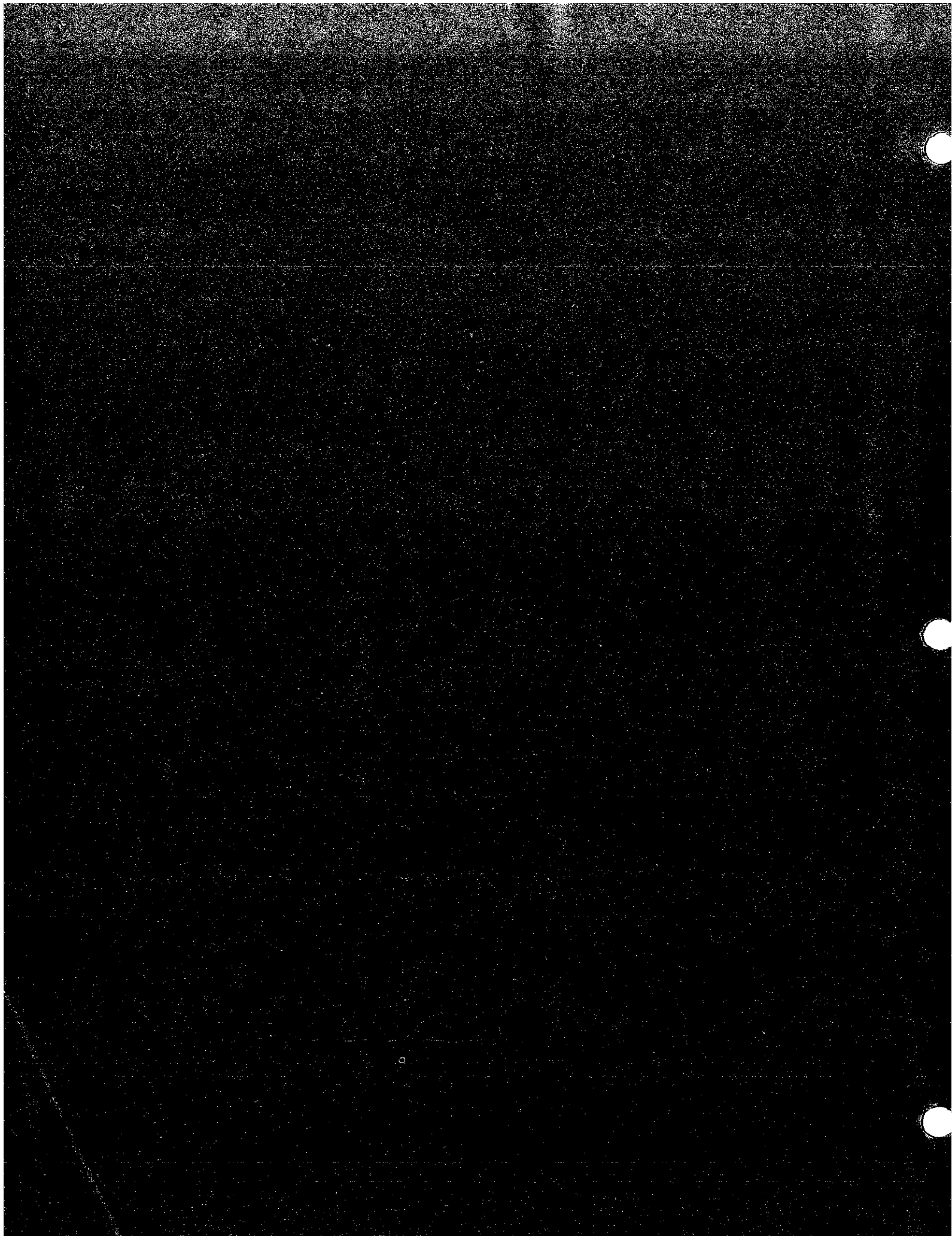


Tom B

THE
WEYMOUTH
BACK RIVER
STUDY

April 1979



April 6, 1981

SUGGESTED BACK RIVER COMMITTEE

	<u>Totals</u>
1 member from Conservation Commission, both towns	2
1 member, North Weymouth Civic Association	1
Caroline J. Stouffer, Hingham member of original Study Committee	1
1 member, South Shore Yacht Club	1
1 member, Back River Protective Association (suggest Mary Toomey)	1
1 member, Hingham Bare Cove Park Committee	1
1 member, Weymouth Park Department	1
1 member, Bare Cove Power Squadron	1
1 member, Hingham Harbor Development Committee	1
1 member, Commercial Clam-diggers Association	<u>1</u>
Total	11

