



Town of Greenwich
Department of Parks & Recreation - Programs
Town Hall - 101 Field Point Road - Greenwich, CT 06836-2540
Phone: (203) 622-7814 – Fax: (203) 622-6494

Grass Island

Location: Off of Shore Road.(Belle Haven area)

Directions from

Town Hall: Field Point Rd. across Railroad Ave. to traffic light, left under railroad bridge onto Horseneck La. on left First right onto Shore Rd. Left turn into Grass Island.

Size: 25.5 Acres

Hr. of Operation: 6 am to 8 pm

Parking: lot parking

Facilities:

I. Picnic Area:

- A. 3 - 6' wood and metal picnic tables
- B. 2 - 6' wood and metal permanent Benches
- C. 1 - metal Flagpole

II. Locker and Rest rooms Building:

- A. Men - 2 urinals, 2 toilets, 2 sinks, 1 garbage cans
- B. Women - 3 toilets stalls, 2 sinks, 1 garbage can
- C. 2- wood and metal 7' benches
- D. 1 wooden 6' picnic table
- E. 1-6' metal and fiberglass picnic table
- F. 5- metal refuse cans
- G. 1 water fountain

III. Marina Parking

- A. 145' x 60' lot (opp. 1st. dock)
- B. 110' x 60' lot (opp. 1st dock)
- C. 110' x 90' lot)opp. 2nd dock)

IV. Boat House Area:

- A. 1 - Pay Phone
- B. 3 - 3' metal trash cans
- C. 1 - water fountain
- D. 1 - 50' x 50' house w/ rest rooms (locked)
- E. 4 - 5' wooden picnic tables
- F. 2 - 5' wood & metal benches
(area closed November 15 through April 15 - sign on door)

V. Boat Yard and dock area:

A. South Dock:

1. 1- 3' metal trash can
2. 1 - 60' pier
3. 1 -50' ramp from pier to floating dock
4. 100' + floating docks
5. 100 + 40' Pylons in the water

B. North Dock:

1. 32 - 40' pylons in the water
2. 1 60' pier over water
3. 1 - 40' ramp connecting pier to floating dock
4. 1 - 20' x 30' dock
5. 1 - 3' metal garbage can

C. Between North and South Dock:

1. 2 - 2' x 2' "Slow Railway" signs
2. 1 - railway leading from Dry Dock area to loading area I in water- railway approx. 100yd.
3. Loading Area sign - 7' x 2' - Permit required
3. 3- 16' steel boat racks

D. Small Preserve at Southern tip of Park:

1. 1 - 3' garbage can
2. 2 - 5' wood & metal Benches
3. 2 - 5' picnic Tables
- 1 - 100' Flag Pole (no Flag)

VI. Sewer Treatment Plan

VII. Control Booth (12' x 8')

VIII. Fuel Dock

- A. 2 Fuel Dispensers
- B. 1 pump a head
- C. 1 12' x 10' shingled service house
- D. 10 finger pontoons

IX. Nature Trails:

- A. 1 - 6' x 6' Wooden Entrance Sign - "Grass Island Nature Trails"
"Managed Observation Area"
- B. 4 - 3' direction signs (w/ painted yellow arrows)
- C. 4 - 5' wood & metal benches
- D. 1 - 18' x 80 yd. Fence (wooden) blocking Sewage plant from Nature Trail

Recreational uses:

Greenwich Yacht Club, a private organization, maintains a clubhouse leased through Parks & Recreation, and boat slips at Grass Island.

Grass Island

A true island prior to 1909 and today grown to nearly twice it's original size from a series of fill episodes, this shore front property includes a managed conservation area, a public marina, the Greenwich Boat and Yacht Club and, as well, the Town's wastewater treatment plant. Open all year round, the property is reached by turning left off Shore Road onto grass Island Road.

The 14 acre managed conservation area affords a surprisingly rich ecological environment that is ideal for a leisurely walk or the study of a wide variety of vegetation and fauna, for it comprises wooded areas, meadows, and one of the few remaining salt marshes in Town.

Trees and shrubs, especially along Shore Road, are many and varied. These provide refuge for squirrels, small mammals and a host of perching birds. Wintering Great Horned Owls and long eared Owls have been sighted roosting in a stand of Japanese Black Pines.

The meadow, retained by annual mowing by the Town, provides another environment for birds and mammals. Ring-necked Pheasants and Cottontail Rabbits have been noted.

The salt marsh, with it's stands of reeds and cordgrass, affords another. Here can be seen Mallards and Black Ducks, Wigeons, Gadwalls, as well as the ubiquitous Canada Geese. Herons, Egrets and Terns from nearby Island rookeries feed here during the summer months.

More and more people are realizing the importance of the salt marsh in the chain of life. Of equal importance, but less recognized as such, the habitat serves as an ecosystem for the health of the surrounding residential properties.

Jacques Robbins

Grass Island

Location: Belle Haven - south east side of Shore Road

Size: 25.5 Acres

Natural History

Grass Island is a tidal marsh area in Greenwich Harbor. Part of the area is occupied by a boat marina and sewage plant (3.45 Ac.) The surrounding habitat is a fragile marsh ecosystem protected as a managed conservation area. The phragmites or reed grass community is a shelter for wildlife. The tree/shrub border creates an edge effect and the grass fields serve as a barrier between the developed area and the tidal marsh. Salt marshes and mud flats are suitable for large numbers of animal and plant species. Dredging activities has destroyed some tidal flora.

History before Acquisition

Grass Island was first purchased in 1712 by John Howe who gave the Greenwich Harbor Island its name. At the time, the area was a tidal marsh, which was partially inundated at high tide. What use the island served is unknown.

In 1898 the Connecticut General Assembly granted Daniel S. Mead the right to construct sea walls in front of and around the island and to fill and grade the spaces within the walls. This measure was undoubtedly taken in an effort to improve the potential for development of the land. In 1916, the land was advertised for sale as property suitable for construction.

Park Development

The town bought the property from Oliver Mead for use as a sewage disposal plant. A causeway was built from the mainland to Grass Island.

During the Prohibition Era, the island was used as a dumping ground where policemen would break up confiscated bottles.

From 1937-1940 the island underwent a drastic change in size, shape and character. It's size doubled as dredge material from Greenwich Harbor was deposited on the land. At this time Grass Island was described as " a real mud hole and a garbage heap". (Joe Dietrich, Director of Parks & Recreation). The southern causeway was closed in 1945 and the northern one expanded. In the 1950's Grass Island ceased to be an Island when fill from construction of the Connecticut Turnpike was placed beside the former causeway. In 1960 a new sewage treatment plant was built.

Grass Island now has a variety of uses. The Eastern portion remains in usage as a sewage treatment plant by the Town. A private Boat Club maintains a clubhouse, parking lot, boat storage and dock space in the southern section of the Island. Also, the Town has a boat yard and docks in the southwestern portion. The remainder is a managed conservation area. This designation was given to it in 1975 following an environmental study sponsored by the Conservation Commission. The area is maintained as a meadow with a variety of grasses and wildflowers. Mowing once a year keeps it from progressing to a woodland stage. Birds and small animals use the grasses as shelters for nesting. Tall grasses, small trees and shrubs have grown up along the edges of the area, providing a buffer for wildlife, especially waterfowl.

Recreation Uses

Greenwich Yacht Club, a private organization, maintains a clubhouse, leased through Parks & Recreation and boat slips at Grass Island.

Facilities

Public locker

Restrooms

Town boat marina

Town boat maintenance Building