

(April 24, 1950 Island Dispatch

Town Board 3/20/50 A bill was read, now before the Governor of the State of NY requesting powers to take over, by the West River Property Owners' Association, to maintain and operate a private water system formerly owned by Mr. Horace J. French and acquired by the state in 1947 by appropriation proceedings. The board moved that the Attorney draft a letter to be signed by the Supervisor recommending the approval of the bill No. 2726 before the Governor, as passed by the legislature, in regard to the West River water plant.)

From copy of "Management Guide" (page 3)

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The West River Parkway Facility Management Guide provides guidance to park staff for the protection, planning, development, and management of the parkway's resources and attributed. It also provides direction for the preparation of subsequent plans required to implement park policies or to achieve program objectives.

The 634 acre parkway is linear in shape and stretches some nine miles along the west side of Grand Island (Erie County) connecting Buckhorn Island State Park to the north and Beaver Island State Park to the South. The eastern shoreline of the West Branch (Chippawa Channel) of the (Upper) Niagara River runs the full length of the Parkway affording users and adjoining Property owners magnificent views of the River.

A concrete and asphalt, two-lane highway traverses the heart of the Parkway. Rolling, open, maintained grass areas, punctuated with trees separate the roadway on the east from a paralleling West River Road with numerous, single family, residential properties. On the west (river side) the terrain is relatively level and supports a more narrow strip area of maintained grass. The river embankment varies in grade from gently sloping to steep and for the most part, is tree and shrub covered. Two parking/overlook areas are strategically located on the west side as well.

The Map of Grand Island (Figure 2) gives an accurate location of the Parkway, connecting roadways, and depicts its physical importance as a greenway and connecting corridor.

With the exception of this guide there are no known current plans or studies directly related to the management of the environmentally sensitive West River Parkway area as an area of controlled human use.

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Four areas of the West River Parkway are being used to restore stiff-leaf goldenrod, a state listed threatened species. These areas were established by Empire State Pipeline as part of their restoration work after installing the pipeline. These areas were established in cooperation with DEC (Appendix B).

The wetland areas along the shores of the parkway are being invaded by purple loosestrife. A root-mining weevil was introduced into these areas as a biological control over the advance of purple loosestrife. The DEC Division of Fish and Wildlife are working in conjunction with the New York Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research unit at Cornell University on this program. (See Appendix C)

Steps to control nuisance wildlife will occur on an individual case basis.

2. CULTURAL RESOURCES

In 1924 “A State Park Plan” was introduced by Robert Moses. This was the first step in expanding Parks from the 1885 creation of the Niagara Reservation. The first expansion was slated for Grand Island. The purposed plan was for a park at both ends of Grand Island with bridges connecting both ends with the mainland and parkway connecting both bridges.

The first acquisition for the Plan was Buckhorn Island State Park in 1927. Acquisition of land at the south end of the Island (Beaver Island State Park) began in 1931. In 1933 ground was broken for the south Grand Island Bridge.

The next step was the acquisition of lands for a parkway to run from the south Grand Island Bridge to Beaver Island State Park, and then from Beaver Island to Buckhorn Island State Park and the north Grand Island.

With Governor Lehman present, the Grand Island Bridges, Beaver Island State Park and Buckhorn Island State Park were dedicated on July 15, 1935.

Thirty-one (31) acres were purchased for the West River State Parkway between 1930 and 1940. Another 228 acres were bought between 1946 and 1951. In 1952 the final 375 acres were purchased. Parkway construction began in 1949, and three years later, Grand Island had a major road along the west bank of the Niagara River. Many homes had been relocated and docks removed to create a park-like area.

Robert Moses’ vision was to create a unified State Park System connected by scenic travel corridors, parkways. Buckhorn Island State Park, Beaver Island State Park and the West River Parkway were the first steps in achieving this interconnected park system. The parkway exhibits features and characteristics of Robert Moses’ design style.

3. RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

The Parkway is a concrete and asphalt two-lane, limited access roadway structure stretching nine miles from Buckhorn Island State to Beaver Island State Park. The roadway is curbed on both sides. A portion of the roadway consists of a bridge that crosses over Big Six Mile Creek. The rest areas on the west side of the parkway provide motorists a place to park. The grassy median and vegetated shoreline are used for a variety of activities. Access to these areas is

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Boat Launching. Launching of all powerboats and personal watercraft is prohibited from all areas along the Parkway. These craft may be launched at the Big Six Mile Creek Marina. Canoes, kayaks, windsurfers and surfboards may be launched from the two designated overlook parking areas.

Camping – Camping is prohibited along the entire length of the Parkway. This includes both parking areas, and the Big Six Mile Creek Marina.

Swimming – Swimming is prohibited along the entire length of the Parkway. Swimming is also prohibited in and around the entrance to the Big Six Mile Creek Marina.

Parking/Standing – Parking/Standing prohibited along the entire length of the Parkway with the exception of the two parking areas located along the western side of the southbound lane. The exception to this rule is during waterfowl hunting season.

Walking/Running – Walking/Running on the roadway is prohibited.

IV. CAPITAL NEEDS

At this time, capital needs along the West River Parkway are the primary responsibility of the State Department of Transportation. Responsibility for improvements to the maintenance of existing roadways, curbs, guardrails, parking areas, grass areas and associated signage and control devices, etc. was transferred from Parks to DOT on February 3, 1976 through execution of a Memorandum of Understanding between the agencies and the Division of Budget.

Parks capital needs are limited to erection of seasonal signage in support of uses of the parkway controlled through issuance of special use permits for activities such as duck hunting, snowmobiling, horseback riding, etc. Personnel (staff) needs to issue permits, monitor uses and use enforcement are limited as is associated equipment.

V. PARK MANAGEMENT

From 1952 until 1972 the Niagara Frontier State Park Commission had complete control of the Parkway. In 1972, the Niagara Region of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation controlled the maintenance and the security of the Parkway. In

October of 1975, maintenance responsibility was transferred to the NYS Department of Transportation and security was transferred to the NYS Division of State Police.

A. TRAILS

Snowmobile trail designation signage, permits and identification stickers are the responsibility of Beaver Island State Park. Trail grooming, traffic control and hazard warning signage are the responsibility of the Grand Island Snowmobile Club.

The Conservation Trail (Finger Lakes Trail) route signage is the responsibility of the Foothills Trail Club.

B. ROAD AND REST/PARKING AREAS

The two lane access roadway and two parking areas are maintained April 1st through December 1st by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT).