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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Department of Environmental Management

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

100 Cambridge Street
Boston
Massachusetts
02202

May 18, 1984

Dear Interested Citizens:

Office of
Planning &
Development

This letter is to let you know that the Draft Boston Harbor Islands Master Plan Update is near completion. Enclosed is a summary for your review. Representatives of Wallace, Floyd Associates, Inc. will make 4 presentations of the Draft the week of June 11th in Boston, Concord, Hingham, and Lynn. Your attendance and comments would be greatly appreciated. The following is a schedule of the meetings, please note the locations and attend the one nearest you:

- 1) Monday, June 11, Room 801 Boston City Hall, use the Dock Square entrance;
- 2) Tuesday, June 12, Room S18 Concord High School;
- 3) Wednesday, June 13, Visitor Center, Wompatuck State Park; and
- 4) Thursday, June 14, Lynn Yacht Club.

All meetings will begin at 7PM and end at 9PM.

Please bring a friend and I look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

Katherine F. Abbott
Boston Harbor Islands Coordinator

BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS STATE PARK
DRAFT MASTER PLAN UPDATE
31 May 1984

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The Boston Harbor Islands are a unique natural, historical, and recreational resource of the Commonwealth. They form a state park which is more accessible to more people-- in terms of both distance travelled and availability of public transportation-- than any other.

The islands provide an experience of natural wildness at the very heart of the Boston metropolitan area. The power of natural forces to restore an environment once transformed by human activity is evident on all the islands.

The Plan provides the framework for the next twenty years of park development and management through a program of coordinated actions based on policies intended to strike an appropriate balance between preservation of the unique qualities of the islands and making the island experience available to more people.

Examples of unique resources that have been destroyed by their own success are too well known to need much description here. Surveys of harbor island visitors indicate that while some improvements are desired (food, water, and comfort facilities; more information; better transportation) the fragile and subtle qualities of the islands are very much appreciated as they are. An unhappy scenario for the islands would see "improvements" and growing numbers of visitors detracting from this environment and spoiling the islands for both human visitors and wildlife communities. The Plan is committed to preventing this scenario from occurring.

On the other hand, it is a basic goal to make the harbor island experience available to more of the Commonwealth's residents. This is a goal based both in equity and in wise use of the financial resources needed to operate a state park. Can greater quantity in terms of the number of people served be provided without a loss of quality? This plan answers that question in the affirmative.

Providing recreational service to more people without compromising quality is possible through appropriate policies, strategy, and approach. The policies represent the four major values that must be served: preservation of the existing environment, interpretation of that environment, provision of recreational opportunities, and provision of access to all.

The strategy consists of working with the diversity and natural separations that exist among the islands to set aside areas for intensive, moderate, and low use. The approach is to always keep in mind the visitor's point of view as he or she experiences the islands.

Actions involve development of facilities, management, information, and transportation improvements.

Development involves physical improvements to control erosion, house interpretive activities, provide recreational facilities and visitor comforts, and support transportation service. In keeping with the policy of preserving the island environment, development should in general be small scale and designed not to intrude and change the character of the islands. The Plan recommends that larger scale development to accommodate many visitors should be concentrated near the piers and limited to four locations on Spectacle, Long, Georges, and Peddocks Islands plus mainland facilities on Long Wharf in Boston and Hewitts Cove in Hingham.

Management includes a variety of actions by park staff: selective improvement of natural habitat based on study of potential and desirable wildlife communities; erosion control and maintenance of trails and facilities; operation of facilities and provision of services related to visitor comfort, safety, and security. Management also involves effective coordination of the public agencies and private groups that play a role in the Harbor Islands State Park.

Information and Marketing is a special aspect of management that deserves separate emphasis. It includes preparation of information related to both interpretation and access to the park and should continue to emphasize personal contact with visitors by the Island Managers.

Transportation Service can be improved through increased schedules on large ferry and excursion boats and the DEM water taxi, and by land-based connections to the departure points of these boats. Special programs for low income and special needs groups should continue to be provided by DEM.

