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## Greenwich Bay Special Area Management Plan Recreational Use Chapter Summary<sup>1</sup>

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The Greenwich Bay watershed contains unique and valuable resources that provide recreational opportunities to residents and visitors. Recreational uses, such as boating, swimming, fishing, or just walking along the shore, enhance both the economy and quality of life in the Greenwich Bay watershed. Marinas, yacht clubs, mooring fields, private docks, parks, beaches, boardwalks, boat ramps, and public rights-of-way to the shore all facilitate the public's use and enjoyment of Greenwich Bay. However, because the population living around and using the Bay is increasing, there is growing competition for the limited open water and shoreline space available. The Greenwich Bay SAMP can help achieve a balance among the competing recreational uses and maintain and enhance the entire public's use and enjoyment.

### **What are the key findings?**

#### *Boating*

- Greenwich Bay and its coves are ideal boating areas because they are sheltered from high winds and seas. The Bay and coves support a diverse boating community ranging from larger pleasure boats to personal watercraft to kayaks.
- Greenwich Bay's marinas, mooring fields, and private docks can accommodate at least 4,000 boats, the largest number in Rhode Island. Boating use in Greenwich Bay is increasing.

#### *Swimming*

- Greenwich Bay is historically a popular swimming area. Swimming occurs on licensed and unlicensed beaches along the shoreline as well as from private docks and boats.
- Beaches at Potowomut Neck, Goddard Memorial State Park, Chepiwanoxet Park, Cedar Tree Point, Nausauket, Warwick City Park, and Oakland Beach have been used historically as swimming areas.

#### *Recreational Fishing*

- Greenwich Bay provides excellent recreational fishing opportunities for finfish and shellfish.
- Due to gear restrictions, Greenwich Bay is primarily a sport fishery for finfish. Many finfish species have declined recently, such as winter flounder. Striped bass and bluefish sustain this fishery.
- The gentle slope of the Greenwich Bay shoreline provides substantial quahog and clam habitat accessible to the average citizen for gathering seafood. Residents and licensed non-residents are allowed to harvest daily up to 1 peck or ½ peck, respectively.

#### *Marinas and Yacht Clubs*

- Marinas are key facilities and are increasingly in demand as boating use grows in Greenwich Bay. There are approximately 27 recreational marinas with more than 3,200 boat slips on the shores of Greenwich Bay and its coves.
- Marinas are in a continual state of being rebuilt because their infrastructure requires regular maintenance as well as periodic modernization.
- Marinas can mitigate many adverse impacts by following best management practices (BMPs). The concentration of boats in a single managed facility allows marinas to mitigate boating-related impacts better than private docks, anchorages, or mooring fields.

#### *Moorings and Private Docks*

- Moorings and private docks are important alternatives to marina boat slips.
- There are approximately 580 individual moorings in Greenwich Bay's coves. Moorings require land-side access and parking to facilitate their use. Waterfront homeowners may have issues with unrelated boats moored off their property.
- Private docks are increasing along the Greenwich Bay shoreline. Once a private dock is built along a section of shoreline, denying future dock applications to adjacent property owners is difficult.

#### *Parks and Open Space*

- Parks and open space provide recreational opportunities for citizens in and outside the Greenwich Bay watershed.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on public access may be found in a separate summary.

- Goddard Memorial State Park, Warwick City Park, and Oakland Beach are the largest parks along Greenwich Bay and provide multiple recreational opportunities. Chepiwanoxet Park is an undeveloped area recently acquired by the City of Warwick that provides limited parking and access for beach walking and fishing.

#### *Channel and Marina Dredging*

- Dredging is essential to maintaining public access to Greenwich Bay for boaters as well as restore habitat under certain circumstances.
- Federal navigation channels currently meet authorized depths throughout Greenwich Bay.
- The primary dredging needs are state, local, and private projects, which are small in scale relative to federal navigation projects. Dredging can improve boat ramp access at Goddard Memorial State Park and in Greenwich Cove. State or local maintenance dredging is necessary in Warwick Cove and Oakland Beach on a regular basis.
- Marinas, yacht clubs, and boat ramps dredged during construction will need periodic maintenance dredging.

