

MASTER PLAN  
FOR  
CRAB MEADOW BEACH  
AND  
JEROME AMBRO MEMORIAL  
WETLANDS PRESERVE

*Maintaining the integrity of a  
coastal wetland system and community*

November 1996

Citizens Advisory Committee appointed on May 14, 1996  
Draft Plan presented to Town Board on September 24, 1996  
Public Hearing held on October 22, 1996  
Town Board adopted on November 12, 1996

TOWN BOARD RESOLUTION  
ADOPTING FINAL PLAN  
WITH MINOR REVISION

1996-647.

ADOPTING A MASTER PLAN FOR CRAB MEADOW BEACH AND THE JEROME AMBRO MEMORIAL WETLANDS PRESERVE AND DIRECTING ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Resolution for Town Board Meeting Dated: November 12, 1996

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Scarpati-Reilly

and seconded by COUNCILMAN ISRAEL  
COUNCILMAN MUSGNUG

WHEREAS, by resolution of May 14, 1996 the Town Board determined that a master plan for Crab Meadow Beach and the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve is needed to identify site features and resources; to map out uses compatible with the properties' designation as a public beach, park-preserve, outstanding natural coastal area, and significant fish and wildlife habitat, while enabling public recreational access; and to define short and long-term management responsibilities and policies; and

WHEREAS, by the same resolution the Town Board appointed a Crab Meadow Citizens Advisory Committee (CMCAC) to meet with and to assist town departmental staff in compiling background information, site data, community input on existing and future uses and to identify local needs and direction for site management as they relate to the formulation of a Crab Meadow Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, a draft master plan for Crab Meadow Beach and the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve was compiled, was submitted to the Town Board and was subject of a public comment period which closed with the public hearing on the document on October 22, 1996; and

WHEREAS, all comments presented in writing, expressed at the public hearing and/or presented in phone discussions with Town personnel have been reviewed and considered by the CMCAC and Town Board and minor revisions are recommended for inclusion in the plan; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Board adopts the draft master plan for Crab Meadow Beach and the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve, with specific amendments recommended during the public comment period in the memorandum from the Planning Department dated October 31, 1996 incorporated therein, as a final plan for implementation of a recommendation contained in the Town Comprehensive Plan and supporting the recommendations of the CMCAC, including the alternative nature center placement which will necessitate relocation of the beach maintenance operation, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Town Board recognizes, commends and thanks the Chairman and Members of the Crab Meadow Citizens Advisory Committee and all town staff that played a role in preparing this first formal park master plan in accordance with the Town Comprehensive Plan, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Directors of Parks and Recreation, General Services, Environmental Control and Planning, Town Attorney, and Superintendent of Highways are directed to insure that involved staff are informed of the pertinent management policy recommendations in the master plan for Crab Meadow Beach and the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve, to assure compliance with the guidelines and objectives established, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Master Plan Coordinator assigned from the Planning Department shall continue to serve in an ongoing liaison capacity to the community, to the Ad Hoc Crab Meadow Advisory Committee, to the involved town departments, regional and state agencies, and to the Town Board to facilitate initiation, cooperation and expedient implementation of the recommendations contained in the master plan; to specifically acquire grant funding and technical assistance from outside agencies as necessary to accomplish stated objectives; and to provide oversight of an evolving dynamic planning document for Crab Meadow, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Supervisor is authorized to file applications with outside agencies for financial assistance in accordance with the provisions of established grant programs and to enter into and execute project agreements for such financial assistance to this municipality to implement the Master Plan for Crab Meadow Beach and the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Director of Planning is directed to distribute copies of this resolution to the members of the Crab Meadow Citizens Advisory Committee; to the Departments of Parks and Recreation, General Services, Engineering Services, Environmental Control, Highways, Town Attorney and Town Clerk; to the Recreation Commission and the Huntington Conservation Board; and to the agencies contacted during the course of the master plan preparation.

VOTE: 5 AYES: 5 NOES: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 0

Supervisor Frank P. Petrone	AYE
Councilwoman Marlene L. Budd	AYE
Councilman Steve J. Israel	AYE
Councilman Donald P. Musgnug	AYE
Councilwoman Susan J. Scarpati-Reilly	AYE

THE RESOLUTION WAS THEREUPON DECLARED DULY ADOPTED.

Additional Long-Term Policy Recommendation:

The Town should pursue a joint management and use agreement for the 160-acre Makamah County Nature Preserve which adjoins and forms the east watershed complement to the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve. The County Trustees have long been interested in attaining or sharing a parking area to allow greater access to the preserve and recognize that joint management may well present such an opportunity. The trail along the LILCO right-of-way in the Ambro Preserve intersects the trail system at Makamah and is used by many visitors as a related resource already. A future staff presence at the Crab Meadow Nature Center would be the likely candidate for periodically assessing the condition of the sites, the trails, and coordinating use thereof.

Additional Short-Term Policy Recommendation:

Potential physical hazards from past residential and boat ramp use may require removal in the area of the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve just south of the beach parking lot, in particular rusted jagged metal remains and fencing. Town General Services staff should investigate whether any dangerous conditions exist. Any such problems should be identified for immediate manual removal (without introducing heavy equipment into the area) to secure the area from potential liability to visitors and/or wildlife.

DRAFT MASTER PLAN  
FOR  
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WETLANDS PRESERVE

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SEPTEMBER 1996

## Introduction

In 1993 the Huntington Planning Board adopted a Town Comprehensive Plan which, for the first time, identified the need for the development of specific park management plans which are resource-based. The purpose of this document is to implement the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan, provide supporting information and prescribe specific strategies to maintain and improve the outstanding resources of Crab Meadow Beach and the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve. Crab Meadow is the only Town beach on Long Island Sound. It has long been a family-oriented site. The adjoining Jerome Ambro Wetlands Preserve is the Town's largest park site-noteworthy for its diversity of natural habitats that flow from tidal to fresh water wetlands to woodlands.

This draft document is the culmination of nine weeks of work by the Crab Meadow Citizens Advisory Committee with Town staff support. It results from eight formal CAC meetings and individual involvement which included the conducting of community surveys, as well as specific research. This plan was prepared by the CAC with input by the immediately proximate civic associations--Crab Meadow Beach Alliance, Waterside Park Association, Sound Shore Bluffs Property Owners Association, and the Makamah Beach Homeowners Association--, Town staff and the Huntington Conservation Board Chairperson. Its objective is to support improved management of the Town's premier beach facility and the unique wetlands preserve.

The support and assistance provided by Town officials, staff, community members and other individuals and agencies, particularly the NYSDEC and NYSDOS, is gratefully acknowledged.

*It is the recommendation of the Crab Meadow Citizens Advisory Committee that the Town Board resolve to schedule a public hearing on this draft plan in accordance with its earlier resolution of May 14, 1996. Following public hearing the draft plan should be adopted as the implementation plan for Crab Meadow Beach and the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve, as recommended in the Town Comprehensive Plan and compatible with the Generic Environmental Impact Statement prepared thereon, after all substantive comments have been incorporated and any necessary response provided. On behalf of the Citizens Advisory Committee, this plan is submitted at open session of the Town Board meeting of September 24, 1996.*

### Crab Meadow Citizens Advisory Committee

Bill Walsh, Chairman  
Helen Martin  
Suzanne McGuire  
Marshall Lindner  
Dan Rosenberg  
Joy Squires  
Charles Vreugde

By Committee Invitation: Bert Gerbracht

Town Staff Liaisons

Margo S. Myles, AICP, Senior Environmental Analyst  
Crab Meadow Master Plan Coordinator  
Town of Huntington Planning Department

Clint Clarke, Recreation Supervisor  
Town of Huntington Parks and Recreation Department

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LAND ACQUISITION-HISTORY AND DESTINY .....	1
<i>Crab Meadow Beach</i> .....	1
<i>Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve</i> .....	1
<i>Adjoining Roadways</i> .....	3
USE OF CRAB MEADOW RESOURCES .....	4
<i>Volume</i> .....	4
<i>Recreation Programs</i> .....	4
<i>Outdoor Environmental Education</i> .....	6
<i>User Survey</i> .....	7
<i>Immediate Crab Meadow Community Use</i> .....	7
INFRASTRUCTURE/MAN-MADE FACILITIES .....	8
<i>Existing Building/Pavilion</i> .....	8
<i>Concessions</i> .....	10
<i>Historic Value</i> .....	12
<i>Proposed Crab Meadow Nature Center</i> .....	13
<i>Proposal "A"-Construction of a New Building</i> .....	14
<i>Proposal "B"-Utilization of Existing Pavilion/East Wing</i> .....	16
<i>Boardwalk</i> .....	18
<i>Group Picnic Area</i> .....	20
<i>Parking</i> .....	20
<i>Traffic Flow/Roadway Concerns</i> .....	21
<i>Drainage/Flooding/Stormwater Management</i> .....	22
<i>General Maintenance</i> .....	23
<i>Whole Access</i> .....	23
NATURAL RESOURCES .....	24
<i>Natural Resource Inventory</i> .....	25
<i>Habitat Restoration</i> .....	26
<i>Security</i> .....	27
<i>Park Watch Network</i> .....	27
<i>Boundary Protection</i> .....	27
<i>Roadside Appearance</i> .....	28
<i>Access</i> .....	28
<i>Vector Control</i> .....	28
<i>Interpretation/Public Relations</i> .....	28
<i>Trails</i> .....	29
<i>Volunteer Cultivation</i> .....	29
COMPENDIUM OF CRAB MEADOW PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS .....	29
<i>General Policy Recommendations</i> .....	29
<i>Short-Term Policy Recommendations (for implementation prior to Memorial Day 1997)</i> .....	32
<i>Long-Term Policy Recommendations</i> .....	35

## LAND ACQUISITION-HISTORY AND DESTINY

All of the municipal lands in the Crab Meadow area (Crab Meadow Beach, Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve, and Crab Meadow Golf Course) are under the direct jurisdiction of the Town Board of the Town of Huntington and are recognized as parkland in the Town Comprehensive Plan (1993) and carried as such on Section VIII of the Town Assessment Roll. As dedicated municipal parkland, an act of the State Legislature and possibly, replacement of comparable real estate, would be required to allow its use for any other purpose. In the case of the dedicated park-preserve, the Huntington Town Code requires a mandatory referendum before the land could be used for anything else, as well. The assemblage consists of original Board of Trustees' property; land acquired following public referendum and with the assistance of grant funds; and land dedicated through the subdivision process for the enjoyment of all residents of the Town of Huntington (see Crab Meadow Area Base Map next page).

### Crab Meadow Beach

The two tax parcels shown on the Suffolk County Tax Map which comprise Crab Meadow Beach total 15.76 acres and were vested to the Town of Huntington through Colonial Patent. The 1972 W. Keith Kavenagh study entitled Town Lands and the Trust Doctrine: Huntington, New York as a case study, 1653-1972, which was authorized and undertaken under the aegis of the Board of Trustees of the Town of Huntington, describes a title search conducted by Willard N. Baylis in 1917 [pp. 198-200] which finds that: "title to it [Crab Meadow Beach] was vested in the Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the Town of Huntington by Colonial grants of Nicoll, Dongan and Fletcher, and the ratifying acts, and unless divested, title is still in such Trustees." Title to these properties was transferred from the Board of Trustees to the Town of Huntington by virtue of condemnation proceedings in 1959. The actual area fenced as the Town beach includes the land described above, as well as a small portion of the area acquired in the 1960s as described below.

### Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve

The Ambro Wetlands Preserve was named and dedicated on July 13, 1993; however, most of the land comprising the preserve was acquired earlier using bond monies appropriated following a public referendum in 1962. At that time there was a proposal to develop an extensive water-related public recreational facility that would have altered the wetlands significantly. A Parks Referendum fact sheet supporting the funding notes:

"The Voorhis proposal for Crab Meadow's 450 acres would involve the dredging of what is now a meadow to develop over 75 acres of fresh water lakes. These lakes would be stocked with fish. Around these lakes would be bridle paths, nature trails and wildlife refuges. Also included in the plan for Crab Meadow is a 600-boat marina and a full-size 18-hole golf course--the old Northport Country Club. Provision is also made for the expansion of the present Crab Meadow town beach, for a picnic area, several baseball fields and an organized play area near the beach. There would be an expanded parking field for the beach, plus separate new parking fields for the golf course, the picnic area, and the marina."

Figure 1 - Crab Meadow Area Base Map

It took several years following the referendum (1964-1968) for Town condemnation proceedings to secure the Crab Meadow wetland holdings and, thankfully, only minor components of the grandiose plan originally proposed were ever implemented. The Town proceedings were complicated as many different properties and land ownerships were involved. Of the approximately 440 acres acquired, about 300 are part of the preserve; the remaining acreage encompasses the Crab Meadow Golf Course (which is not directly addressed in this plan).