Ex Officio Members

Board of Selectmen, each Town

State Senator

State Representatives

Harbormasters, both Towns

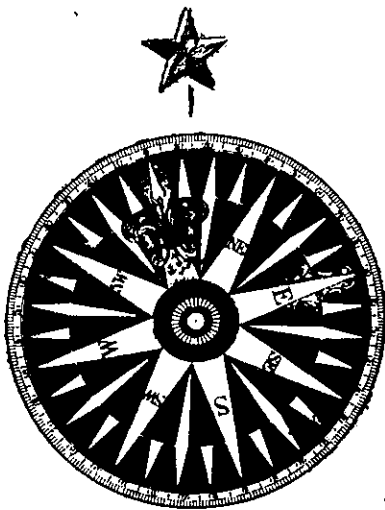
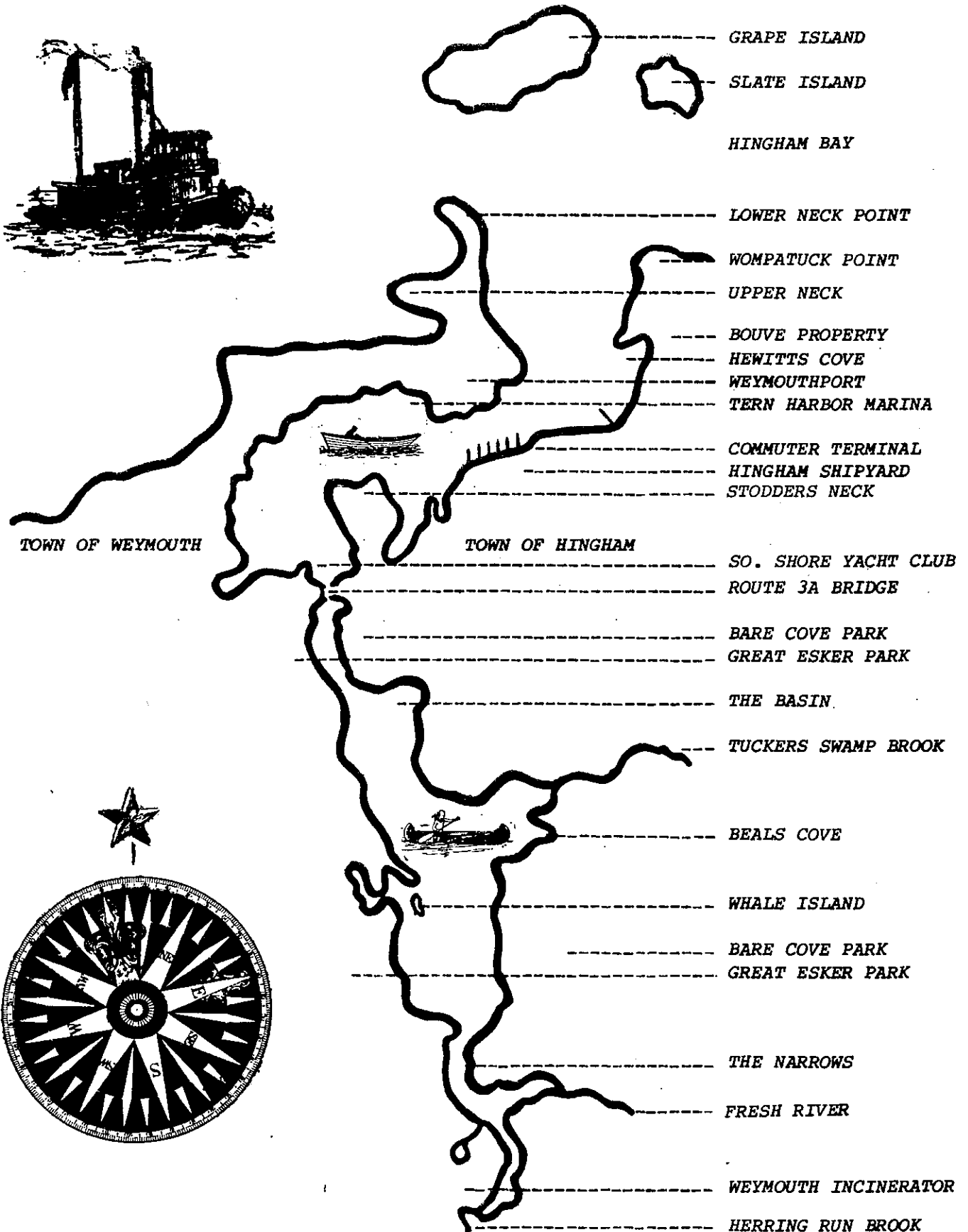
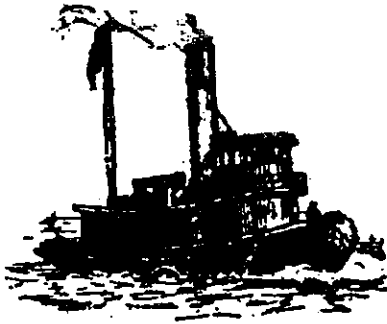
Representative from the Metropolitan District Commission

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Weymouth Back River



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BACK RIVER STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Hingham Harbor Development Committee Appointee:

Mr. Edward R. Baumgartner
41 Whiton Avenue, Hingham

Weymouth Conservation Commission Appointee:

Mr. John Carota
56 Sunnypoint Avenue, Weymouth

Town of Weymouth Selectmen Appointee:

Representative Robert A. Cerasoli
21 Whiton Avenue, Quincy

Bare Cove Power Squadron Appointee:

Mr. George Dolan
Bonnie Brier Circle, Hingham

South Shore Yacht Club Appointee:

Mr. J. Russell Johanson
215 Cushing St., Hingham

Hingham Conservation Commission Appointee:

Mr. Jerry Klima
679 Main Street, Hingham

Metropolitan District Commission Appointee:

Mr. Thomas McDermott
20 Somerset Street, Boston 02108

Town of Hingham Selectmen Appointee:

Senator Allan R. McKinnon
78 Cottage Lane, Weymouth

Bare Cove Park Committee Appointee:

Mr. John P. Richardson, III
99 Fort Hill St., Hingham

Town of Hingham Selectmen Appointee:

Representative Caroline Stouffer
7 Howard Road, Hingham

Weymouth Back River Protective Association Appointee:

