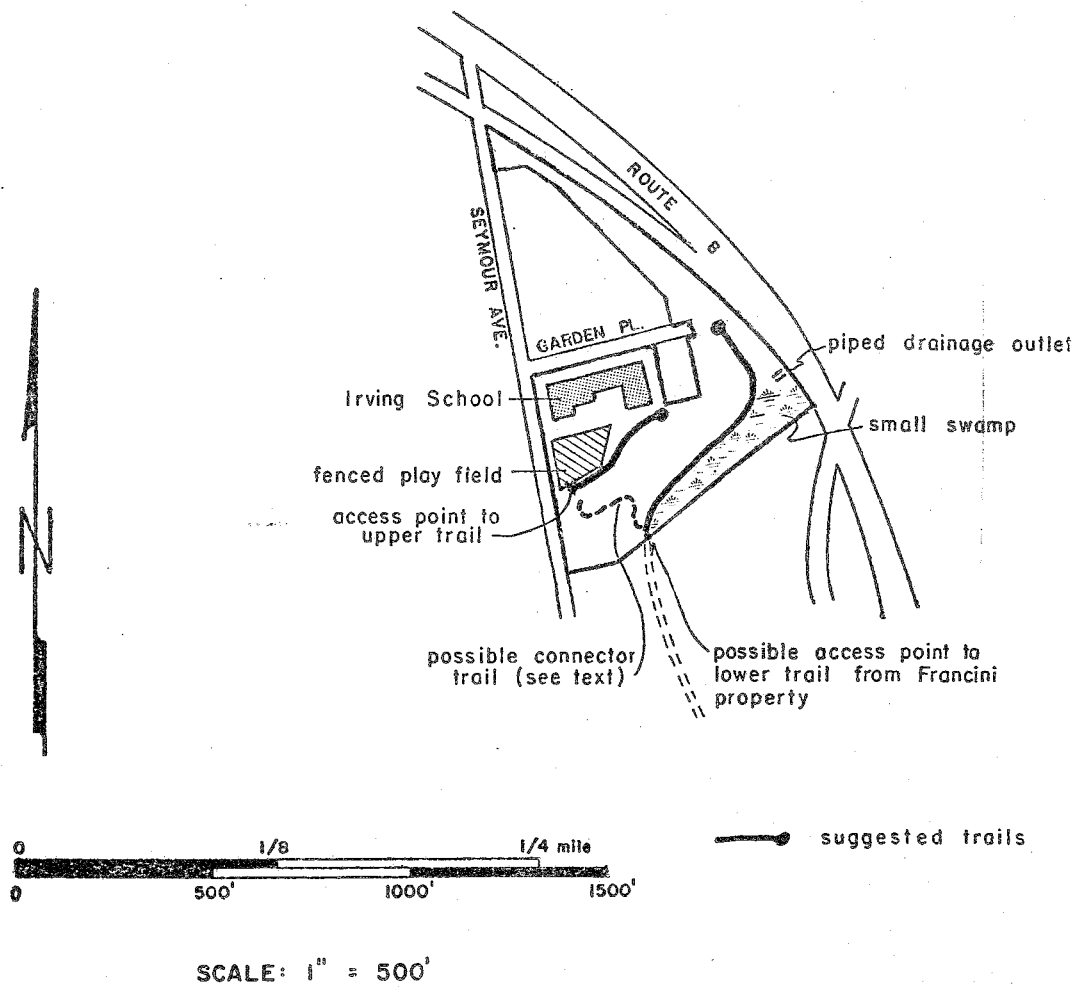
Pedestrian access to the "upper trail" on the western border of this property can be obtained via a gate at the southern border of the open field on this site (see Figure 3). Depending upon school policy, a limited amount of parking for access to this trail may be feasible in the New Irving School parking lot.

Access to the "lower trail" along the eastern border of the site is much more problematic. Access via the Route 8 on-ramp cannot be encouraged and access from Garden Place is not feasible due to steep slopes. The only apparent, possible vehicular access to the lower trail is from the south. For this to become a reality, however, a right-of-way would have to be obtained, possibly by donation, from the Francini Company. If this access could be isolated along one edge of the property, it could open up a number of positive elements. One of these is that it would make police patrolling much easier and more effective.

The feasibility of constructing a satisfactory connector trail between the upper and lower trails is questionable due to the steep terrain and highly erodible soils. Although such a trail could probably be constructed, extensive and costly conservation measures would be required to prevent serious erosion problems from developing. Necessary erosion control measures might include terracing portions of the property and constructing retaining walls. Members of the ERT could not agree on whether or not the construction of a connector trail would be worth pursuing. On the one hand, a connector trail would enhance access to the lower trail and viewing of the entire site. On the other hand, without careful planning, construction, and maintenance, the connector trail could easily turn into a severely eroding gully. Whether or not to pursue construction of the connector trail may hinge on the availability of financial resources to do the job. Clearly without a firm commitment of financial resources to properly construct and maintain a connector trail, it would be preferable to view the resources of the site solely from the upper and lower trails. For additional assistance on this matter, the Soil Conservation Service office in Wallingford should be contacted at 269-7509.