As a condition of Planning Board approval of the Wodaembarc cluster subdivision, 37.5 acres south of and including a portion of the LILCO right-of-way east of Seaside Court were deeded to the Town and dedicated as parkland-preserve (preservation area) pursuant to §159-3(b)(2) of Huntington Town Code on April 12, 1988. The remainder of the preserve was dedicated to the same protective category five years later. Preservation areas are identified as "Nature centers providing outdoor laboratories in ecology and conservation; shall have guided walks; may cut some selective trails; no large buildings, or collecting of materials; to provide educational programs." The Wodaembarc land is comprised of freshwater wetlands and upland woods. Three adjoining freshwater wetland parcels totaling 3.78 acres were acquired using private grant funds from the Iroquois Gas Transmission System (IGTS) in 1993 and 1994 and deeded to remain as public open space in perpetuity. The size of the preserve is the direct result of long-term interest in assembling a protected public wetland area.

The Town is continuing efforts to expand the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve through strategic land acquisition. Specific parcels will not be identified in this plan to protect the interests of the Town and the individual landowners. *Residual Iroquois Gas Transmission System-Land Preservation and Enhancement Program funds, other private and public funds, and available planning tools should be applied (without invoking eminent domain) to secure additional properties that will enhance and protect this largest of the Town's preserves, a significant coastal wetland system.*

#### Adjoining Roadways

The Waterview West Street spur at the southwest corner of the beach and the defunct Waterside Road extension north of the beach entrance are not considered part of the Crab Meadow Beach/park holdings. However, they both serve a purpose that is park-related. Waterview West Street is not a dedicated Town road, though it is recognized as a Town road by usage. The Waterview West Street spur provides access to the beach parking lot for large equipment and is used to route traffic more efficiently for beach sticker holders while the gate entrance is in use for beach sticker sales.

The northern extension of Waterside Road is part of a dedicated roadway that runs 3,124 feet south from the Long Island Sound. The Waterside Road extension is gated along the beach frontage and is needed as an access point to the beach for Northport Fire District water rescue calls and for other unforeseen emergencies. As most of the Town beach is enclosed by boardwalk, proper maintenance of this spur should be considered part and parcel of the Crab Meadow Beach operation. This Waterside Road terminus serves as a de facto fifty-foot buffer to the residence to the west. Years of neglect have resulted in the substantial growth of vegetation which is unsightly although it affords some degree of privacy to the residence. *Since the Waterside Road extension adjoins a private residence, any alterations or modification of the parcel should be discussed first with the homeowner in an effort to seek agreement, before changes are made.*

*While no change in use is supported for these two segments, it is recommended that they be abandoned by the proper Town authority as necessary to allow Town Board dedication as parkland additions to Crab Meadow Beach. While this is a paper transaction and does not change ownership, it will clearly define the manner in which these lands are to be managed in the future—as part of the beach assemblage.*

## USE OF CRAB MEADOW RESOURCES

Crab Meadow Beach is used for organized summer Town recreation programs and open for general individual and/or family active and passive use year-round. While it is a Town of Huntington-owned beach that is managed primarily to serve municipal residents, it is available to non-residents as well. Town beach staff indicate that Crab Meadow appears to be growing increasingly popular as a daily vacation site for younger people and families.

### Volume

The Town does not track attendance at its beach facilities; however, vehicular access to the beach is permitted during the peak season, Memorial Day through Labor Day, by beach sticker only. Seasonal and daily beach stickers are sold at each of the Town beaches and at Town Hall that allow residents use of any of the Town's beach facilities for the specified period. Analysis of revenue reports for the 1994 and 1995 beach seasons indicates that Crab Meadow Beach leads all other Town facilities for vehicle sticker sales. Therefore, by sales implication and as evidenced by general use, Crab Meadow is likely the most popular/visited Town beach. Beach personnel indicate that peak use of the beach is experienced on hot summer weekend days when high tide is close to the hours of 12:00-2:00 p.m. A breakdown of sticker sales is provided in the tables below. This provides some indication of beach use, but does not measure frequency of visitation, nor the number visiting per vehicle, nor does it factor in local access by pedestrians, skaters and bicyclists.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Number &amp; Percent of \$15 seasonal permits</i>	<i>Total Number &amp; Percent of \$10 resident daily permits</i>	<i>Total Number &amp; Percent of \$15 non-resident daily permits</i>
1994	5,600 of 14,418 townwide (39 %)	342 of 606 townwide (56 %)	82 of 177 townwide (46%)
1995	5,454 of 13,668 townwide (40%)	246 of 475 townwide (52%)	59 of 148 townwide (40%)

Table 1 Crab Meadow Beach Sticker Sales-Townwide Comparison

<i>Year/Type</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>	<i>Total</i>
1994 resident seasonal	1,223	2,596	1,418	354	9	5,600
1994 resident daily	27	58	103	140	14	342
1994 non-resident daily	18	20	32	12	0	82
1995 resident seasonal	763	2,541	1,677	464	9	5,454
1995 resident daily	8	24	75	125	14	246
1995 non-resident daily	5	9	24	21	0	59

Table 2 Crab Meadow Beach Sticker Sales-Monthly Breakdown

### Recreation Programs

Town-coordinated recreational programs at Crab Meadow Beach are presently limited to only four summer offerings with prior registration required. A community instructional swimming program was an integral part of the beach use for many years; however, it was discontinued following the widespread drop in beach attendance in the late 1980s likely due to extensive media coverage of beach contamination at other sites (e.g. hospital waste on south shore beaches and sewage seepage and raised bacterial counts in certain north shore areas). Crab Meadow Beach on Long Island Sound has not experienced water quality problems that are common to more enclosed bay and harbor beaches. It is monitored by the Suffolk County Department of Health Services for total and fecal coliform bacteria from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Cumulative logs of samples analyzed by the SCDHS over the past ten years reveal that Crab Meadow has no water quality history that would indicate bacterial pollution threat. However, Crab Meadow is as susceptible as any other north shore beach to isolated problems, such as spill events, that might arise from the utilization of Long Island Sound as a commercial pathway for vessels (e.g., oil and gas barges, tankers). The beach's proximity to LILCO's Northport power plant and its related oil barge/pipeline poses ongoing concern for oil leakage contamination. However, the overall water quality at Crab Meadow Beach has been generally compatible with Town program use.

The four Town programs described below are thought to be well run and a welcomed, necessary part of the public beach operation. Sound programming promotes wise use the resource. *Crab Meadow Beach can and should be programmed more fully to meet identified recreational needs in a manner that is sensitive to the environment and which complements existing use patterns.*

Camp Soundview - A full-weekday camp program for children aged 6-12, including a variety of activities such as swim instruction, recreational swim, nature study, arts and crafts, fishing, sports and special event. Four two-week sessions run from the end of June through mid-August, 8:15 a.m. -2:00 p.m.; registration as follows: 1993 (227); 1994 (268); 1995 (341); 1996 (460). In 1993 and 1994 the Town only offered three two-week sessions, in 1995 an additional fourth session was added. Registration averages about 115 per session; campers are grouped by age incrementally (6 and 7 year-olds, 8 and 9 year-olds, 10 and 11 year-olds and over 11).

Co-Ed Beach Volleyball - A late Sunday afternoon program for ages 18 and above for recreational team play; summer session only; registration as follows: 1993 (12 teams, 168 players); 1994 (16 teams, 224 players); 1995 (10 teams, 152 players); 1996 (9 teams, 141 players).

Pick-Up Volleyball - A late Saturday afternoon adult program added in 1996 with a first-time registration of 28 people; summer session only.

Beach Slimnastics - A workout from a combination of jazz, ballet and slimnastics exercises to music at the beach for adults ages 16 and older; summer session only; registration as follows: 1993 (23); 1994 (14); 1995 (15); 1996 (14).

The Town began a public square dancing program in 1996 in which a professional caller rotated between Crab Meadow, Centerport and West Neck Beaches to provide an event at one of the

beaches one evening per week. The program was well received and had an average of 70 to 80 participants at Crab Meadow. The Parks Department is considering making Crab Meadow the home site for the evening square dancing program next year because of its consistent turn-out.

The Town Recreation Supervisor has indicated that the Town can and will increase outdoor recreation programming where such opportunities arise. For example, the Parks and Recreation Department is planning a Harvest Crafts Festival for October of this year which will incorporate many facets of the beach and preserve allure through short programs (e.g. nature study), contests (e.g., sand castle construction) and activities (e.g., surf casting, beach combing). It will be an open trial off-season event to encourage the best use of the park resources, a further opportunity to increase community appreciation of the beach environment.

### Outdoor Environmental Education

Most of the other Towns in Suffolk County have their own nature/outdoor education centers, notably Hoyt Farm in Smithtown, the South Shore Nature Center in Islip, Mt. Sinai Cedar Beach Nature Center and Holtsville Ecology Site in Brookhaven. Although the Ambro Preserve offers a diversity of habitats and instructional possibilities, there is no programmed use of its resources, except limited exposure to youngsters through Camp Soundview and the occasional school group visitation. Primary users of the Preserve are outdoor enthusiasts (birders and hikers).

Among anticipated opportunities is a proposed Crab Meadow Nature Center which could attract beach and wetlands use for environmental education. In addition to a small exhibition area that would be open for public viewing, the Town would offer an array of nature study programs on a limited registration basis. *The Town should establish a nature center at Crab Meadow Beach for the benefit of its residents and its natural resources. The Town's overall programmatic goal should be to foster a greater sense of connection with the natural world so that individuals will act on their responsibility to protect our environment. In this process individuals may understand their role in maintaining the health of the global ecosystem.*

From June through August each year Camp Soundview will dominate use of this proposed Center, though afternoon youth programs and evening adult programs could be added later. From September through May it is likely that Town programs could be developed to accommodate weekday school groups, after-school youth sessions, Saturday programs for youth and adults and periodic evening programs for teens and adults. It is expected that Parks and Recreation Department programs will cover diverse and exciting topics, possibly including: coastal biology, coastal ecology, coastal geology, marine science, ornithology, astronomy, entomology, fish ecology for anglers, weather and climate, global changes, nature drawing, nature photography, salt marsh ecology, special talks and tours. Classes would have low student/teacher ratios and be offered on a reasonable schedule. *The Department of Parks and Recreation, in consultation with community representatives, should establish usage policies to insure that programs allow individuals to be exposed to the special resources of the beach and preserve on a schedule and in a manner that will least affect the land and its natural inhabitants.* Once an educational center is established, the Town will be able to develop programming tailored to meet the needs of the community (see further details on Proposed Crab Meadow Nature Center on page 13).

### User Survey

A survey of the nearly 400 households in the immediate Crab Meadow area yielded a great deal of information on the perceived needs and issues concerning the beach and preserve. The results were analyzed and summarized below. The same survey questionnaire was distributed at the beach to general users; however, the CAC felt these surveys should not be given the same weight as the local community because the Town did not ask respondents to state their name or address. For more complete response breakdown, refer to the surveys on file in the Planning Department.

### Immediate Crab Meadow Community Use

Of the 400 households surveyed, 90 surveys were returned-at a high response rate of 22%-during the short July 4th holiday week. This indicates a high level of community concern about the Town facilities. In addition to the high response rate, the depth and scope of the comments submitted by community residents was also noteworthy. As frequent users of these facilities their views and insights should be highly valued.

Most local respondents visit the beach at least once a week and believe the facilities at Crab Meadow Beach are being managed well, although almost everyone provided suggestions for improvement summarized by category below. The beach, boardwalk, playground and restaurant are the greatest attractions in order of popularity.

- More than a third of the local respondents patronize LaCasa Cafe at least once a month.
- More than half object to the sale of alcohol at the establishment, most being concerned with the consumption of alcohol outside the restaurant.
- About two-thirds are aware of the Town's plans to build a two-story nature center building in the beach's parking lot. Major objections noted were aesthetics, traffic and parking, vandalism, potential storm damage and negative environmental impact.
- Support for the center and/or concept was expressed by about a third, with two-thirds opposed or quite concerned..
- Several indicated the need for more information and/or were not informed that construction of the proposed nature center was to be primarily privately-funded.
- About a fifth noted no further development of beach facilities and that there should be no restaurant.

Beach: needs raking, no handicap bathroom near swings (ADA violation), first aid station poorly managed; mark how dangerous the currents are at the jetty; provide more shady areas near the playground; reduce litter problem on beach and adjoining wetlands, especially glass; improve quality of sand on beach; make sure play apparatus is safe for kids; extend cement walkway down to waterline for families with infants; keep beach open 'til 10, instead of 8 p.m.; have Town or organizational sponsored barbecues or field days; extend boardwalk.