Ms. Mary Toomey
1615 Commercial Street, East Weymouth

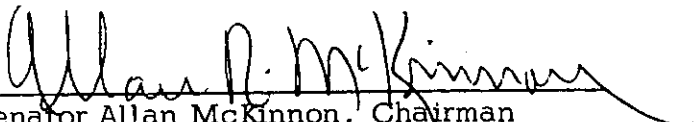
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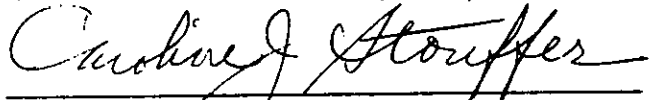
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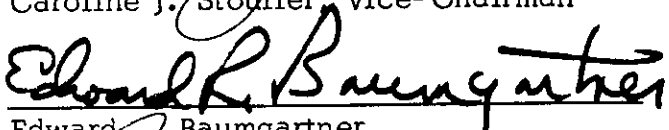
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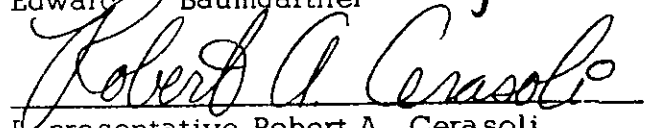
To the Boards of Selectmen of the Towns of Hingham and Weymouth and to the Annual Town Meetings of 1979 of the Towns of Hingham and Weymouth:

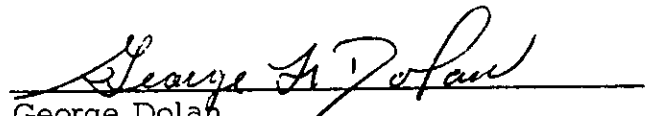
The Back River Study Committee, formed by the Boards of Selectmen of the Towns of Hingham and Weymouth to study and make recommendations for the optimum use and development of the Weymouth Back River, herewith submits its report.

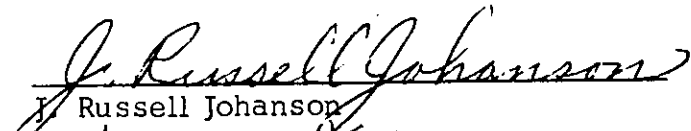

Senator Allan McKinnon, Chairman


Caroline J. Stouffer, Vice-Chairman

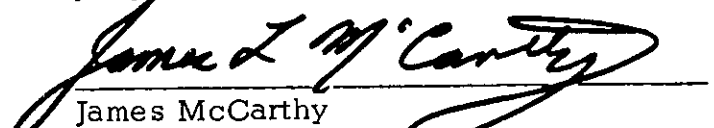

Edward Baumgartner

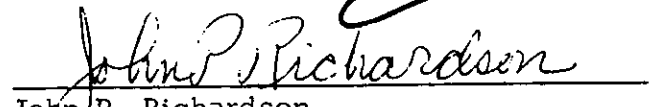

Representative Robert A. Cerasoli

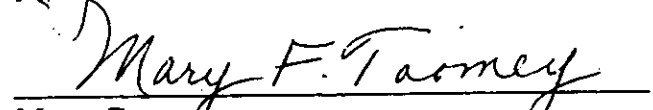

George Dolan


J. Russell Johanson


Jerry Klma


James McCarthy


John P. Richardson


Mary Toomey

April 5, 1979

Committee Members

Edward R. Baumgartner, Hingham Harbor Development Committee appointee
* State Representative Robert A. Cerasoli, Town of Weymouth Selectmen appointee
George Dolan, Bare Cove Power Squadron appointee
J. Russell Johanson, South Shore Yacht Club appointee
Jerry Klima, Hingham Conservation Commission appointee
James McCarthy, Weymouth Conservation Commission appointee (replaced original appointee John Carota who resigned in September 1978)
Thomas McDermott, MDC appointee (attended only one meeting)
State Senator Allan McKinnon, Town of Hingham Selectmen appointee
John P. Richardson, Bare Cove Park Committee appointee
State Representative Caroline J. Stouffer, Town of Hingham Selectmen appointee
Mary Toomey, Weymouth Back River Protective Association appointee

*represented at the meetings by an aide, Peg Goudy of Weymouth, who participated fully in the discussions and report preparation

Staff: Libby Fay, aide to Senator McKinnon

Definitions

Elver - an immature eel.

Esker - a long narrow ridge of coarse gravel deposited by a stream flowing in an ice-walled valley or tunnel in a decaying (melting) glacial ice sheet.

Estuary - a semi-enclosed coastal body of water which has a free connection with the open sea and is thus strongly affected by tidal action. Within the estuary, sea water is mixed and measurably diluted with fresh water. Estuarine systems may include other coastal environments such as salt marshes, mud flats, eelgrass and/or barrier beaches.

Because of the shallowness of the water in estuaries, light penetrates throughout most of the water column and water temperatures are warmer than in deeper, more open coastal water. Land run-off from fresh water inflow and organic matter produced by salt marshes supply carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorous compounds essential to marine productivity.

Floodplain - the area of shorelands extending inland from the normal yearly maximum stormwater level to the highest expected stormwater level in a given period of time (example: 5, 10, 50 or 100 year floodplain).

Watershed - a high ridge of land which divides two areas that are drained by two different river systems. The watershed of a particular river includes all the region draining into that river or river system.