#### **What are the issues?**

- Increasing boating activity in Greenwich Bay requires additional marina slips, moorings, private docks, or parking at boat ramps to meet the demand.
- Boating use can have adverse impacts on public safety and the environment, such as illegal sewage discharges, that affect other recreational uses in the Bay like swimming
- Marinas can have detrimental environmental impacts related to their location, the services provided (e.g. boat repair or fueling), and the concentrating of boats in one area.
- The cumulative impact of numerous private docks might approximate the environmental impacts of a small marina.
- Marinas, private docks, and other structures perpendicular to the shore can restrict public access and navigation along shores that have been historically open for boating, swimming, fishing, and walking.
- A lack of new moorings and rising property values could lead to a proliferation of private docks.
- During the swimming season, the three major licensed beaches in Greenwich Bay (Oakland Beach, Warwick City Park, and Goddard Memorial State Park) were closed 110 days in 2003 and over 300 days since 1993 because of public health concerns. The 2003 total represents almost 25% of statewide beach closure days.
- Greenwich Bay's beaches are subject to erosion that reduces recreational beach area.
- Public access to the shoreline, overfishing, and shellfish closures due to pollution limit recreational shellfishing in some areas.
- Navigation channels and marinas require periodic dredging to maintain boating access.
- Dredging can have detrimental environmental impacts, such as disturbing shellfish grounds, that may be reduced using BMPs. Impacts must be balanced against the benefits of dredging projects.
- Current sediment contaminant and grain size standards limit the use of dredged material for beach renourishment in Greenwich Bay.

#### **What are the SAMP's goals?**

- Maintain a balance of recreational uses in the Greenwich Bay watershed.
- Promote the restoration and sustainable growth of recreational opportunities in the Greenwich Bay watershed.
- All marinas adopt Clean Marina Programs and receive Clean Marina designation by 2010.
- All private docks and moorings adopt and use clean boating BMPs.
- Eliminate all illegal boat sewage discharges by 2006.
- Reduce shellfish closures by 40% by 2010.

## What are the recommended actions in the SAMP?

Type of Action	Who will Implement?
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Increase the number of filtering traps and clean storm drains periodically to reduce sediment inputs to Greenwich Bay.	Municipalities
Prioritize using dredge materials from Greenwich Bay to replenish beaches in the Bay.	CRMC
<b>REGULATIONS</b>	
Ensure a proportion of shellfish are relocated prior to any maintenance dredging project within marinas.	CRMC
Require boat pump-outs at fueling stations.	CRMC, Municipalities
Require marinas to have pump-out capability in every slip for larger boats.	CRMC, Municipalities
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
Create educational brochure on clean boating practices for private dock owners.	CRMC, DEM
Enforce no discharge regulations by annual and random boat inspections.	DEM, Municipal Harbormasters
Work with URI's Watershed Watch to create a volunteer monitoring program for swimming and shellfishing that meets QA/QC requirements.	HEALTH
Develop state Clean Marina Program consistent with federal standards.	CRMC, marinas
Encourage harbormasters to take a more active role in managing competing recreational uses and no discharge enforcement.	Municipal Harbormasters
Create designated fund to receive mooring fees and ensure fund is used to support harbormaster programs.	Municipalities
Classify material carried from Oakland Beach onto the western shore and Warwick Cove as suitable for beach replenishment.	CRMC
Dredge the mouth of Warwick Cove with a hydraulic dredge onto Oakland Beach to control channel shoaling.	CRMC
Dredge the delta at the mouth of Brush Neck and Buttonwoods Cove.	CRMC

## How do actions in this chapter relate to other issues in the SAMP?

Recreational uses in Greenwich Bay affect and are affected by nearly every other chapter in the SAMP. Water quality limits recreational uses like swimming and fishing in Greenwich Bay while boating and its related facilities can affect water quality. Healthy habitats support finfish and shellfish populations that support recreational fishing. In turn, marinas, private docks, and mooring fields, which are essential to support boating, can impact valuable shoreline and nearshore habitats. Parks serve as both recreational areas as well as valuable habitats. Recreational activities in concert with cultural assets create a powerful economic engine with effects far beyond the immediate businesses related to recreation. Finally, natural hazard mitigation is needed to limit damage to recreational facilities from inevitable natural disasters.