Restaurant: sewage problem, prevent cesspool overflow; no longer a local restaurant; garbage and rat problem/cups & straws litter beach and breezeway, LaCasa should have someone bus/clean outside table area; dumpster never closed; alcohol being served outside on boardwalk; noise, traffic, late hours; restaurant parking-free and being abused, should use ticket vending gate; too many tables outside, outside tables clutter boardwalk, remove outside chairs and tables; remove signs on fence

facing Waterview Drive (LaCasa); remove outdoor umbrellas, not appropriate; provide a real snack bar like at Sunken Meadow; no expansion.

Sanitation: provide mid-day beach clean-up; take better care of trash problem, remove dumpster from front of lot, keep lid closed, empty more frequently.

Parking/Traffic: improve drainage in parking lot; do not store sand and salt in parking lot, can leach into creek and sound; provide better speeding surveillance; repave Waterside Road.

General: provide more after hours security; provide better building upkeep.

The observations of the combined respondents are significant as they represent ways in which the facility has either affected them already or might better suit them in the future. The Town (and La Casa Cafe) should give serious consideration to the comments. However, while all suggestions presented are summarized in this document, they are not the recommendations of the CAC unless clearly specified. *A suggestion box should be placed in a prominent location at the beach to accept ongoing thoughts, concerns and suggestions for improvement at the facility.*

## INFRASTRUCTURE/MAN-MADE FACILITIES

Crab Meadow Beach presently supports a dual-winged brick, stuccoed-block and Spanish tile pavilion with breezeway area, railed boardwalk with open-air gazebos at its west and east ends; covered picnic area with outdoor barbecues which can accommodate gatherings by permit of up to 150 people; gatehouse; comfort station; handicapped-accessible playground; one half-basketball and two shuffleboard courts; and parking area for 325 cars. Fifty parking stalls are located west of the pavilion and reserved for restaurant use. The west wing of the pavilion (including greenhouse addition) supports a restaurant (La Casa Cafe) which has a current fire inspection permit to support up to 70 people. It has a new (spring 1996) take-out pizza window opening under the breezeway, upstairs storage area, and public restrooms (men). The five-arched open-air breezeway contains seven red formica fixed booths and 11 white plastic round tables (supplied by La Casa Cafe), each providing about four seats.

The east wing of the pavilion contains a lifeguard office, restrooms (women) and large parks maintenance area used to repair equipment on the ground floor and to store supplies on both floors. There are interior stairway openings to the roof from either second-floor wing and two exterior stairways. The main pavilion and boardwalk were constructed as a WPA project dedicated on May 28, 1938 and were later rehabilitated and rededicated in 1986 (see existing facilities map next page).

### Existing Building/Pavilion

Photo postcards on file with the Northport Historical Society show the pavilion at Crab Meadow Beach has remained largely unchanged since its construction in 1938 (see photo postcard copied on next page). The only major adjustment to the building footprint has been the added greenhouse addition to the west wing for restaurant use. Other additions created a snack bar concession (1986)

Figure 2 - Photo Postcard circa 1938 showing Crab Meadow Beach Pavilion



Entrance to Crab Meadow Beach — Northport, Long Island, N. Y.

and a take-out pizza window (1996) under the existing breezeway to facilitate improved business use of the restaurant.

### Concessions

For the three years the LaCasa Cafe has occupied the restaurant it has been open year-round, daily 11:00 a.m.-midnight, serving lunch and dinner. The concessionaire plans to close on Mondays through Thursdays after October 1st, opening only for sporadic group gatherings, and to resume a full schedule on April 1, 1997.

Much of the impetus for preparing a plan for the beach arose from long-standing community discontent with specific issues related to the restaurant, many of which have been addressed through subsequent Town response to the Committee and cooperative action on the part of the concessionaire.

Among notable restaurant issues that have been addressed and resulting actions are:

- removal of tables and chairs from obstructing the boardwalk;
- removal of umbrellas that contain advertisements for alcohol-related beverages from tables;
- placing a timer on neon lights to avoid all-night disturbance and power waste;
- addition of a new third dumpster in an attempt to reduce trash overflow;
- securing a sanitary disposal variance from the Suffolk County Department of Health Services' Board of Review to enable Town replacement of defective holding tanks that serve the west wing of the pavilion and which apparently were the cause of overflow and added to odor problems.

*Now that the Town has been notified of the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) Board of Review's decision to allow replacement of the existing sanitary tanks and addition of a grease trap (which was supported unanimously by letter from the CAC), the remedial work should occur as soon as possible. The in-kind replacement is the most environmentally benign solution to the problem--a presently ill-functioning, though previously SCDHS-approved, wastewater holding tank. It is likely that any leaching field system or treatment plant so close to the beach would require artificial manipulation of the topography to raise elevation to provide sufficient percolation above the water table. The only areas of the beach that are not completely necessary to support present uses lie too close to the sensitive resources the Town wishes to protect in perpetuity.*

Holding tanks will marry the Town to a maintenance operation with ongoing pumping truck visitations to remove waste to the Town sewage treatment plant. However, given the physical hydrogeologic limitations of the site, leaching systems could link the Town to long-term overflow problems, particularly during high tides and peak storm occurrences. It is highly unlikely that the Town could control infiltration from surface and tidal influences, therefore, seemingly necessitating a closed tank system. *The Town should closely monitor the success of the new tank project and the frequency of pump truck visits and recognize that local residents can be the Town's "eyes, ears, and noses" on such matters and seek future input. Efforts to schedule pumping and to contain odors therefrom to least affect the beach use, restaurant operation, and residential community are necessary to allow quiet enjoyment of the area to its fullest extent.*

Odors from the sanitary system are compounded by close proximity of restaurant dumpsters for cardboard, general refuse and grease. Installation of a new grease trap with the holding tank

replacement will eliminate the small dumpster storage of grease. While the concessionaire added a third dumpster to be used for cardboard, the odors have not subsided. The dumpsters usually remain open and do not appear to be cleaned. The CAC investigated this issue closely and found that there are companies that are willing to install a compactor system on a trial basis, are likely to reduce the trips to the beach for disposal, and may reduce the restaurant's garbage disposal costs. The restaurant concessionaire was receptive to these ideas on meeting with the CAC Chairman. *Therefore, the CAC strongly recommends abandonment of the current dumpster site and the introduction of a closed compactor system and its relocation at a more centralized location as soon as possible. This action will help to mitigate odors, control trash from being blown out, stop attracting birds and wildlife from redistributing the trash, and remove unsightly containers from the beach perimeter.*

The residential area closest to Crab Meadow Beach is a nearly fully-developed community. Its infrastructure is established with only one road in and out and many homes are set on the hillside with views of the Town beach and preserve. Major changes at the Town park or preserve could have potential to affect homeowners. For this reason, it is recommended that *the presidents of the four civic associations that that were represented in the Committee deliberations (Crab Meadow Beach Alliance, Sound Shore Bluffs Property Owners and Waterside Park (to the west), and Makamah Beach Homeowners Association (to the east)) be considered an ongoing Ad Hoc Committee for the purposes of providing advisory guidance to the Town for any major management decisions the Town may face (i.e., concession agreement review, new construction), to disseminate information to the community, and/or to support implementation of plan recommendations.*

A review of the other Towns in Suffolk County revealed that the restaurant at Crab Meadow Beach is an anomaly. While several Towns allow seasonal food concessions and independent food service trucks at Town recreational facilities, one even providing a seasonal restaurant, none provide a year-round restaurant which serves alcoholic beverages. *Any action the Town can take to contain/confine the consumption of alcohol to within the restaurant itself, and not allow its movement outside, can only assist in maintaining a quality family environment at the beach.*

Crab Meadow's pavilion was originally designed as a recreational asset for the Town of Huntington. The largest spaces in the building now provide home for a commercial restaurant and the Town's beach maintenance operation. *As the Town's only Long Island Sound beach, the Town should encourage appropriate public use of its facilities. Further expansion of the privatized commercial (restaurant) use of Crab Meadow facilities should not be allowed and the general beach maintenance operation should be relocated off-site to avail the space for much-needed Town programming (See Proposal B-Utilization of Existing Pavilion/East Wing, page 21).*

The restaurant (La Casa Cafe) is used pursuant to a negotiated concession agreement which runs until May 1999. It is the responsibility of the concessionaire to abide by the agreement and the Town to enforce its requirements. Several items that caused the community to take issue with the restaurant over the past two years are clearly established in the legal agreement. Enforcement of the Town's own terms is needed on an ongoing basis. *Therefore, it is recommended that a specific entity/individual within the Town, preferably within the Department of Parks and Recreation or Town Attorney's office, be charged with the ongoing duty of monitoring the agreement.* This will assist the Town by building a record that can be readily reviewed when the agreement comes up for review again in a few years and provide a clear channel for reporting concerns if necessary.

Moreover, *a comprehensive cost analysis should be undertaken to determine, how much, if any, profit actually accrues to the Town or whether the lease/operation actually results in public costs.*

### Historic Value

The Crab Meadow Beach Pavilion, according to newspaper articles contained in the Long Islander [6/3/38] was dedicated on May 28, 1938; the architect who is credited with designing the building is David Dusenberry, who is cited as a Huntington resident. The project was partially funded by the Federal Works Progress Administration, a program established by President Roosevelt during the Depression to employ those who otherwise would have received home relief. Unemployed Town of Huntington residents were used to construct the building. The significance of the building to the Town of Huntington is severalfold.

The 1938 redevelopment of Crab Meadow Beach represents Huntington's only example of a planned waterfront recreational resource in the tradition of the Long Island State Parks plans of the Robert Moses era. Nowhere else along the Town's waterfront have such facilities been developed on the same scale. Both the pavilion and boardwalk are part of the original scheme to develop Crab Meadow Beach as the Town's largest and most imposing waterfront park. As early as 1929 [Town Board Minutes 1929-1933, 12/5/29, p.36] such improvements were contemplated for Crab Meadow Beach which had served for many years as a facility open to the public for recreation. However, the defeat of the proposed bond issue, and, undoubtedly, the ensuing Depression, resulted in the deferred construction "of a suitable pavilion and bathhouses at the Town Park, at Crab Meadow Beach" until 1938 (see postcard picture circa 1938 next page).

The pavilion embraces a Spanish Colonial style court yard plan which originally featured two opposing one-story square wings clad in stucco with terra cotta tiled hip roofs linked along their north facades by a one-story brick breezeway punctuated along its span by a series of open arches ornamented with limestone keystones and medallions. On the roof of the breezeway, an outdoor promenade/terrace and viewing deck is enclosed for safety by a series of brick piers separated by Art Moderne grilles. The blending of the two styles transforms what might have been a predictable derivative Spanish Colonial building into a dynamic structure whose form is very much related to its function.

The structure has been altered, most notably by a glass-walled, one-story addition on the west and north facades of the west wing in order to house a restaurant and bump-out intrusions built into the open breezeway for a pizza oven and snack bar. Such modifications have somewhat altered the building's important architectural features and have required structural change. The addition contains an entrance and pizza window which block the open archway, forming the west end of the breezeway. It has not destroyed the arch itself which has been retained. The north and west walls of the west wing have also been removed to provide open access between the interior of the west wing and the glassed in area. Although it has altered the symmetry of the building, the addition is limited to the first floor and occupies only one wing. The roof lines remain intact and the integrity of the overall architectural plan is largely maintained. If it were desired, the building could be restored to its original form.

The alternative placement of the proposed nature center in the east wing of the pavilion (see Proposal B-Existing Pavilion/East Wing) should not alter the historic value of the building as it will involve only interior renovation. However, *if significant exterior alterations to the pavilion building are planned, the Huntington Historic Preservation Commission should be requested to review and advise on an appropriate plan. Under Article VI, §198-40.2 (D)(4) the Commission is charged with the power to*

*review and issue written reports on all municipal proposals relative to uses or structures affecting a designated landmark or historic district. Although the Crab Meadow Beach Pavilion is not presently a designated landmark, its historical association with the WPA program in Huntington, its cultural significance as a planned waterfront park in the Robert Moses tradition, and its interesting architectural eclecticism suggest that it is worthy of landmark designation. Further research should be conducted to identify any other local commissions which may have been designed by the architect David Dusenberry, to locate architectural and site development plans, and to provide more specifics concerning the Works Progress Administration program as it was carried out in Huntington*

*Ill-advised past use of the top deck of the structure by a prior restaurant concessionaire for an open bar area resulted in long-term damage to the structure that requires immediate attention. A large tent canopy had been anchored into the building and not properly secured upon removal. The resultant water damage to the roof (lifting the existing rubber coating) and underlying structure (masonry, columns) is visible both from above and below the deck in the breezeway. Additional damage has been caused by the pressures of the marine environment (high winds, salt and sand spray), such as missing and broken roof tiles.*

The Crab Meadow pavilion exists because of the hard work of Huntington's past residents to serve the leisure of its present and future visitors. *It is imperative that the Town recognize the significant value of this resource and secure funding for its immediate needs and ongoing maintenance. Structural maintenance needs to be programmed and kept in check annually.*

*To insure that the main pavilion and its complementary features are properly maintained, the Town should investigate designating Crab Meadow Beach as an enterprise fund-but only if it is determined not to be a limiting financial arrangement. It should not be done without an in-depth review of the costs to run the beach operation on an annual basis to reveal whether it could be deemed self-supporting. Fees and concession payments could be used to directly subsidize the operation and costs, particularly related to the concessions, should be carefully scrutinized to enable the Town to negotiate the most appropriate future agreement for site use. Town staff should identify and seek potential sources of public and private grants and partnerships to maintain the integrity and interpret the value of the historic 1938 WPA plan (while meeting ongoing municipal program needs). While the structures and design reflect a built environment, they represent an irreplaceable resource that requires ongoing maintenance under the care of the trained historians and planners that serve the Town.*

#### Proposed Crab Meadow Nature Center

The only proposals pending to add to the existing assemblage of structures at either the beach or preserve both address the need for the development of a nature education center at Crab Meadow Beach.