Introduction

Establishment of the Committee

In mid-Spring of 1977, a controversy arose over the proposed use of a portion of Stodder's Neck, a public park on the Weymouth Back River owned by the MDC, by the South Shore Yacht Club, a private corporation. Situated directly across the river from Stodder's Neck, the Club sought to use the public land because the long-term lease at their own location was about to expire and there was doubt about the possibility of renegotiation.

A petition passed by the Legislature in 1977 requiring the MDC to enter into a lease arrangement with the Club was withdrawn because of objections from the Hingham Board of Selectmen and other citizens, but plans were made to refile it in 1978. As a result, several public meetings were held to determine public feeling on the matter.

At a Special Town Meeting on November 14, 1977, Hingham residents voted, 205 Yeas to 401 Nays, against the measure and against any such lease for public land.

In order to explore what could or should be done regarding the status, present and future, of the Back River, and whether or not additional moorings and boating activity ought be encouraged, the Selectmen of Hingham and Weymouth in a joint effort created a Study Committee for the Back River.

In meetings on January 23 and February 21, 1978, the Weymouth and Hingham Boards of Selectmen determined the make-up and goals of the committee. Its purpose would be:

"To study and make recommendations for the optimum use and development of the Weymouth Back River with particular regard to Recreation and Boating opportunities. To confer with and solicit the input of, but not limited to:

- a. appropriate federal, state and local agencies and local officials
- b. owners of both private and public land abutting the river
- c. business interests located on the river
- d. interested residents of Hingham and Weymouth

To report to the 1979 Annual Town Meetings of Hingham and Weymouth. "

Membership was to consist of the following:

- State Senator Allan McKinnon
- State Representative Caroline Stouffer
- State Representative from Weymouth (appointed by the Weymouth Selectmen)
- Representative of the MDC (appointed by the MDC Commissioner)
- One member of the Hingham Conservation Commission (appointed by the Commission)
- One member of the Weymouth Conservation Commission (appointed by the Commission)
- One member of the Back River Protection Association (appointed by the Association)
- One member of the Hingham Bare Cove Park Committee (appointed by the Committee)
- One member of the Hingham Harbor Development Committee (appointed by the Committee)
- One member of the South Shore Yacht Club (appointed by the Club)
- One member of the Bare Cove Power Squadron (appointed by the Squadron)

All appointments were to be completed by March 15, 1978 and Senator McKinnon was to call the first meeting.

Method of Procedure

The Back River Study Committee met for the first time on April 13, 1978 and elected Senator Allan McKinnon as Chairman and Representative Caroline Stouffer as Vice-Chairman. It determined to meet on a regular basis, every two weeks on Thursday nights, at the Hingham Town Hall. The Committee as a whole met 22 times from April 13, 1978 to April 5, 1979.

Invited to address the committee were:

Robert Yaro, Chief Planner, Department of Environmental Management (4/27/78)
Edward Baumgartner, representing the Division of Marine and Recreational

Vehicles (5/11/78)

Meriel Hardin, Director, Coastal Zone Wetlands Program, DEM, and

Angela Loh, Coordinator of Implementation for Weymouth and Hingham (6/1/78)

Robert Bouve and Thomas Smith, Hingham and Weymouth Harbormasters (6/15/78)

Paul Neelon, Manager, Hingham Shipyard and

Mike Meyers, representing Tern Harbor Marina (6/22/78)

Meg Ackerman, Planner, DEM (9/14/78)

Brian Donahoe, Marine Biologist and Hingham Conservation Agent (10/5/78)

Mary Toomey, assisted by Paul Mazza, Joe Nichols, Larry Stohl and Robert

Brown, area diggers and fishermen (11/9/78)

John P. Richardson (11/16/78)

Eugene Cavanaugh, Engineer, Division of Waterways (12/7/78)

On Saturday, May 6, 1978, the Committee made a walking tour of both sides of the river, through Bare Cove Park in Hingham and Great Esker Park in Weymouth.

On Saturday, May 13, 1978, due to the courtesy of Tom Smith, Weymouth Harbormaster, the Committee was able to tour the river by boat, upriver as far as possible on a high tide, and out to the river's mouth at Grape Island.

In January 1979, for the purpose of preparing a report, the Committee divided itself into five sub-committees on Conservation, Marine Resources, Recreation, Transportation and Commercial Potential. Each sub-committee met several times apart from the main committee and prepared a draft report with recommendations for its specific section. John Richardson provided special material on regional importance and prehistoric significance.

All sub-committee reports and recommendations were reviewed by the Committee as a whole before they were collated into a first draft. An outline of all main features was also prepared, and two further drafts of the report. The Committee again reviewed and amended the report and the recommendations.

Final unanimous agreement on the report and the 25 recommendations was reached on March 29, 1979. The last official meeting of the Committee was on April 5, 1979.

Geographic Location & Description

The Weymouth Back River extends southward from Hingham Bay, forming the common border between the towns of Hingham and Weymouth, and connecting with the Weymouth Herring Brook. Headwaters of the Back River are found as far as Holbrook. One of the two major tributary systems includes the Old Swamp River and the Weymouth Great Pond-Mill River. Both flow into Whitman's Pond, a large reservoir in East Weymouth. A fish ladder at the spillway serves as an outlet of the pond. The stream runs some distance underground but surfaces at Broad Street, East Weymouth, where a second fish ladder is located. Below this point, the stream is tidal and becomes the Weymouth Back River. The second major tributary is the Fresh River, draining the Bear Swamp area of West Hingham, and joining the Back River at Lincoln Heights in East Weymouth.

