



Report - Visitor Experience & Transportation Workshop

January 28, 2008

Patchogue-Medford Library, Patchogue, NY

I. Workshop Overview

This document is a summary report of a workshop conducted by the NPS as part of the Fire Island National Seashore (FIIS) General Management Plan (GMP). This workshop, which took place on January 28, 2008, dealt with the subjects of visitor experience and transportation at Fire Island. Park planners had identified these subjects as important ones to address in the GMP. Two additional workshops were held to discuss the management of Fire Island's marine resources and the broad topic of sustainability as it relates to Fire Island.

Workshop organizers invited a wide variety of stakeholders and other interested parties to the Visitor Experience and Transportation workshop. In total, more than thirty individuals participated. In addition to NPS personnel, these included: representatives of educational and preservation partner organizations such as the Friends of Watch Hill, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and the Fire Island Wilderness Committee; members of the real estate community on Fire Island; representatives from mass transit organizations such as the Long Island Railroad and ferry operators; and officials from the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau, along with others associated with tourism to Fire Island and its surroundings.

Proceedings began with a round of introductions, followed by an explanation of the meeting's purpose and format. Presenters explained that many of the ideas generated during the meeting would be evaluated and tested during the Alternatives development stage of the GMP. A variety of graphic materials were displayed on the conference room walls. These included: very large-format maps of Fire Island and the surroundings, image boards illustrating Fire Island's fundamental resources and values, and boards containing recent drafts of foundation planning statements.

Meeting Purpose (from Agenda)

- Provide ideas and recommendations that address the following two questions:
 - How can we offer rewarding and relevant experiences for a diversity of publics, broaden our audiences, and build future stewardship for Fire Island and the William Floyd Estate?
 - What are the best and most appropriate methods to move people to, from, and along Fire Island and improve access to and from the Floyd Estate?
- Develop ideas to improve the visitor experience and transportation related to Fire Island National Seashore for a broad diversity of user groups. Recommendations will include the pre-visit, visit and post visit.

II. General Management Plan Overview

GMP Project Manager, Ellen Carlson, provided an overview of the General Management Plan process. She described the major steps undertaken to date, including initial scoping meetings, the development of foundation planning statements, and a summary newsletter. For reference, workshop organizers displayed the draft foundation statements, including the park purpose, park significance, and fundamental resources and values, on boards taped to the walls of the room, and also provided them in a packet of handouts that each meeting participant received in advance. The planning team had developed these statements previously with input from the park personnel and a number of stakeholders.



III. Existing Visitor Experience and Transportation at FIIS

PowerPoint Presentation – FIIS Supt. Mike Reynolds

Superintendent Mike Reynolds delivered a PowerPoint presentation to the audience. This presentation served as an introduction to Fire Island National Seashore, but it also contained a special focus on the issues and opportunities related to the visitor experience and to transportation and access at Fire Island. The first half of the presentation briefly covered the establishment of the Seashore, its purpose, major resources, and the general GMP issues that were raised during scoping, while the second half of the presentation posed several questions to the audience related to the workshop's purpose. A question and answer session followed, in which many of Mike's points were discussed in more detail.

Key points of Superintendent's Presentation

- **Public Awareness** – What means could the NPS employ to improve public awareness of the national seashore in the region and ensure that visitors to Fire Island know that they are in a national park? How can the National Seashore and the communities work together better to provide an integrated experience for the public and offer more public information within the Seashore?
- **Relevance** – How does the National Seashore provide for an enjoyable visitor experience that is accessible and relevant giving changing demographics in the nation's population?
- **Outdated Facilities and Exhibits** – What opportunities are there to update park facilities and exhibits so that they are universally accessible and portray a positive expression of the park's values and significance?
- **Accessibility** – What strategies can the National Seashore and its partners employ to improve universal accessibility on public water transportation and for beach access?
- **Cost of Transportation** – How should the NPS work to address the relatively high cost of transportation to, from, and across Fire Island? What strategies and partnerships can be initiated to reduce access costs for underserved populations?
- **William Floyd Estate** – What can the NPS do to enhance the visitor experience at the William Floyd Estate? Can the National Seashore support expanded hours of operation, public programming, and outreach?
- **Accommodations/Camping** – Should NPS create more opportunities for "low impact transient accommodations" such as camping? What are other alternatives?
- **Recreational Driving** – What are the appropriate locations and conditions of use for recreational driving for fishing access?
- **Signage/Wayfinding** – How can the National Seashore and its partners improve the wayfinding/signage system to alleviate confusion for visitors arriving from outside the region (getting to/from ferry terminals and the William Floyd Estate)?
- **Lateral Transportation** – What strategies could be employed to improve opportunities for lateral movement along Fire Island—either land-based, non-motorized, or water-based (e.g. water taxis, kayaks, bikes)?
- **Nude Recreation** – Should nude recreation be allowed to continue as an activity in the National Seashore and where should this activity be allowed to occur?
- **Partnerships** – How does the National Seashore best use partnerships in delivering visitor services that ensure a meaningful experience?