The initial planned use of the structure is as a home site for the existing Camp Soundview summer program with periodic availability for visiting school groups from throughout the Town of Huntington and for Town-coordinated programs for outdoor environmental education studies. Crab Meadow was selected as the site for the nature center as it is already the home base for the summer camp program and because it boasts a surrounding diversity of natural resources unparalleled on town lands (see Outdoor Environmental Education discussion on page 9).

Funding for the development of a nature education center has been provided largely from outside sources, including a \$150,000 private grant from the Iroquois Gas Transmission System; \$50,000 federal Land and Water Conservation grant, \$30,000 Community Development Agency assistance (for handicapped accessibility); and \$35,000 town support. The town has held the project in abeyance pending the completion of the Crab Meadow master plan even though it may have placed certain federal project funding in jeopardy. Both the \$50,000 federal grant and the \$30,000 CDA grant have deadlines for use/project completion of December 31, 1996.

The Crab Meadow community has supported the program concept since first learning of it about three years ago; however, it has had strong concerns about the building's height, its aesthetics, its isolation, its likelihood of becoming a target for vandalism and storm damage, the potential burden of ongoing maintenance and security costs, and the negative environmental impact of a septic system so close to the preserve. Therefore, after much discussion and thoughtful consideration, the CAC can not recommend the new building plan.

### Proposal "A"-Construction of a New Building

New construction of a two-story 2,000 square foot nature center building has been proposed on existing paved area in the southeast corner of the beach parking lot adjoining the Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve (see Existing Facilities map next page showing proposed building location). The 16-sided glass and masonry building would have its first-floor raised to elevation 13 feet (existing parking lot is at 10 feet) and the building itself would stand 26 feet (a total of 29 feet in height from existing grade). As a new public structure, the building would be fully handicapped accessible with both entrance ramp and interior elevator/lift. The second floor of the building would have a cantilevered deck surrounding it.

From a planning perspective, the new building in the southeast corner of the parking area would provide separation to the general beach uses (main bathhouse, restaurant, snackbar) and center programming (especially Camp Soundview and public center visitation), without affecting the existing flow of uses at the main pavilion.

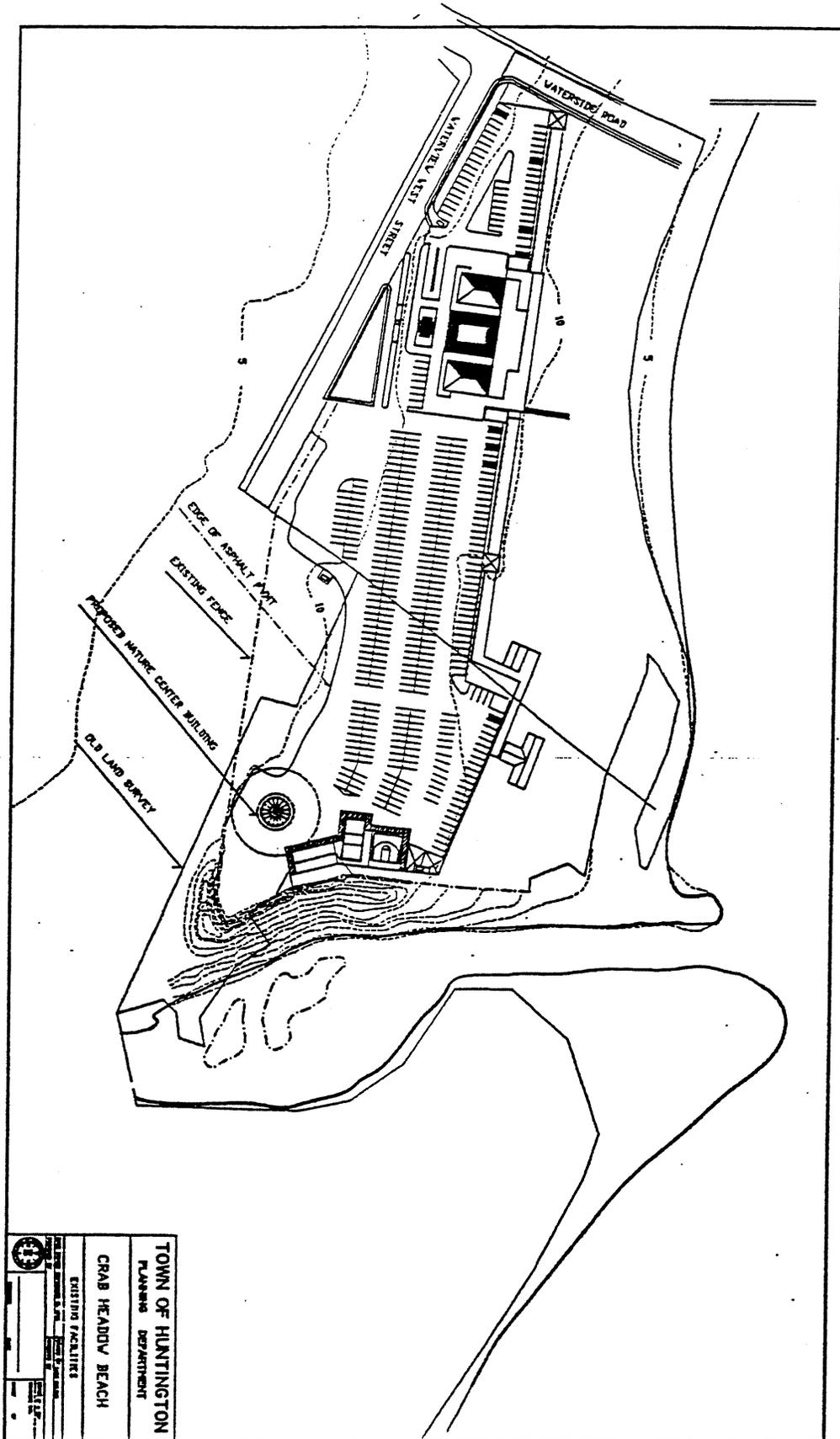
The Town of Huntington has completed all necessary environmental reviews and the following findings and/or approvals have been issued compatible with the proposed building construction:

- 1) Negative declaration per the State Environmental Quality Bond Act by Town Board;
- 2) Coastal consistency approval from the New York State Department of State;
- 3) Letter of non-jurisdiction related to tidal wetlands from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; and
- 4) Sanitary disposal application approval from the Suffolk County Department of Health Services.

No further approvals are required for the Town to proceed with framing a Request for Proposals and selection of a contractor.

The Crab Meadow Citizens Advisory Committee and the Crab Meadow community have analyzed alternatives to the proposed new construction that would address the needs for nature education in

Figure 3 - Existing Facilities with Proposed Building Location



Huntington (as well as the needs of Camp Soundview) without negatively impacting the aesthetics of Crab Meadow and its fragile environment. Alternative options were discussed by the Committee for establishing a nature center at the beach, including using the east wing of the pavilion now occupied by Town Beach Maintenance and constructing a boardwalk extension with an observation gazebo; reducing the size of the proposed new building to a one-story structure and using it in tandem with the east wing of the pavilion; and adding a second floor addition to the east wing of the pavilion. However, all but one of these options were found to have specific limitations or be less than desirable in conserving the resources under review. After considerable investigation, discussion and hard work, the Committee arrived at a preferred solution involving better utilization of the east wing of the existing pavilion with an extension of the boardwalk and the addition of a third gazebo in the southeast corner of the parking lot (see CMCAC preferred plan map next page).

### Proposal "B"-Utilization of Existing Pavilion/East Wing

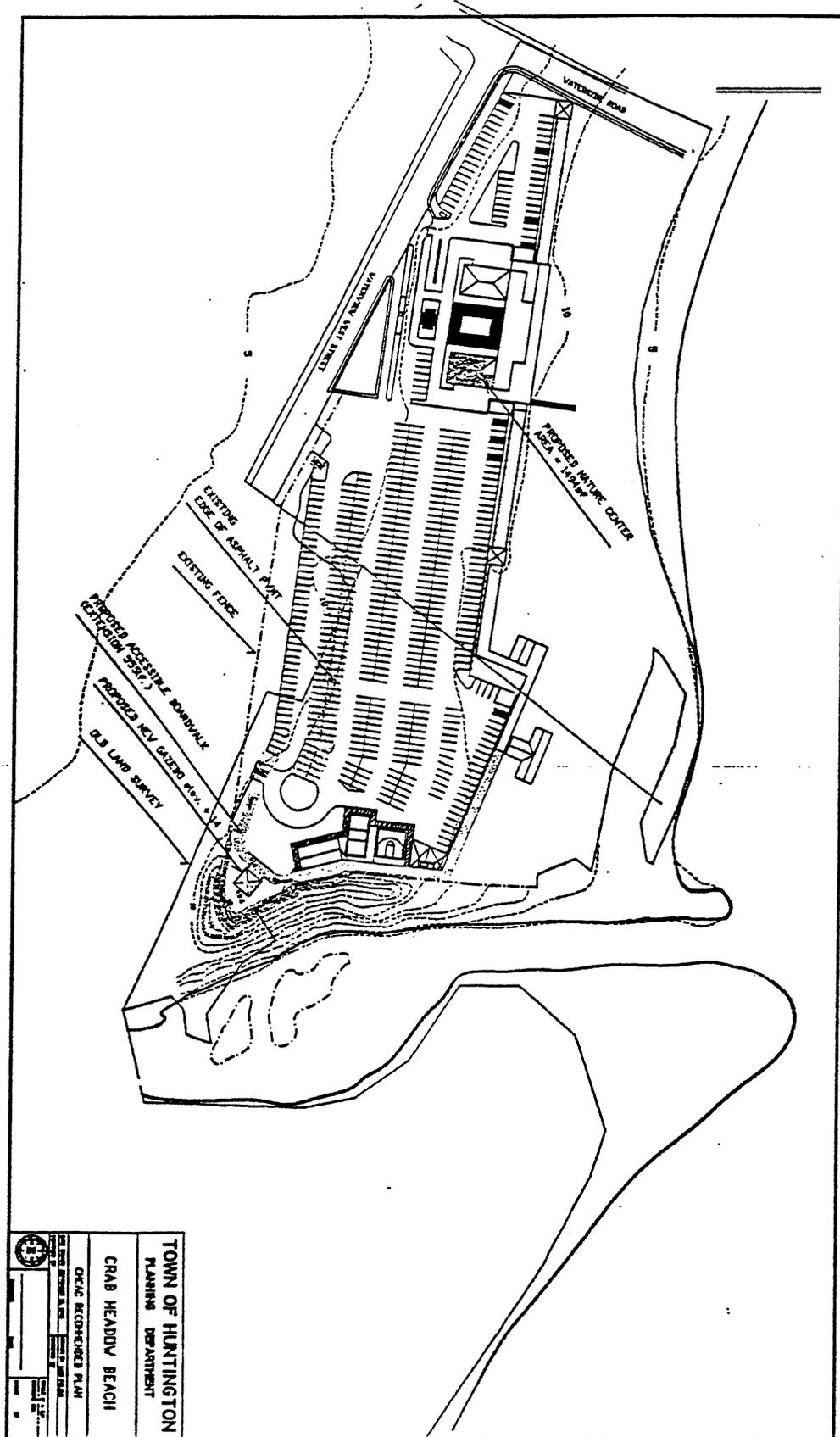
*It is the preferred choice of the Committee (and strongly recommended by all but one of its members) that the Town utilize as much area as possible in the east wing of the existing pavilion for a nature center operation in lieu of the previously proposed new building construction. An extension of the boardwalk as noted below would create an outdoor viewing platform for improved visual access to the adjoining preserve's unique resources. Unlike some past additions and modifications, the plan to use the east wing of the pavilion as a site for the proposed nature center will in no way alter its historical design. Instead, interior renovations are proposed to make an attractive facility to house environmental education programming without detracting from the existing beach viewscape.*

From preliminary analysis it appears that the east wing of the pavilion can provide nearly 1,500 square feet of useable space for interpretive programs. The new boardwalk extension will add 555 linear feet. A gazebo will match the two existing gazebos in size and style, and the finished floor elevation of the gazebo will be only 14 feet. It is the CAC's consensus that this proposal offers many advantages, including the following:

- encourages better use of existing facilities;
- lower anticipated costs of construction and maintenance;
- security will be easier for the Town (as functions are consolidated under one pavilion roof);
- no need for new septic system to be placed near delicate wetlands;
- extended boardwalk benefits all (not just nature center users);
- preservation of pavilion's architectural integrity (no structural changes are needed);
- construction savings can and should be applied to land acquisition to extend the Ambro Preserve;
- improved aesthetics (new gazebo will match existing structures/beach architectural style);
- elevated gazebo will offer good sight lines for educational programs and for casual viewing of the channel and wetlands by the public;
- program consolidation in main pavilion will likely result in improved upkeep/maintenance of a valuable architectural resource; and
- less parking area will be affected.