The Back River is relatively shallow as it flows between Great Esker Park on the west and Bare Cove Park on the east, but past the Route 3A bridge it becomes a dredged channel between the old Hingham Shipyard and Weymouthport, flowing between Weymouth's Webb Park and the Wompatuck point in Hingham, emptying beyond Grape Island into the Bay.

The northerly portion of the river, from Grape Island to the Route 3A bridge, is bordered by a mixture of intense waterfront development and widely separated open spaces. Development includes high rise condominiums (Weymouthport), residential homes, marinas, a yacht club, a boat launching ramp and a variety of commercial and industrial businesses.

Three widely spaced open areas add important balance and contrast. Two are publicly owned: Stodder's Neck on the Hingham side, owned by the Metropolitan District Commission, and Webb Park on the Weymouth side (formerly, Upper and Lower Neck Points), recently purchased and being developed by the state's Department of Environmental Management. The third, located at Hewitt's Cove and privately owned by the Bouve family of Hingham, is an important potential open space which serves as a natural buffer between the residential portion of Hingham's Wompatuck area and the commercial district of the old Hingham Shipyard.

Stodder's Neck, until recently an unsightly gravel pit, has been transformed by the MDC into a major link in the chain of open spaces that unites the Boston Harbor Islands State Park to the Back River open space. Isolated from commercial activities on three sides by the river, and forming the river's major curve to the south, Stodder's Neck holds a pre-eminent position as the gateway to the scenic portion of the Back River.

The Route 3A bridge is the boundary between the developed and the scenic-ecologic portions of the river. Beyond the bridge, the southerly, or upriver, portion of the Back River is almost totally contained in two public parks owned and managed by the two towns: Bare Cove Park, Hingham (465 acres) and Great Esker Park, Weymouth (138 acres). A series of hills and high forested glacial eskers form a natural barrier that screens and

isolates the river floodplain from nearly all the industrial, commercial and residential development along this section of the river. Recent cooperation with current developers has helped maintain the natural screen, assuring unbroken peace and serenity along the southerly portion.

In Hingham, the Bare Cove Park Committee has responsibility for continued management and preservation of the Park. In Weymouth, Great Esker Park is in the care of the town's Park Department.

Regional Importance as Open Space

The Weymouth Back River is probably one of the foremost scenic urban-centered open spaces in New England.

The river's unique location within a densely populated urban area, less than 20 miles from the center of Boston, combined with its size and beauty, establishes it as a major urban-centered recreational, educational and natural resource, and gives it a regional importance far beyond the borders of Weymouth and Hingham.

The Boston Metropolitan Coastal area is defined as a semi-circular basin extending from Revere Beach on the north to Nantasket Beach on the south. Although there are approximately 600 miles of shoreline within the basin, only one-sixth of that is available for public use. It has been estimated that two million people in forty communities live within a 15-mile radius (10 to 40-minute drive) of the Weymouth Back River, making it of inestimable value to metropolitan area residents subject to pressures related to living in a highly competitive technical society. State and federal studies have pointed out the need for large-scale coastal parks within metropolitan areas, emphasizing that "such wildlife and wilderness sanctuaries provide refuge for city dwellers, away from the pressures of urban life, and become an invaluable part of our heritage."¹

The river's natural topography south of the bridge, its beauty and its ability to protect against intrusion from development, underscores its value as a major large-scale scenic open space. The pristine and quiet beauty of the river's southerly portion is rarely found available within such a short driving distance of a large urban center.

¹Harbor Islands Report, Boston Harbor Islands Commission, April 1967

General Value of the River and its Watershed Area

1. Food Value

Comparable to its regional importance as open space is the river's potential as a food-producing source. Because it is an estuary, combining both fresh and salt water, the Back River and its environs support a wide variety of fin and shellfish. The shallow bays, tidal flats and salt marshes are extremely productive nurseries and, despite inadequate management, supply in large measure the fish found in Hingham Harbor and the outer waters.

Historically, the Back River provided a great deal of the food needed by the earliest inhabitants of Weymouth, Hingham and surrounding towns. With increasing technology, succeeding generations depended less on the river, but today, as food supplies dwindle and increase in cost, it becomes clear that this rich source of high protein food must be protected and nurtured. It is of crucial importance to protect that inseparable combination of fragile fresh and salt water resources which, working in unison, provide that vital first link in the marine food chain that sustains the marine fisheries of the Greater Quincy-Hingham Bay region. These several distinct resources include Hingham's Tucker's Swamp Brook and its watershed; Hingham's Fresh River-Bear Swamp complex and its watershed; Weymouth's Herring Run-Swamp and Mill River-Whitman's Pond complex and its entire watershed; as well as all the tidal flats, salt marshes and salt ponds that are part of the estuary and its floodplain.

Two-thirds of all fish caught commercially in coastal waters begin their lives in estuaries. Native to the Back River estuary are 31 species of finfish, including flounder, mackerel, striped bass, smelt, tom cod, bluefish, eel, herring, and also lobster, crab and clams. The Back River is one of the few estuaries emptying into Massachusetts Bay which has been left in relatively good condition to support the fisheries. If the river or its watershed were badly polluted, its capacity to support the fisheries would be seriously damaged.