Either the upper or lower trail could be developed as a nature trail with numbered stations telling in common language what one sees while traversing the trail. Details of each station could be incorporated in a self-guiding booklet if so desired. The regional forester from DEP (758-1753) is available to provide assistance in developing nature trails.

FIGURE 3.
CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN



Improvement of the New Irving School Property for passive recreational use should not interfere significantly with current school activities. In fact, development of a nature trail facility at the site could prove a highly complimentary activity to the school's instruction program.

With implementation of the project, consideration should be given to incorporating a special handicapped hiking course on the "lower trail" which would allow for handicapped persons, including the blind, to experience the joys of the site. Based upon information at the Valley Regional Planning Agency, such a facility would be unique within this part of the State. Construction of such a facility could garner broad-based support, thus maximizing volunteer involvement and reducing to a bare minimum city staffing and funding requirements.

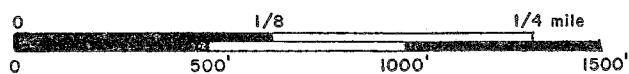
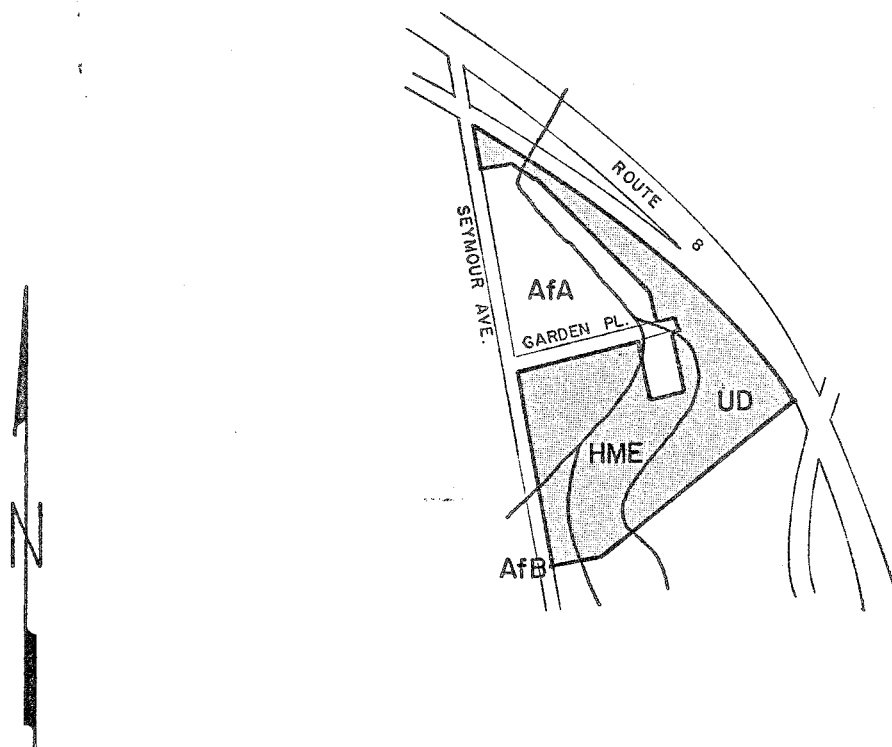
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VIII. APPENDIX

SOILS MAP

◦ ADAPTED FROM NEW HAVEN COUNTY
SOIL SURVEY, U.S.D.A. - S.C.S.

◦ SOIL BOUNDARY LINES DERIVED FROM
SMALLER SCALE MAP (1" = 1320') AND
SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS PRECISE
BOUNDARIES BUT RATHER AS A GUIDE
TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF SOILS ON
THE PROPERTY.



SCALE: 1" = 500'

SOILS LIMITATION CHART -- RECREATIONAL LAND USES

MAP SYMBOL	SOIL NAME	PATHS & TRAILS	PICNIC AREAS	PLAYGROUNDS
AfA	Agawam fine sandy loam, 0-3% slopes	Slight	Slight	Slight
AfB	Agawam fine sandy loam, 3-8% slopes	Slight	Slight	Moderate; Slope
HME	Hinckley and Manchester soils, 15-35% slopes	Severe; Slope	Severe; Slope	Severe; Slope, small stones
UD	Udorthents, smoothed	-- On-site investigation required as soil characteristics are variable --		

EXPLANATION OF RATING SYSTEM:

SLIGHT LIMITATION: indicates that any property of the soil affecting use of the soil is relatively unimportant and can be overcome at little expense.

MODERATE LIMITATION: indicates that any property of the soil affecting use can be overcome at a somewhat higher expense.

SEVERE LIMITATION: indicates that the use of the soil is seriously limited by hazards or restrictions that require extensive and costly measures to overcome.

NOTE: Limitation Ratings Based Upon U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service Criteria.

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.