Although this alternative involves only minor site changes, the Town should contact the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to determine whether a tidal wetlands permit will be necessary to implement the plan. Other assessments that may be necessary include review in-house pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act, sanitary disposal by the Suffolk

Figure 4 - CMCAC Preferred Plan: Utilization of Existing Pavilion/East Wing



County Department of Health Services; and clearance from the funding agencies that the grants may be extended and used for the proposed alternative project.

A key component of the option involves the relocation of the Beach Maintenance operation from Crab Meadow to a more suitable and less valuable site.

While having the maintenance staff at the beach year-round has likely contributed to better security and more immediate attention to needs, it is recommended that *the small maintenance office in the northeast corner of the east wing of the pavilion be reserved at the beach. It is the strong agreement of the Committee that the Town must recognize the inherent value of the beach pavilion as a resource and encourage its best public use.*

The east wing contained public bath/locker rooms originally. Now it is used as a maintenance garage-type operation for supply storage and equipment repair. The Committee agrees fully that this is not a desirable use for such heavily-used Long Island Sound beachfront. The Town will have to make a quick decision about the relocation of the maintenance operation for the recommended nature center plan as outlined in Proposal B to proceed, preferably one that will afford greater space to the operation in order to consolidate the outdoor storage (now occurring at the nearby Kirschbaum Park) to better serve the needs of the Town.

### Boardwalk

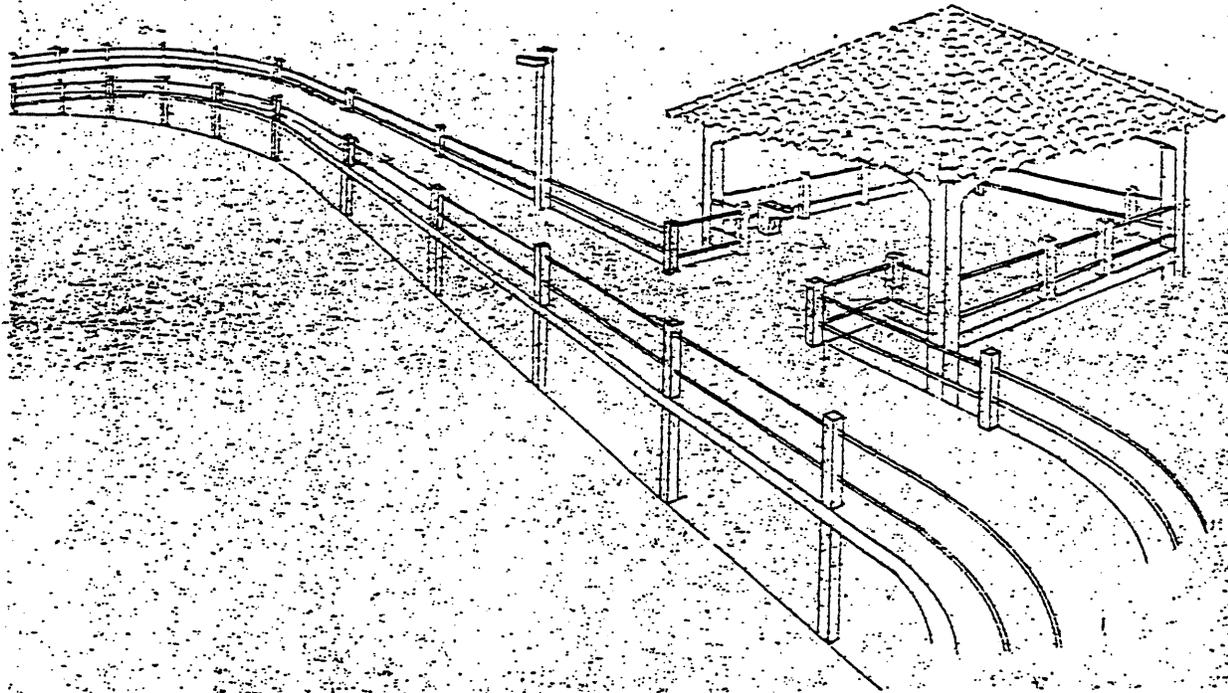
In its current form, the combined boardwalk at Crab Meadow Beach is a highly valued recreational asset. However, it is, limited by its length (a total of 980 feet) and its width (16 feet). Wooden boardwalk runs 200 feet on either east and west side of the pavilion's concrete apron to gazebos that are 30 feet in diameter. Beyond the east gazebo is a concrete sidewalk that runs around the playground area to the picnic pavilion a distance of about 310 feet. Its use is varied—as an “athletic and therapeutic track,” as a scenic overlook, as a pedestrian route to other beach facilities, and as a visual and physical dividing line between the natural and manmade resources. The boardwalk is a recreational asset that is used year-round by the community. Several users surveyed indicated that an extended boardwalk would be an asset.

Therefore, *the Town should extend the concrete walkway eastward, at grade and parallel to the north edge of the parking lot pavement and then, turn south and ramp upward along the outside edge of the existing court games to a new third gazebo in the southeast corner of the lot. This raised boardwalk and gazebo would serve as a handicapped-accessible observation platform for nature study, a safe route of passage for residents, especially Camp Soundview registrants, to the preserve, and provide “boardwalkers” a greater and more varied stretch.*

The third gazebo would be the same size and construction of the existing two gazebos (see Proposed Third Gazebo Conceptual Sketch next page). The development of the boardwalk extension of 555 feet will result in a linear walking track about 0.29 mile in length, allowing a clear quarter mile distance to be marked for recreational use. There is some interest in extending the boardwalk even further and this deserves careful study to insure no adverse effects may result.

Maintenance of the existing boardwalk is ongoing as needed, though major segments require replacement on a four-five year basis. The section spanning from the eastern gazebo to the pavilion was replaced in Fall 1995. A four by eight foot section of boardwalk on the west side of the pavilion

Figure 5 - Proposed Third Gazebo Conceptual Sketch



has been replaced with recycled plastic lumber. Town maintenance staff are assessing its possible further use. Of particular concern is whether the material heats up more than wood in direct summer sun. It is basically splinter-free and is warranted for a period of years. While its cost is double that of pressure-treated wood, long-term cost benefits appear to outweigh the short-term cost increase. *The recommended boardwalk extension project might be a special opportunity to test the recycled lumber that would appear more benign to the sensitive marine wetland environment than pressure-treated wood.*

### Group Picnic Area

The picnic pavilion at the east end of the beach provides an opportunity for group outings of up to 150 individuals to gather on a permit basis. Users primarily include local schools, camps, businesses, non-profit and service organizations and family reunions. Picnic tables, outdoor grills and garbage collection are provided by the Town. Fees for picnic area use are tied to the size of the group. Picnic site permittees are responsible for cleaning the area that has been reserved at the completion of the picnic and for any damage to property and persons while using the park. Present rules and regulations allow picnic facilities to be reserved from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. only. The closing time for picnic area use has sometimes caused conflicts as the beach itself is closed at 8:00 p.m. On heavy weekend use periods, there may be insufficient time to ready the picnic area after evening use when a morning outing is scheduled for the following day. *Rather than allow lingerers to remain in the park beyond the public use period and to insure that proper time is afforded to the attendants to make certain the site is clean and prepared for picnic use the following morning, the Town should limit group picnic area use to 7:30 p.m. However, general picnic area hours, like all other beach facilities, will end at 8 p.m.*

### Parking

Although the Comprehensive Planning Study for Parks and Recreation prepared for the Town by Vollmer Associates in 1988 indicates that there are 600 parking spaces at Crab Meadow Beach, the parking area has only 325 striped spaces of which 310 are of the Town Code specified size of 9 feet by 20 feet and 15 are handicapped parking stalls (4 in restaurant lot, 5 in main lot near pavilion, 6 near picnic area). Of the parking provided 50 stalls are located west of the restaurant and are restricted for restaurant use; 275 are located within the confines of the main beach lot for public beach use.

Many of the individuals surveyed and Beach staff indicate that parking for the beach is at a premium and that more should be provided. Presently Town Code requires 1 stall per 50 feet of gross floor area for restaurants; LaCasa would require 76 stalls based on this design standard. However, at the time the restaurant was designed in 1985 the Code standard was different, requiring 1 stall per 100 feet of gross floor area. From a use standpoint, it would appear that the parking provided at the restaurant is adequate for the 70 person maximum occupancy established by the Town's Chief Fire Inspector; however, it needs to be better monitored and managed to prevent outside use.

There is concern that the Town is losing money on beach sticker sales and entrance fees early in the day when people often bypass the gatehouse by pulling directly into the restaurant lot which remains open. The concessionaire has been asked to monitor the lot and/or develop a "chit" system which would allow the Town to recoup parking fees. The restaurant concessionaire agrees that better control of the restaurant lot is needed to insure that ample parking is available to serve the

restaurant, while not affecting Town beach revenue, and favors the "chit" system. *Therefore, the Town should establish such a chit system for the west parking lot to be managed by the restaurant concessionaire.*

There is some ongoing evening parking on the adjoining road segment (Waterview West Street); however, it is not clear whether the parking is related to restaurant use or to local fishermen who do not wish to have vehicles locked in the park on its 8:00 p.m. closing. The beach lot becomes stressed primarily from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. on peak weekends when hot weather and high tides correspond-at which time all available paved area is used for parking, including the area proposed for the nature center building.

*The Town should evaluate the sufficiency of parking at the facility by conducting periodic traffic counts and by monitoring actual parking lot vacancy rates during the peak summer season. Should additional parking prove necessary to accommodate need, the Town should recognize the physical limitations of the beach property that coincides with the dedicated park-preserve. Any planned minor pavement extension within the fenced beach boundaries should be reviewed by the proper agencies (NYSDEC, NYSDOS, TOHDEC), authorities, and area residents to insure against natural resource impacts.*

The condition of the beach parking lot requires improvement. From an aesthetic perspective, the parking area detracts from the general site appeal. Pavement is broken and even sinking in areas requiring repair and repaving. Most curbing needs replacement. Landscaping is sorely lacking and could provide some visual protection to the adjoining community, while adding shade, color, and windbreak in specific locations. The parking lot needs to be restriped, particularly that component reserved for restaurant use on the west side of the site. *The Highway Department practice of storing winter sand/salt mix and storing snow plowed from area roadways in the main lot is unsightly and the quality of surrounding resources is presumed to be compromised by leaching of contaminants and intermixed debris. Alternate storage sites should be sought. While the winter of 1995-96 was exceptional and required the trucking of roadway snow to the beach, a plan for containment is advised. If the Town is unable to relocate its storage operation and the NYSDEC sanctions such ongoing use, the Town should take greater care in storage of the mix by containing an area with a ground liner, haybales, filter fabric, and sandbags at the start of the peak winter season to prevent leaching into the wetland area.*

*The Town should support a Crab Meadow Beach parking area capital budget project that could incorporate total design and implementation, including but not limited to drainage improvements, replacement and installation of curbing, general pavement repair, planting island creation to add trees and soften the austere look of the lot, and total lot restriping in addition to any new pavement and/or boardwalk addition. The addition of new outdoor recreational elements, such as walking or skating courses marked on the parking field, may increase the Town's opportunities to secure outside grants and funding earmarked to cover such improvements.*

### Traffic Flow/Roadway Concerns

Waterside Road is the sole public thoroughfare that leads to Crab Meadow Beach. While it appears on the Town and Suffolk County tax maps as a fifty-foot right-of-way, it is a narrow two-lane roadway with 24 feet of pavement. The road width, height and curvature are important factors in planning future park use. Most of the shoulder on the east side of the road does not have curbing

and it is joined by the tidal wetlands of the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve. The west side of the road provides street frontage to adjoining homes zoned R-5 Residence District (5,000 square foot minimum, less than 1/8-acre) from Crab Meadow Beach south to the south side of Butler Place. Likewise pedestrian and cycling access to the beach and preserve are limited by the road width, turns and discontinuous sidewalk. *A recent serious accident on Waterside Road in which a jogger was hit by a car and had to be airlifted out makes clear the need for a designated pathway for runners, walkers and bicyclists. The Town should investigate available options for providing greater safety for such continuous recreational use which is recognized as directly related to beach use.*

### Drainage/Flooding/Stormwater Management

The resources that are subject of this plan lie within a federally-designated floodplain area which requires placement of new structures above average 100-year flood levels (A-7, 13 feet). Most of the development at Crab Meadow Beach and in the surrounding community predates the Federal Emergency Management Act regulations and infrastructure placement is well established. Flooding is a concern in accessing the beach and in protecting the preserve that serves as both sponge and filter for the flow depending on the force and velocity of rainfall/storm occurrences.