2. Economic Value

The economic importance of the estuary to the offshore marine fisheries, the unique function of the estuary in the development of the marine food chain should be fully understood and appreciated by the residents of Hingham and Weymouth. Efforts must be made to preserve and increase these abundant resources through long-range planning and good management, protective regulations, and the gradual elimination of sources of pollution. A salt water river can cleanse itself of small amounts of pollutants within a short period of time and become even more productive, but once polluted by oil, it may take over ten years to recover. Damage to the food chain could run into millions of dollars.

In 1970, statistics compiled by the Division of Marine Fisheries² showed that the annual income from utilization of the marine resources of Hingham Bay amounted to nearly one million dollars. Today its value would be far higher. Since Hingham Bay is supplied in large measure by the Weymouth Back River, keeping the estuary productive is vital to the offshore marine fisheries. The river's importance in this relationship can not be overstated.

The large potential economic benefits of the Back River's clam flats are not being fully realized because of pollution and lack of proper management. With inadequate harvesting, the clams suffocate and both the food resource and its economic value are lost.

3. Haven for Wildlife

The area around the Back River upriver is a quiet haven for many forms of wildlife, increasing the river's potential for enjoyment as a recreation and conservation area. Shorebirds find food in the clams, mussels and other products of the estuary. Close to 150 species of bird life are common to the area, including the Green, Great Blue and Black-Crowned Night Heron; the Red-Tailed Hawk; the Cormorant; the Snowy Egret. Such birds need the kind of solitary resting area provided by the river. At least 32 Great Blue Heron rest and find sustenance in what is perhaps the only Great Blue Heron roosting area in this entire metropolitan urban area. The colony is considered a rare treasure by both the Audubon Society and the Manomet Bird Observatory.

There is a wide variety of other wildlife present in and along the river, and abundant plant growth, including 18 species of vascular plants and 16 species of algae. The New England Association for the Preservation of Wildflowers has conducted one exploratory walk and plans to conduct more in the future. The undisturbed area, preserved largely in its original state by 60 years of federal as well as recent municipal protection, is one of the few unspoiled estuarine environments left, and deserves continued protection to keep it so.

4. Recreational Opportunities

For both active and passive recreation, the Back River offers abundant possibilities: boating, fishing, hiking, picnicking, bicycling, in addition to the opportunities for nature observing previously mentioned. Lack of adequate moorings and related on-shore facilities are considered the major drawbacks to additional use of the river by the boating community.

² A Study of the Marine Resources of Hingham Bay, Monograph Series #14, Division of Marine Fisheries, Department of Natural Resources, March 1973

Based on its increased awareness that protection of upriver resources is of the highest necessity, the Back River Study Committee believes that no moorings should be permitted south of the Route 3A bridge, nor should additional fueling stations be installed upriver of Tern Harbor Marina.

The possible consequences on the marine life of the river as a result of dredging to provide more moorings were given careful consideration, as was the high cost and the prospect of a long wait for approval of any dredging proposal. As potential sites for increased moorings, three areas in particular were considered: the westerly side of the state boat ramp in Weymouth; the cove to the east of Stodder's Neck; and Hewitt's Cove at the easternmost corner of the old Hingham Shipyard. The first two areas would require dredging, perhaps on a regular basis because of the silting pattern of the river, and neither has sufficient area to provide for additional parking space that would be necessary. By contrast, the Hewitt's Cove area would not necessarily require dredging since the 4 to 6 feet of water there is enough for many local boats. It is believed that the 75-plus moorings currently located there could, with proper arrangement, be expanded to accommodate perhaps triple that number. The old plateyard is a possibility for conversion to parking nearby, and commercial support for some moorings already exists at Multi-Hull Associates.

The Committee, in supporting the acquisition of the Bouve property by the Town of Hingham, sees this area not only as an especially lovely parcel of open space, but also providing access to more waterfront area which could support more moorings for public use. The land itself, under conditions of matching public funding, would remain as conservation land and essentially unchanged, but provision of a landing, floats or moorings would not jeopardize the use of state or federal monies for its acquisition, and the two uses would be complementary. The securing of the Bouve property in its natural state would also complement the development and preservation of Webb Park on the opposite shore and keep the mouth of the Back River truly a beautiful entrance to this recreational area. The Committee feels that both public and private moorings should be encouraged, depending on the precise location along the river.

Recognizing that yacht clubs have an appropriate role to play in providing certain services to boaters, and that the South Shore Yacht Club has made a positive contribution to the Hingham-Weymouth area recreational boating community along the Back River over the past 25 years, the Committee supports ongoing efforts by the Club to maintain a facility and to continue recreational boating, if possible at its existing mooring site or, if that is not feasible, at any other available site north of the Route 3A bridge, with the exception of land now publicly owned, or the Bouve property if obtained for public use.

The linking of Stodder's Neck and Bare Cove Park by walking and biking trails is desirable, and the use of existing roads to link them with Great Esker Park as a marked bike trail should be explored.

When development in the various park areas is more nearly completed and has become more widely known, the shoreside areas might handle as many as a thousand visitors daily in good weather. Summer waterside recreation could easily involve a similar number. Proper support facilities such as parking, sanitary facilities, trash disposal and security will be necessary.

5 Commercial Potential

In considering the river's potential for commercial development, the Committee judged possible uses as to whether they were beneficial or harmful to the river and its resources overall. The commercial potential of food produced by the river is apparent in the earlier discussion of marine resources in this report. Increased development of food supplies will be dependent on availability of funding to allow expansion and exploration into areas of aquaculture, nurseries for elvers, better shellfish management, etc., or may occur if reduced personal income and scarcity of food forces a return to greater dependence on the river's resources. Important as those resources are now, they could, with knowledgeable management, become an even larger source of food and local employment.