THEMES AND ISSUES THAT GUIDE THE HARBOR ISLANDS PLAN

The islands themselves must be the basis of any successful plan. Anyone who has visited several of the islands will agree that they each have unique qualities different from the others. Concepts for each island are based on their individual assets and liabilities, and the Plan as a whole is organized around four interrelated themes that give coherence to the Harbor Islands State Park as a whole. These themes are natural forces; harbor geography; harbor history; and harbor transportation.

Issues to be addressed in the plan include visitor preferences, intensity of use, management of natural areas, harbor water quality, waste disposal, fresh water for drinking and irrigation, protection of improvements from damage, maintenance and management requirements, and transportation scheduling and feasibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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When the Plan for the Harbor Islands State Park is fully implemented, total visitation will have increased from the present 170,000 per year to 550,000 or more. This more than three-fold increase will not be evenly spread over the islands, however.

Most visitors on a typical summer weekend day will be found at four major centers of recreational and interpretive facilities located on Georges, Long, Peddocks, and Spectacle Islands, and it is on these islands that most Park development will occur. Each of these intensive use islands will be served by separately scheduled ferries from Long and Rows Wharf in Boston and Hewitts Cove in Hingham, with some additional service from Lynn and Hull. The four islands will be connected by a large water taxi travelling a circuit among them.

A second group of islands will continue to be used at moderate intensity: Bumpkin, Gallops, Grape, and Lovells. These islands will be served by water taxis based at Georges, Long, and Peddocks Islands and Hewitts Cove, providing convenient service with schedules that limit use of each island to levels appropriate to island maintenance and visitor enjoyment. Development on these islands will be smaller in scale, consisting of improvements to provide interpretive facilities, visitor comforts, and improvement and management of historic and natural resources and trails.

A third group of islands will remain at low levels of visitation: the Brewster group, Rainsford, and Slate. These islands will not be served by water taxi or ferry except for infrequent service to Great Brewster and Rainsford. Little or no development will occur except as necessary to protect and preserve natural resources and to accommodate the small numbers of visitors planned. However, there will be active management to improve and maintain habitat quality and diversity. Except for Great Brewster, which is the most heavily used island in this group, there will be no regular staffing on these islands.

Major Actions

1985-1987

Improve Long Wharf docking facilities and open Harbor Islands State Park Visitor Center at the head of the Wharf.

Improve and open major facilities at Long Island with emphasis on harbor geography, history of transportation and fortifications, and picnicking.

Make safety and visitor center improvements at Fort Warren and develop programs specializing in the history of the fort. Begin restoration.

Perform a scientific study of natural areas in the harbor and design a long-term program of habitat improvements in low use areas to support indigenous and diverse plant and wildlife communities as they might have existed prior to human intervention.

Perform engineering studies of groundwater potential for potable or irrigation water on the islands; develop promising sources or provide transported drinking water.

Provide a prototype floating management base at Gallops Island as an alternative to structures on the island.

Increase number of island managers on all staffed islands.

Improve water taxi service to Lovell's, Bumpkin, and Grape Islands, and provide direct ferry service to Long Island and Peddocks Island via coordination with private operators.

Construct additional pier and visitor/commuter facilities at Hewitts Cove headquarters.

1988-1992

Continue Fort Warren restoration.

Begin stabilization of Spectacle Island.

Continue natural area improvements.

Provide minor improvements to Bumpkin, and Lovells Islands.

1993-1995

Improve and open Spectacle Island as a fourth major activity area, with emphasis on introduction to harbor themes, informal picnic areas, and environmental art-work increasing awareness of visitor's relationship to the island and harbor.

Provide direct ferry transportation to the four major island activity centers, and a large water taxi vessel making a circuit of these four areas; smaller water taxis to moderate use islands maintained.

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Comm. from Katherine F. Abbott, Boston Harbor
Islands Coordinator, Mass. Dept. of Environmental
Management Re: schedule of various
meetings to be held on the near completion
of the Draft Boston Harbor Islands Master
Plan Update.

In City Council,

June 11, 1984

6/11/84

Placed
on
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