*Emergency service vehicle (fire, police, ambulance, utility) access is a concern that must be addressed as peak flood and sporadic crisis situations require the closure/barricading of Waterside Road. While some of the adjoining community lies on private roads, Waterside Road is a public maintenance responsibility. Additionally, resources at the beach (LaCasa Cafe, Camp Soundview) have recently experienced short-term "trapped visitor" situations. Therefore the Town should develop an evacuation plan for contingency situations that occur sporadically and insure that there is no compromise to public health and safety. The Town Highway, Engineering and General Services Departments, with support from the Departments of Planning, Parks and Recreation and Environmental Control, should analyze the portion of Waterside Road (including the sidewalk on the west side), that lies north of Seaside Court for Town stormwater management, roadway options (e.g., resurfacing, reconstruction, raising of the road), and supporting grant funding that can enable alleviation of recurring flooding without impacting sensitive wetland resources or arbitrarily impacting private property.*

Town staff identified an adverse drainage situation in the wake of the Iroquois Gas Transmission System (IGTS) natural gas pipeline construction in the Seaside Court area adjoining the Ambro Wetlands Preserve. The Town applied to IGTS for Stage 2 remedial funding in 1992 to restore proper flow on the west side of the Seaside Court/LILCO right-of-way intersection, but was turned down. A channel exists alongside the road at this location that has the potential to undermine the roadbed. There have been police requests for guardrail installation; however, given the configuration of the existing drainage ditch/swale, there is not sufficient upland area alongside the road for such rail placement. Seaside Court is also known for a dangerous S-curve closer toward the golf course that the Town Highway Department has reviewed and may require some realignment for public safety.

The 1992 mitigation proposal submitted by the Town for Seaside Court requested improvements (labor, equipment, and materials) necessary to:

- remove and temporarily secure shrubby plantings for relocation post project;

- install twin 30" diameter plastic pipes parallel to Seaside Court from the existing pipes near Waterside Road to prevent roadway undermining and which will connect to the existing east-west channel;
- regrade/shape stream channel appropriately to establish positive flow characteristics by more gradual contouring of side slopes and channel floor and removal of pooling areas caused by indifferent IGTS backfilling;
- plant stabilizing vegetation to shore up stream channel banks and improve local habitat.

While the project did not receive IGTS remedial funding, the Highway Department recognizes that area drainage conditions could be improved and have worsened since pipeline construction. While not specifically included in the earlier proposal, the pipeline construction raised the concern that existing drainage piping may require replacement and/or enlargement under the LILCO right-of-way east of Seaside Court which connects the freshwater wetlands on either side. There may be opportunities to have other agencies assist the Town in implementation of a restoration project, perhaps the United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (Partners for Wildlife Program); the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (Wetland Reserve Program); or the New York State Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the New York State Department of State Coastal Management Division. *It is recommended that the Town pursue avenues for outside professional and funding assistance to enhance the hydrological integrity and stormwater management in the headwater area of the system that drains into the lower tidal lands (see Habitat Restoration section under Natural Resources).*

### General Maintenance

Crab Meadow Beach has a staff presence year-round in the Beach Maintenance operation in the east wing of the pavilion. The beach staff is supplemented during the summer season by gate attendants, lifeguards, camp personnel and additional maintenance workers. The Department of Parks and Recreation is charged with full maintenance responsibility for Town beaches, with the exception of specialized trades. Other Town departments provide services as needed, such as sweeping and striping the parking lot and pumping of the holding tanks by the Department of General Services. The user surveys and comments from the local and general communities indicated that the overwhelming majority opinion is that the Town maintains its facility well, but could do even better.

Key maintenance responsibilities necessary for the public's enjoyment of the beach include, but are not limited to: using the mechanized surf rake to remove rocks; raking the high tide line; removal of litter; placement, removal and maintenance of beach equipment (swim lines, playground equipment, lifeguard chairs); cleaning of restrooms; replenishment of beach sand; installation of snow fence prior to winter; painting and general facility repair. Staff reductions over the past decade have forced the Town to focus on the most critical maintenance needs which sometimes means that smaller tasks may be delayed that have the potential to develop into greater problems. *The Town should make adequate provision for the beach to be monitored and/or tended daily to insure proper upkeep and to stem any problems that require immediate attention.*

### Whole Access

Handicapped-accessible parking stalls are provided at both the restaurant and general parking areas. There is a ramp alongside the west side of the restaurant that connects to the boardwalk and allows access to the restaurant/breezeway. There is similar access from the east near the picnic pavilion

from a drop curb. In 1994 the Huntington Community Development Agency reconstructed the children's playground with handicapped-accessible equipment, an improvement that is largely recognized by the community as the single greatest and most welcomed facility addition in the past five decades. The new playground offers opportunities for a broader range of play abilities and entices expanded family use throughout the year. Accessible restrooms exist at the main pavilion and at the east end comfort station. A beach wheelchair is available at Crab Meadow to provide greater beach access to those in need. Individuals responding to the beach survey indicated the need for the east comfort station to be rendered accessible and to contain an infant changing area.

*As the playground attracts a sizable clientele year-round and was designed to serve special needs, it is only fitting that the Town evaluate means by which the adjoining comfort station facility can be updated and adapted to accommodate the abilities of all visitors.*

*The boardwalk extension and observation gazebo supported by the CAC should be fully accessible to allow a full range of use.*

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Crab Meadow Beach is a water-influenced site. It has a raised groundwater table, just 7.4-7.8 feet below the parking lot surface elevation at high tide; receives tidal flow from Long Island Sound and from the south during severe Nor'easters; and provides the outfall path for at least two watershed areas, the largest being cone-shaped with its vertex located three miles south in East Northport. The site is completely manipulated lying on fill over meadow mat that created the improved beach facility area (its major channel having been relocated from the west side to east side of the beach post the 1837 US Coast Survey). Its surrounding wetlands were farmed for salt hay and, later, ditched for mosquito control. Twenty-five structures (20 seasonal homes and 5 garages) that had been located just south of the beach parking area were demolished by the Town following acquisition in the early 1960s supported by local referendum. The beach pavilion was dedicated in 1938; however, the site's public beach use long preceded the structure.

Despite the degree of man-made influence to the beach and surrounding wetlands, the land is prized for its considerable natural resource value at this time. The vast expanse of public lands ranging from Crab Meadow Beach, the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands, Crab Meadow Golf Course, and Makamah County Park comprise over 600 protected acres; planning for one element requires a look toward the others as the wetland and woodland systems are contiguous and related and, therefore, must be reviewed as associated environmental assets. These include New York State-regulated tidal (salt, intertidal and mainly high marsh) and freshwater wetlands (cattail marsh with open water, stream, woodland pond, wooded swamp); Long Island Sound frontage; moist woodland and upland hardwood forest.

The Town wetlands surrounding the beach have been designated as coastal Significant Fish and Wildlife Habitat by the New York State's Coastal Management Program and an Outstanding Natural Coastal Area by the Long Island Sound Study. The beach is regulated on a federal basis by the Federal Emergency Management Act; affected regionally by the New York State Tidal Wetlands Act and Local Waterfront Protection Program; and directed locally by the Coastal Erosion Hazard Area, Marine Conservation, and Park ordinances of the Town of Huntington. The Preserve is regulated

by the New York State Freshwater Wetlands Act (System N-3) and portions have been designated as Critical Areas of Environmental Concern pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act. The Huntington Town Board dedicated the 300+ area preserve south of the beach property as park-preserve/preservation area in December of 1993. As a park-preserve, the Ambro Wetlands fall under the joint management jurisdiction of the Town Departments of Parks and Recreation and Environmental Control. The degree to which the wetlands have been recognized and designated should connote the magnitude of significance in which they are revered locally.

Correspondence received from George W. Hammarth, Deputy Regional Permit Administrator for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation dated September 4, 1996 and supportive of the Crab Meadow Master Plan work specifies:

“...Crab Meadow consists of approximately 300 acres of undeveloped salt marsh bordered by the golf course, barrier beach, and low density residential development to the east and west. Large areas of undeveloped salt marsh are relatively rare on the north shore, with Crab Meadow providing one of the last, relatively undisturbed examples. The marsh is habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife species, including great blue heron, black crowned night heron, snowy egret, many species of ducks, Canada goose and songbirds. Gulls, plovers, sandpipers, osprey, and northern harrier also make use of the area. The marsh also supports a wide range of finfish, shellfish and crustaceans which contribute to the productivity of Long Island Sound. The tidal creek channels serve as nursery and feeding areas for many species, as well as conveyors of organic materials and nutrients from the marsh into the Sound. Any activities which would substantially degrade the water quality in Crab Meadow will adversely affect its biological productivity...”

While the CAC does not possess the expertise to prepare a scientifically-based agenda for the resource and its diverse component parts, it is recognized that Town professionals can build a better information base and set wheels in motion to enable ecological management and educational interpretation of the resource that is not limited to facility and/or crisis management. Many tasks appear self-evident to protect, monitor and enhance the inherent beauty and function of the marvelous Crab Meadow. The Parks and Recreation and General Services Departments have only limited staff and time in which to manage all of the Town's active recreational resources. Its natural areas deserve, and all but demand, special attention. *The Town of Huntington should seize the opportunity to be a front-runner in managing its Crab Meadow environment using a full complement of new technology, volunteer initiative, outside agency professional guidance and partnerships, and ambitious solicitation of grants.*

#### Natural Resource Inventory

*Town staff should conduct an inventory of the preserve identifying flora and fauna and habitat distribution with assistance from other public agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, and universities, providing mutually-beneficial information development and internship opportunities. Such a survey should be conducted every five years beyond the base inventory to analyze whether the area is changing and what forces may be at work to cause adaptation. Periodic contact with the New York Natural Heritage program will insure that both the Town and State have current consistent data. Any endangered, threatened or rare species or community type should be duly recorded, mapped and revisited annually. The inventory should be maintained as a series of database coverages in the Town's Geographic Information System for ease of retrieval and*

*comparison over time. The inventory should describe and recommend means by which to continuously monitor topography; hydrology (especially mean tidal flows and tracking of the overall flow system); coastal erosion (beach changes, sandbar and lagoon shifts); geology and soils; water quality; vegetation; aquatic biota; birds; mammals; reptiles and amphibians; and insects. Dynamic recommendations for short and long term management objectives tied to the resource data should be prepared and revisited over short intervals, not to exceed two years.*

### Habitat Restoration

The tidal and fresh water marshland that comprises the bulk of the Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve has been altered and affected considerably from its natural setting through many forces, including, but probably not limited to, channel relocation, filling, mosquito ditching, utility installation, roadway construction, stormwater diversion, bordering development, operation of the adjoining golf course, introduction of non-native vegetation, and historic agricultural practices. While the natural characteristics of the marshland are revered, the area requires substantial restoration under the cautious guidance of experts. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources submitted a habitat restoration survey form to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA)/Long Island Sound Field Office nominating the site for habitat restoration project funding and implementation early in 1996. The encroachment of development, alteration of hydrology, and invasive non-native species are specifically cited as key concerns in the Crab Meadow nomination.

It would appear that such a project would involve many components designed to restore a more natural flow in the open marsh area, possibly including, but not limited to better buffering to the golf course through vegetative means, mitigation of the mosquito ditching, control of invasive species through increasing salt water/tidal flushing, use of culverts to open marsh impoundments/ponded areas in the high marsh and creation of high volume creeks. Such an undertaking would likely involve the fresh and tidal portions of the site in a unified remediation program. The benefits/goals of such ecological management could be significant: decreased local flooding, particularly during peak winter Nor'easters as a healthier marsh will store more stormwater; improvement of the viewscape as tall monoculture weeds are replaced by a more diversely vegetated landscape; increased wildlife usage as greater opportunities for forage and shelter are provided; diminished mosquito population due to better system flushing and opportunities for natural predators (e.g. killifish to move into high marsh areas and consume larvae); and reduced odors by increasing tidal flow volume and removing impounded areas.