The single largest remaining area for commercial development along the river is the old Hingham Shipyard. The Committee's main concern is that future development in the Shipyard have no detrimental effects on the rich resources and current activities of the river. The Committee supports improvement and full development of the Shipyard area and its immediate environs, provided such development is compatible with and not harmful to other water-related uses such as recreation, fishing, shellfish management, marinas and so forth. The Committee encourages within the Shipyard such commercial uses as restaurants, shops, storage facilities, light industry (e.g., small boat construction), office space, hatchery and processing facilities related to increased harvesting of shellfish or eeling, among others.

The Committee fully supports the changes proposed by the Route 3A and Lincoln Street Bridge Safety Committee and the Shipyard Committee for a relocated, safer entrance/exit for the Shipyard and an improved roadway and parking within the Shipyard. However, the new road system should be designed to provide a maximum of protection from possible problems as polluted water run-off. In addition, it should provide access to and parking for users of the Bouve property (if acquired by the town) and the moorings available at Hewitt's Cove.

6. Means of Transportation

The commuter boat operation, located within the old Hingham Shipyard, is an integral and necessary part of any future Shipyard development and an important link in the alternative transportation system from the South Shore to Boston and vice versa. The Committee supports it and the proposed terminal for the Harbor Islands service also. Plans for the terminal ought be coordinated as much as possible with Shipyard management so that future development could be linked by walkways, perhaps covered, to the terminal, providing access for boat-service users to shops, offices, restaurants, etc. which may some day be constructed. Fast Hovermarine-type of water transit must be given a full and fair opportunity to show whether it can be utilized here, and the conventional hull service should be expanded to include more daytime, weekend and even some night trips.

The Committee recommends construction of the combined ferry/harbor islands/commuter boat service terminal at the site of the existing commuter boat service pier, since that site requires no dredging and would leave Hewitt's Cove, the alternate terminal site, available for increased mooring space.

In order to promote maximum use of the commuter boat service, harbor islands trips, and with future Shipyard development in mind, it is suggested that planning ought be initiated by the Town of Hingham to explore the feasibility of feeder bus service to the boat pier. Small shuttle buses which might be used for such service could also be operated within the town during the day to serve town residents. When the Shipyard is developed, such a shuttle service would be of great benefit to those who might be employed or wish to shop in the Shipyard area, as well as to those who commute to and from Boston by boat.

A water connection from the boat terminal over to Webb Park should be explored once the terminal has been constructed. The possibility of limited excursions upriver to Great Esker Park or Bare Cove Park, or connecting the two, might be considered, but with caution because of the delicate ecology of the upriver area.

7. Summation

Location of the commuter boat service at the old Hingham Shipyard and the planned future construction of the Harbor Islands State Park ferry terminal and headquarters there, the beauty and importance of the upstream open space, the wealth of marine resources contained in the river and its watershed area, the ease of access for a large population, the possibility of increasing the recreational boating activity, are some of the reasons which combine to make the Weymouth Back River potentially a major South Shore port, both recreationally and commercially. To reach that potential will require exacting and visionary planning uniting recreational, residential, commercial, ecological, scenic and educational resources into a cohesive unit that will be acceptable to local communities and private abutters, and that will provide the protection necessary to preserve the incalculable value of the river's marine resources while providing recreational and commercial opportunities for local and metropolitan area residents alike.

Protection as a National Natural Landmark

The Weymouth Back River Open Space, south of the Route 3A bridge, contains a glacial geology that may be unique to coastal New England. An interrelated series of glacial eskers, salt marsh coves, salt ponds, salt brooks and Whale Island represents one of New England's grandly scenic urban-centered marine ecologies. These geologic formations, in conjunction with several undisturbed prehistoric culture sites, are an outstanding natural resource that may be eligible for inclusion upon the National Natural

Landmark Register.

The National Natural Landmark Program was formulated to delineate unique natural resources in the hope that such designation would add weight to their specific importance and increase the chances of their preservation. Sites that become Natural Landmarks receive a bronze plaque from the Department of the Interior and are listed on the National Landmark Register, just as Hingham's Old Ship Church is a National Historic Site. A National Natural Landmark can be a local and regional resource, a matter of community and regional pride.

Nomination of the Weymouth Back River for Landmark status has been explored in a preliminary way but should be followed up. Congressman Gerry Studds has toured the river personally and has indicated his interest in the project. His office has assured the Committee that he will assist local efforts to have the river attain National Natural Landmark status.

Contact has also been made with the Scenic Rivers Program set up under the state's Department of Environmental Management. Those in charge of the program have expressed strong interest in the Back River and are exploring possibilities for having it designated a Scenic River. The continued interest and active participation of local citizens and officials is of particular importance in pursuing Scenic River status.

Committee Recommendations

An important part of the Committee's work was to resolve the occasionally conflicting points of view regarding the differing uses of the river and its resources. General agreement was reached that a major priority is to preserve and protect the unique and beautiful environment of the upriver estuarine area.

Understanding the overall value and the delicate ecology of the entire estuary, the Committee makes the following recommendations which it feels are compatible with a sensible, planned use of the whole Back River.

It is recommended that:

1. A permanent committee, comprised of residents appointed by the Boards of Selectmen of the Towns of Weymouth and Hingham, and similar in make-up to that of the present Back River Study Committee, be established to act in an advisory capacity to other boards and agencies of the two towns where the interests of the river are involved.

Functions of the committee shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a. to provide continuing attention to the conservation of the river resources and offer suggestions to other town agencies regarding projects, activities or developments which may have an adverse effect on the river, its watershed and the resources therein;
- b. to carry forward the recommendations of this report and to seek sources of funding to implement them;
- c. to pursue National Natural Landmark status and Scenic River designation;
- d. to review and make recommendations to update town, state and federal regulations, and violation penalties, in order to ensure a continuing supply of marine resources;
- e. to review management practices relative to ensuring the best possible harvest of clams, mussels, smelt or other fish;
- f. to explore possibilities of aquaculture in the Back River area;
- g. to seek CZM funding for study of expanded uses, financial costs and assistance in finding other sources of direct funding for improvements;
- h. to establish an educational program to achieve wider recognition of the river's importance;
- i. to make periodic reports to town meetings and appropriate town boards;
- j. to perform any other functions related to the river which the Selectmen may suggest.

2. The water quality of the Back River be improved and maintained at the highest possible level by establishment of a plan for the gradual elimination of pollutants from industrial and municipal sources, either currently existing or from possible future development along the river, such pollutants to include sewage, gasoline, oil, toxic chemicals and road salt.

3. Certain proposals (a, b and c) contained in the Weymouth Open Space Study (pertinent sections cited in parentheses) and the MAPC Study of 1977 (d) be carried out:

- a. that the salt marshes upstream of Great Esker Park as far as the Old Colony Railroad and the Hingham town line and those downstream of Bridge Street on either side of David's Island Road be protected by application of the Coastal Restriction Act, M. G. L. Ch. 130, sec. 105, and by asking the Town of Weymouth to consider changing the zoning to open space (p.30, par.4 and p.52, E-10);
- b. that the Town of Weymouth re-examine the present designation of the tidal marshes at the head of the Back River since they are unsuitable for industrial use (p.52, E-8);
- c. that in the event the Weymouth Compacting Station is no longer in use, the land be used as an entrance to Great Esker Park and the building be used by the Weymouth Park Department (p.52, E-7);
- d. that the Town of Weymouth proceed with plans to cap the existing dump to prevent toxic substances from seeping into the river.

4. The Town of Weymouth petition the Commonwealth to repair and maintain the fish ladders so that the fish can reach Whitman's Pond and so that the herring population can be maintained.

5. The Town of Hingham acquire the Bouve property as open space to complement development of Webb Park on the opposite shore and keep the mouth of the Back River an attractive entrance to this recreational area.

6. Another study of the Hingham Bay area be conducted by the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries in 1980 and every 10 years thereafter, to determine the value and status

of the marine resources, with recommendations for the wisest possible management.

7. No permanent moorings or slips be allowed in the waters south (upriver) of the Route 3A bridge, but continue to allow overnight anchoring.

8. No additional fueling stations be permitted upriver from the Tern Harbor Marina.

9. A plan be developed by the owners of moorings in the Hewitt's Cove area with the cooperation of the Hingham Harbormaster to use the available space more efficiently and to provide additional moorings.

10. The Town of Hingham provide a town-owned landing off the Bouve property, if the property is acquired by the town.

11. Adequate support facilities on shore, such as parking, sanitary facilities, trash disposal, for those using the river or adjoining parks, be established and maintained.

12. Joint attention and supervision be established by the two towns to oversee #11 and other common concerns.

13. The possibility of linking Stodder's Neck and Bare Cove Park by biking and walking trails be explored.

14. The possibility of linking Great Esker Park to Bare Cove Park and Stodder's Neck by marked bicycle paths utilizing existing roads be explored.

15. A gangway and fishing/dinghy float be constructed at the existing picnic site at the Bare Cove Dock to encourage recreational fishing and to make the picnic area and park accessible from the water.

16. No hunting or shooting be permitted in the area upriver from the Route 3A bridge.

17. The MDC be asked to enlarge the dock area at Stodder's Neck to allow better access to the park from the water.

18. Existing boat transportation from the Hingham Shipyard to Boston, using conventional hulls and the Hovermarine-type hulls where practical, be continued and expanded, adding daytime, weekend and evening service if possible.

19. Certain immediate improvements be made by the Commonwealth to the existing commuter boat pier:

- a. secure planking along walkway
- b. install movable drops
- c. install safety railings or gates at drop areas
- d. get float for Hovermarine service built and in place

20. Development of the ferry terminal to serve the Harbor Islands be constructed at the site of the existing commuter boat pier, to coordinate services for commuters and harbor islands visitors.

21. A water connection to Webb Park from the boat terminal be explored.

22. Connecting feeder bus service to the boat pier be explored by the Town of Hingham, in cooperation with the state's Department of Transportation.

23. The recommendations of the Route 3A and Lincoln Street Bridge Safety Committee and the Shipyard Committee for a safer Shipyard entrance/egress with signals and turning lanes, and for an improved road system and parking within the Shipyard be supported by the Town of Hingham and implemented.

24. Parking within the Shipyard be improved and expanded to include not only commuter boat and harbor islands service users, but visitors to the Bouve property and future users of Hewitt's Cove area moorings also.

25. Emphasis of development in the Hingham Shipyard be focussed on that which is most compatible to water-related uses (recreation, fishing, marinas, shellfish management, water transit), especially commercial space, shops, restaurants, storage facilities, light industry related to small boat construction, lobstering, celling, shellfish and related hatchery or processing functions.

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