The Long Island Sound Coastal Management Plan includes discussion of Outstanding Natural Coastal Areas, such as Crab Meadow-Fresh Pond, as "areas that contain significant coastal resources that are sensitive to development, and therefore in need of protection, enhancement or restoration. Within these areas, the assemblage of various significant natural resources, such as wetlands and forested areas, indicates that resource protection is the state's priority." *The Town should strongly support the habitat restoration nomination and work aggressively to secure 1997 funding to facilitate development of a specific plan with assistance from the NYSDEC and establish partnerships for plan implementation. Funds held in escrow from the Iroquois Gas Transmission System (from the settlement of the eminent domain proceeding by which easement rights were taken on Town wetlands) should be considered as the Town's match in securing timely grant funding.* Potential sources include the proposed State Bond Act/Environmental Protection Fund, United States Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Wildlife or Wetlands Challenge Grant Programs, and

the National Estuary Program under which the US EPA Long Island Sound Coastal Management program falls. Securing such support could have vast beneficial consequence for the coastal system and local community. *Any restoration plan developed for Crab Meadow should be reviewed locally for acceptance by Town environmental and engineering professionals in the Departments of Environmental Control, Engineering Services and Planning. Prior to initiation of any restoration work, the community must be informed clearly and consulted with as to schedule and scope of the project, as well as the function and value of the wetland system.*

### Security

All park properties are threatened when their users are not properly informed of the guidelines under which such sites are to be used and what the penalties are for offenses. *Crab Meadow Beach and the Ambro Preserve, like all other Town parks, require better signage that clearly identifies prohibited activities and which gives notice to the Suffolk County Police under which section of Town Code an individual can be cited. A specific example has been drafted and is contained in the appendix for Town use. A greater security presence at Crab Meadow Beach would alleviate the ever-present threat of vandalism. The Town should request that the Suffolk County Police consider becoming a more visible seasonal presence at the beach, perhaps by availing an office for their use, or assign Town staff as "cluster rangers" to oversee a full group of varied, but closely situated, park properties (e.g., Crab Meadow Beach, Ambro Preserve, Kirschbaum Park, Crab Meadow Golf Course and Geisslers Beach).*

### Park Watch Network

The Town of Huntington owns and manages about 105 widely-distributed parks and preserves, more than half of which are passive use open space/natural areas. The Town does not have 24-hour management staff at any park except Dix Hills Park where the Town security force is based. *A network of observers is needed to help keep the Town informed throughout the year of crisis situations (e.g., liabilities/hazards), developing problems (e.g. trail erosion) and nuisance uses (e.g. dumping), and to make recommendations for improvement and simply report good news. The (adult) Park Stewardship Program and (student) Youth Rangers provide such an opportunity for interested park neighbors and visitors to serve as monitors in Town parks. Additional community volunteers are welcomed to participate in these programs to serve as the parks' "eyes, ears and mouths" in the field. Park Stewards and Youth Rangers should be alerted to potential concerns and be given priority consideration in reporting to the Department of Parks and Recreation.*

### Boundary Protection

*The boundaries of the preserve should be surveyed, mapped and marked by some distinct means in the field, preferably unobtrusively, such as through small monument placement, to avoid the time and cost of future resurveying. The Town should check the boundary courses of the preserve on an annual basis. Any encroachments from off-site (e.g., private residences) should be identified and proper notification sent informing of the provisions for park use and management and a distinct timeframe in which to remove or to cease any encroachment (e.g., dumping of yard debris, placement of minor structures, storage of vehicles, improperly placed fences) prior to being fined for such activity. Town enforcement personnel should follow through on investigating any lingering condition. The exterior boundaries of the beach and preserve property should be posted with small signs placed high (7 feet or more to minimize vandalism) that identify the land as Town parkland.*

*The channel entrance from the Sound, east of the bathing beach, should be posted with signs visible from the water specifying "No Jet Skis or motorized vehicles" to stem a new threat to the inner wetland.*

### Roadside Appearance

*Where the Preserve is visible and immediately accessible from the road the Town should make an extra effort to maintain the immediate streetside in a sightly condition free of trash and yardwaste and natural debris, even if it means the removal of fallen limbs which would otherwise be discouraged in natural area management. If this does not occur, it is likely to attract additional dumping to the detriment of the natural system. Careless disposal of yard waste (clippings, branches, leaves) is tantamount to filling and can change the delicate wetland microenvironment. Vegetation should be controlled, by manual or mechanical means only, from interfering with roadway travel, including sight distance. The Crab Meadow Beach Alliance conducts an annual roadside clean-up along Waterside Road from Eaton's Neck Road to the beach entrance. Such volunteer efforts are to be applauded, as they enhance the preserve viability; however, they should not be considered replacement of the Town's responsibility to maintain its precious park resources.*

### Access

*Access to and on the existing trails in the northern tidal portion of the preserve adjoining the beach should be by foot only. The main LILCO right-of-way trail in the Ambro Preserve has become a popular route for mountain bicycling and unfortunately, off-road motor bike activity. No motorized vehicles are permitted in Town parks, except in paved and/or marked areas. The activity needs to be stemmed. A public media campaign should be initiated against such motorized vehicle use in Town parks, essentially illegal trespass, and the dire effects it wrecks on the landscape, to wildlife and the public enjoyment of such areas.*

### Vector Control

*The public must be made aware of common vectors in the area, such as ticks, mosquitoes, flies, rats, and raccoons. Their place in the environment should be understood, along with potential problems from contact, and proper safeguards respected. Due to the immediate location of a high density community, any aerial spraying of the wetland should be avoided in all but the most extreme public safety situations. Innovative non-intrusive control mechanisms, such as the greenhead fly traps (constructed as an Eagle Scout project) in the salt marsh or other measures noted in the habitat restoration section above, should be encouraged as part of an integrated pest management program for the area. It is important for the Town to consider the long-term ramifications of such projects and not encourage or accept them unless there will be a commitment to provide maintenance. As an example, the screens in the greenhead fly traps require replacement to function as intended when they were set in the meadow three years ago.*

### Interpretation/Public Relations

*All actions recommended to preserve the vitality of the Town wetlands and upland resources in the area are grounded on the best ideals of public education--that learning leads to understanding and to positive responsible action. The Town should make available the materials necessary to encourage visitation to the area for interpretive purposes. Attractive interpretive entrance and special signage*

*should be provided at the beach to educate visitors of its particular assets. School group visitation should be encouraged to build understanding of the need for proper land stewardship in the Town's residents. Such use should be coordinated/scheduled by the Department of Parks and Recreation prior to use to avoid conflicts.*

### Trails

*Trails that are to be used publicly should be properly marked and use of the preserve should be restricted to such trail areas. The Town should include the Ambro Preserve as a Suffolk County Youth Conservation Corps. project next summer to clear and frame existing preserve pathways. Proper trail head markers should be installed and a map of existing trails and highlighted features should be prepared and available at the beach for anyone to investigate the preserve and beach resources on their own. No new trails should be developed until such time as a natural resource inventory has been prepared for Crab Meadow Beach and the Ambro Preserve (see above discussion) as trails should be placed and designed to avoid sensitive areas and species and serve to confine visitor activity to areas that can tolerate such use without long-term maintenance requirements (e.g., erosion and soil compaction). In the northern salt marsh section of the preserve, no trails should extend south of the old road bed which now serves as the main trail.*

### Volunteer Cultivation

There are many special projects at the beach and preserve just waiting for the right person or group to step up and volunteer to take them on. As an example, the Town should develop a cadre of leaders that can provide short interpretive walks at the beach and preserve to enhance others enjoyment of the site. Reciprocal relationships with local environmental organizations, agencies and schools might assist the training process. Slideshows and specialized trail guides might be developed by volunteers who can get out and speak to groups throughout Huntington and give a glimpse of the Crab Meadow environment from afar. The beach and preserve are visited periodically by local school groups, such as the East Northport Middle School. The students learn about the site resources without leaving a tangible mark. The planned nature center can benefit greatly from their experiences. Local school users should be encouraged to develop interpretive displays to highlight features of the site most interesting to them to share their sense of wonder with others. The Town should be willing to exhibit such works as a true token of appreciation.

## COMPENDIUM OF CRAB MEADOW PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

### General Policy Recommendations

The presidents of the four civic associations that that were represented in the Committee deliberations (Crab Meadow Beach Alliance, Sound Shore Bluffs ,and Waterside Park (to the west)), and Makamah Beach Homeowners Association (to the east)) should be considered an ongoing Ad Hoc Committee for the purposes of providing advisory guidance to the Town for any major management decisions the Town may face (i.e., concession agreement review, new construction), to disseminate information to the community, and/or to support implementation of plan recommendations. [page 15]

Crab Meadow Beach can and should be programmed more fully to meet identified recreational needs in a manner that is sensitive to the environment and which complements existing use patterns [page 9].

The Town should establish a nature center at Crab Meadow Beach for the benefit of its residents and its natural resources. The Town's overall programmatic goal will be to foster a greater sense of connection with the natural world so that individuals will act on their responsibility to protect our environment and, in this process, individuals may understand their role in maintaining the health of the global ecosystem [page 10].

As the Town's only Long Island Sound beach, the Town should encourage appropriate opportunities for public use of its facilities. Further expansion of the privatized commercial (restaurant) use of Crab Meadow facilities should not be allowed and the general beach maintenance operation should be relocated off-site to avail the space for much-needed Town programming. [page 15]

The Department of Parks and Recreation, in consultation with community representatives, should establish usage policies to insure that programs allow individuals to be exposed to the special resources of the beach and preserve on a schedule and in a manner that will least affect the land and its natural inhabitants. [page 10]

The Town of Huntington should seize the opportunity to be a front-runner in managing its Crab Meadow environment using a full complement of new technology, volunteer initiative, outside agency professional guidance and partnerships, and ambitious solicitation of grants. [page 29].

No new trails should be developed until such time as a natural resource inventory has been prepared for Crab Meadow Beach and the Ambro Preserve (see above discussion) as trails should be placed and designed to avoid sensitive areas and species and serve to confine visitor activity to areas that can tolerate such use without long-term maintenance requirements (e.g., erosion and soil compaction). In the northern salt marsh section of the preserve, no trails should extend south of the old road bed which now serves as the main trail. [page 33]

The Town should make adequate provision for the beach to be monitored and/or tended daily to insure proper upkeep and to stem any problems that require immediate attention. [page 27]

If significant exterior further alterations to the pavilion building are planned, the Huntington Historic Preservation Commission should be requested to review and advise on an appropriate plan. Under Article VI, §198-40.2 (D)(4) the Commission is charged with the power to review and issue written reports on all municipal proposals relative to uses or structures affecting a designated landmark or historic district. [page 17]

Rather than allow lingerers to remain in the park beyond the public use period and to insure that proper time is afforded to the attendants to make certain the site is clean and prepared for picnic use the following morning, the Town should limit group picnic area use to 7:30 p.m. However, general picnic area hours, like all other beach facilities, will end at 8 p.m. [page 24]

Where the Preserve is visible and immediately accessible from the road the Town should make an extra effort to maintain the immediate streetside in a sightly condition free of trash and yardwaste

and natural debris even if it means the removal of fallen limbs which would otherwise be discouraged in natural area management. Vegetation should be controlled, by manual or mechanical means only, from interfering with roadway travel, including sight distance. [page 32]

Access to and on the existing trails in the northern tidal portion of the preserve adjoining the beach should be by foot only. [page 32]

Trails that are to be used publicly should be properly marked and use of the preserve should be restricted to such trail areas. [page 33]

The Town should make available the materials necessary to encourage visitation to the area for interpretive purposes. [page 32]

School group visitation should be encouraged to build understanding of the need for proper land stewardship in the Town's residents. Such use should be coordinated/scheduled by the Department of Parks and Recreation prior to use to avoid conflicts. [page 33]

The public must be made aware of common vectors in the area, such as ticks, mosquitoes, flies, rats, and raccoons. Their place in the environment should be understood, along with potential problems from contact, and proper safeguards respected. [page 32]

Due to the immediate location of a high density community, any aerial spraying of the wetland should be avoided in all, but the most extreme public safety situations. [page 32]

Innovative non-intrusive control mechanisms, such as the greenhead fly traps (constructed as an Eagle Scout project) in the salt marsh or other measures noted in the habitat restoration section above, should be encouraged as part of an integrated pest management program for the area. [page 32]

The Town should consider the long-term ramifications of volunteer construction (e.g., Eagle Scout) projects and not encourage or accept them unless there will be a commitment to provide maintenance. [page 32]

A network of observers is needed to help keep the Town informed throughout the year of crisis situations (e.g., liabilities/hazards), developing problems (e.g. trail erosion) and nuisance uses (e.g. dumping), and to make recommendations for improvement and simply report good news. The (adult) Park Stewardship Program and (student) Youth Rangers provide such an opportunity for interested park neighbors and visitors to serve as monitors in Town parks and their participation should be strongly encouraged. - Park Stewards and -Youth Rangers should be alerted to potential concerns and be given priority consideration in any concerned reporting to the Department of Parks and Recreation. [page 31]

Volunteer assistance should be encouraged in establishment of the nature center operation, such as organizing programs, leading walks, presenting slideshows, developing trail guides, and preparing educational displays. [page 33]

Short-Term Policy Recommendations (for implementation prior to Memorial Day 1997)

It is the preferred choice of the Committee (and strongly recommended by all but one of its members) that the Town utilize as much area as possible in the east wing of the existing pavilion for a nature center operation in lieu of the previously proposed new building construction. An extension of the boardwalk as noted below would create an outdoor viewing platform for improved visual access to the adjoining preserve's unique resources. Unlike some past additions and modifications, the plan to use the east wing of the pavilion as a site for the proposed nature center will in no way alter its historical design. Instead, interior renovations are proposed to make an attractive facility to house environmental education programming without detracting from the existing beach viewscape. [page 18]

The Town should extend the boardwalk eastward, at grade and parallel to the north edge of the parking lot pavement and then, turn south and ramp upward along the outside edge of the existing court games to a new third gazebo in the southeast corner of the lot. This slightly-raised boardwalk and gazebo would serve as a handicapped-accessible observation platform for nature study, a safe route of passage for residents, especially Camp Soundview registrants, to the preserve, and provide "boardwalkers" a greater and more varied stretch. The recommended boardwalk extension project might be a special opportunity to test the recycled lumber that would appear more benign to the sensitive marine wetland environment than pressure-treated wood. [pages 22 and 24]

A small maintenance office in the northeast corner of the east wing of the pavilion should be reserved at the beach. It is the strong agreement of the Committee that the Town must recognize the inherent value of the beach pavilion as a resource and encourage its best public use. The Town will have to make a quick decision about the relocation of the maintenance operation in order for the recommended nature center plan as outlined in Proposal "B" to proceed, preferably one that will afford greater space to the operation in order to consolidate the outdoor storage now occurring at the nearby Kirschbaum Park as well and best serve the needs of the Town. [page 22]

Residual Iroquois Gas Transmission System Land Preservation and Enhancement Program funds, other private and public funds, and available planning tools should be applied to secure additional properties (without invoking eminent domain) that will enhance and protect this largest of the Town's preserves, a significant coastal wetland system. [page 7]

The Town should implement the sanitary disposal tank replacement in the parking area west of the restaurant as soon as possible and subsequently, monitor the success of the new tank project and the frequency of pump truck visits. Efforts to schedule pumping and containment of odors therefrom to least affect the beach use, restaurant operation, and residential community are necessary to allow quiet enjoyment of the area to its fullest extent. [page 14]

The CAC strongly recommends abandonment of the current dumpster site and the introduction of a closed compactor system and its relocation at a more centralized location as soon as possible. This action will help to mitigate odors, control trash from being blown out, stop attracting birds and wildlife from redistributing the trash, and remove unsightly containers from the beach perimeter. [page 15]

Any action the Town can take to further contain/confine the consumption of alcohol to within the restaurant itself, and not allow its movement outside, can only assist in maintaining a quality family environment at the beach. [page 15]

The Town should establish a chit system for the west parking lot to be managed by the restaurant concessionaire [page 25]

A specific entity/individual within the Town, preferably within the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation or Town Attorney's office, should be charged with the ongoing duty of monitoring the (restaurant) concession agreement. [page 15]

A comprehensive cost analysis should be undertaken to determine, how much, if any, profit actually accrues to the Town or whether the lease/operation actually results in public costs. [page 16]

Ill-advised past use of the top deck of the structure by a prior restaurant concessionaire for an open bar area resulted in long-term damage to the structure that requires immediate attention. It is imperative that the Town recognize the significant value of the pavilion and secure funding for its immediate needs and ongoing maintenance. Structural maintenance needs to be programmed and kept in check annually. [page 17]

To insure that the main pavilion and its complementary features are properly maintained, the Town should investigate designating Crab Meadow Beach as an enterprise fund-but only if it is determined not to be a limiting financial arrangement. It should not be done without an in-depth review of the costs to run the beach operation on an annual basis to reveal whether it could be deemed self-supporting. [page 19]

Further research should be conducted to identify any other local commissions which may have been designed by the architect David Dusenberry, to locate architectural and site development plans, and to provide more specifics concerning the Works Progress Administration program as it was carried out in Huntington. [page 17]

The Highway Department practice of storing winter sand/salt mix and storing snow plowed from area roadways in the main lot is unsightly and the quality of surrounding resources is presumed to be compromised by leaching of contaminants and intermixed debris. Alternate storage sites should be sought. If the Town is unable to relocate its storage operation and the NYSDEC sanctions such ongoing use, the Town should take greater care in storage of the mix by containing an area with a ground liner, haybales, filter fabric, and sandbags at the start of the peak winter season to prevent leaching into the wetland area. [page 25]

As the playground attracts a sizable clientele year-round and was designed to serve special needs, it is only fitting that the Town evaluate means by which the adjoining comfort station facility can be updated and adapted to accommodate the abilities of all visitors. [page 27]

The boardwalk extension and observation gazebo supported by the CAC should be fully accessible to allow a full range of use. [page 27]

The Town Board should dedicate the two adjoining roadway segments (Waterview West Street and Waterside Road extension) as parkland additions to Crab Meadow Beach with no change in their

use. Since the Waterside Road extension adjoins a private residence, any alterations or modification of the parcel should be discussed first with the homeowner in an effort to seek agreement, before changes are made. [pages 7-8]

A recent serious accident on Waterside Road in which a jogger was hit by a car and had to be airlifted out makes clear the need for a designated pathway for runners, walkers and bicyclists. The Town should investigate available options for providing greater safety for such continuous recreational use which is recognized as directly related to beach use. [page 25]

Emergency service vehicle (fire, police, ambulance, utility) access is a concern that must be addressed as peak flood and sporadic crisis situations require the closure/barricading of Waterside Road. The Town should develop an evacuation plan for contingency situations that occur sporadically and insure that there is no compromise to public health and safety. [page 26]

A suggestion box should be placed in a prominent location at the beach to accept ongoing thoughts, concerns and suggestions for improvement at the facility. [page 12]

Crab Meadow Beach and the Ambro Preserve, like all other Town parks, require better signage that clearly identifies prohibited activities and which gives notice to the Suffolk County Police under which section of Town Code an individual can be cited. [page 31]

The Town should request that the Suffolk County Police consider becoming a more visible seasonal presence at the beach, perhaps by availing an office for their use, or assign Town staff as "cluster rangers" to oversee a full group of varied, but closely situated, park properties (e.g., Crab Meadow Beach, Ambro Preserve, Kirschbaum Park, Crab Meadow Golf Course and Geisslers Beach). [page 31]

The Town should strongly support the habitat restoration nomination and work aggressively to secure 1997 funding to facilitate development of a specific plan with assistance from the NYSDEC and establish partnerships for plan implementation. Funds held in escrow from the Iroquois Gas Transmission System (from the settlement of the eminent domain proceeding by which easement rights were taken on Town wetlands) should be considered as the Town's match in securing timely grant funding. Any restoration plan developed for Crab Meadow should be reviewed locally for acceptance by Town environmental and engineering professionals in the Departments of Environmental Control, Engineering Services and Planning. Prior to initiation of restoration work, the community should be informed clearly of the purpose, schedule and scope of the project, as well as the function and value of the wetland system. [page 30]

The boundaries of the preserve should be surveyed, mapped and flagged marked by some distinct means in the field, preferably unobtrusively, such as through small monument placement, to avoid the time and cost of future resurveying. [page 31]

The exterior boundaries of the beach and preserve property should be posted with small signs placed high (7 feet or more to minimize vandalism) that identify the land as Town parkland. [page 31]

The channel entrance from the Sound, east of the bathing beach, should be posted with signs visible from the water specifying "No Jet Skis or motorized vehicles" to stem a new threat to the inner wetland. [page 31]

Where the Preserve is visible and immediately accessible from the road the Town should make an extra effort to maintain the immediate streetside in a slightly condition free of trash and yardwaste and natural debris, even if it means the removal of fallen limbs which would otherwise be discouraged in natural area management. Vegetation should be controlled, by manual or mechanical means only, from interfering with roadway travel, including sight distance. [page 32]

Proper trail head markers should be installed and a map of existing trails and highlighted features should be prepared and available at the beach for anyone to investigate the preserve and beach resources on their own. [page 33]

Attractive interpretive entrance and special signage should be provided at the beach to educate visitors of its special assets. [page 33]

A public media campaign should be initiated against motorized vehicle use in Town parks, essentially illegal trespass, and the dire effects it wreaks on the landscape, to wildlife and the public enjoyment of such areas. [page 32]

The Town should include the Ambro Preserve as a Suffolk County Youth Conservation Corps. project next summer to clear and frame existing preserve pathways. [page 33]

#### Long-Term Policy Recommendations

The Town should pursue avenues for outside professional and funding assistance to enhance the hydrological integrity and stormwater management in the headwater area of the system that drains into the lower tidal lands. [page 27]

The Town Highway, Engineering and General Services Departments, with support from the Departments of Planning, Parks and Recreation and Environmental Control, should analyze the entire portion of Waterside Road (including the sidewalk on the west side), that lies north of Seaside Court for Town stormwater management and roadway improvement options (e.g., resurfacing, reconstruction, raising of road) and supporting grant funding that can enable alleviation of recurring flooding without impacting sensitive wetland resources or arbitrarily impacting private property. [page 26]

Town staff should identify potential sources and seek potential sources of public and private grants and partnerships to maintain the integrity and interpret the value of the historic 1938 WPA plan (while meeting ongoing municipal program needs). While the structures and design reflect a built environment, they represent an irreplaceable resource that requires ongoing maintenance under the care of the trained historians and planners that serve the Town. [page 17]

The Town should evaluate the sufficiency of parking at the facility by conducting periodic traffic counts and by monitoring actual parking lot vacancy rates during the peak summer season. Should additional parking prove necessary to accommodate need, the Town should recognize the physical limitations of the beach property that coincides with the dedicated park-preserve. Any planned pavement extension or new construction within the fenced beach boundaries should be reviewed by

the proper agencies (NYSDEC, NYSDOS, TOHDEC) and authorities to insure against natural resource impacts. [page 25]

The Town should support a Crab Meadow Beach parking area capital budget project that could incorporate total design and implementation, including but not limited to drainage improvements, replacement and installation of curbing, general pavement repair, planting island creation to add trees and soften the austere look of the lot, and total lot restriping in addition to any new pavement and/or boardwalk addition. [page 25]

Town staff should conduct a natural resource inventory of the preserve identifying flora and fauna and habitat distribution with assistance from other public agencies, and non-profit conservation organizations, and universities, providing mutually-beneficial information development and internship opportunities.. Such a survey should be conducted every five years beyond the base inventory to analyze whether the area is changing and what forces may be at work to cause adaptation. Periodic contact with the New York Natural Heritage program will insure that both the Town and State have current consistent data. Any endangered, threatened or rare species or community type should be duly recorded, mapped and revisited annually. The inventory should be maintained as a series of database coverages in the Town's Geographic Information System for ease of retrieval and comparison over time. The inventory should describe and recommend means by which to continuously monitor topography; hydrology (especially mean tidal flows and tracking of the overall flow system); coastal erosion (beach changes, sandbar and lagoon shifts); geology and soils; water quality; vegetation; aquatic biota; birds; mammals; reptiles and amphibians; and insects. Dynamic recommendations for short and long term management objectives tied to the resource data should be prepared and revisited over short intervals, not to exceed two years. [pages 29-30]

The Town should check run the boundary courses of the preserve on an annual basis. Any encroachments to the parkland from off-site (e.g., private residences) should be identified and proper notification sent informing of the provisions for park use and management and a distinct timeframe in which to remove or to cease any encroachment (e.g., dumping of yard debris, placement of minor structures, storage of vehicles, improperly placed fences) prior to being fined for such activity. Town enforcement personnel should follow through on investigating any lingering condition. [page 31]

APPENDIX A

**NOTICE TO S.C.P.D.  
THIS PARK CLOSSES AT DUSK  
TOWN ORDINANCE 159-20**

**HUNTINGTON TOWN ORDINANCES  
PROHIBIT THE FOLLOWING ACTS**

	<u>SECTION</u>
DESTRUCTION OR DEFACING TOWN PROPERTY	159-5
DAMAGE OR THREAT TO VEGETATION OR WILDLIFE	159-5
LITTERING	159-7
DISORDERLY CONDUCT	159-18
PUBLIC CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND/OR CARRYING OPEN CONTAINER OF SAME	159-18
ANIMALS AT LARGE	159-18
PARKING IN OTHER THAN DESIGNATED SPACES	159-8
SPEED IN EXCESS OF 10 M.P.H.	
OPEN FIRES	159-15

Proposed New Park Sign