IV. Envisioning an Exceptional Visitor Experience

Small Group Role-Playing Session

The focus of the workshop was a small group session in which participants assumed the role of a particular visitor or group of visitors and outlined the ideal Seashore experience for this party. Workshop organizers designed these roles in advance to be representative of Fire Island's



diverse user groups and to explore challenges such as accessibility and multiple languages, as well as opportunities to enhance or expand recreation and interpretation on the island. Workshop organizers encouraged participants to be imaginative and to think long into the future, rather than to worry about the current obstacles to enabling this desired experience to occur. Each group was to generate creative ideas and recommendations which related directly to the meeting purpose. Planners supplied each group with large-scale maps of the Seashore and its surroundings, trace paper, markers, and flip-charts so that the groups could record their ideas through words or drawings.

Charge to Each Small Group – the Problem to Solve

Develop an exceptional visitor experience that ensures the group you are role-playing has a wonderful time during all phases of their trip (pre-trip planning, access and to and from the site, experience at the place(s), connection to the Seashore after the visit). Realize the experience you are creating happens in the future. You can make changes to the existing conditions to ensure your group has the information, facilities, programs and resources they need to have a great time. Look out 15 or 20 years and create wonderful opportunities that ensure your group has fun and leaves with a deep appreciation for Fire Island National Seashore.

Please consider all of the following:

- *Trip Planning/Information Gathering/Orientation*
- *Motorized and/or Non-Motorized Access and Transportation*
- *Water and Land Based Experiences*
- *Facilities and Services (e.g., campgrounds, lodges, restaurants/bars, shops)*
- *Interpretation, Education and Outreach*

Roles for Small Groups

- Group 1) Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts seeking a Non-Motorized Island-Based Experience
- Group 2) School Group Resource-based Experience
- Group 3) Family with Children and Seniors – Week Long Summer Vacation
- Group 4) Young Couple Visiting William Floyd Estate and Fire Island
- Group 5) Local Motor Boat Vacationers
- Group 6) Year-Round residents/visiting bike enthusiasts

1) Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts seeking a Non-Motorized Island-Based Experience

Develop an exceptional experience for four friends that want to have a completely non-motorized experience and spend several nights camping in the wilderness. They have brought kayaks. They plan to have this vacation in the fall.

Notes/Findings

Composition of Party

- 3 Guests total. They are all young, just out of college.
- One (or two) is from out of state. One visitor is local – learned from young age about Fire Island. S/he enjoys kayaking, astronomy, birding. Member of Audubon Society.
- Local has 1 kayak – must rent the rest

Pre-Trip Planning

NPS website (FIIS) is important component. Website would include links to specific outdoor experiences. Would include:

- Where to kayak
- Supplies to get and where can be obtained/rented
- Where to get permits. Can purchase permits on web
- Kayak safety information/rules and wilderness hiking safety/precautions
- Weather information



- Virtual trip. Will use photos and other media to portray how the trip will look and feel
- Way of securing transportation from airport to train so will not have to rent car
- What other things to do – indoor/outdoor

Itinerary

Day before leave

- Receive kayak map of Fire Island and South Shore – order from Amazon or obtain by web
- Check in at Glacier Bay Sports – get safety training
- Check in at Wertheim NWR V.C. and learn more about Wertheim, birding, migratory birds, butterflies.
- Pick up bird check list to fill out through entire week. Info to track types of butterflies

Day 1 – Pick up Kayaks, Put in at Wertheim NWR, Land in Wilderness

(Alternates – From Captree State Park to West and East Islands: boat rentals by concession. Or pick up at Patchogue V.C. – put kayak on ferry to Watch Hill. Or can pick up rented kayak at Watch Hill. There is an extra fee to leave the kayak/car in secure facility at Smith Point.

- Glacier Bay Sports – go through Wertheim (Carman's River) and land in wilderness
- Rent Kayak in afternoon. By late afternoon/dusk – arrive at Wilderness
- Scout out sustainable spot – already have permission in hand
- Fish and eat if catch any – stay with fishing rights
- 1 participant is a state astronomy expert – he notes how incredibly dark the sky is

Day 2 – Exploring Day of Wilderness

- There is a designated water trail. GPS unit identifies trail. You can download this GPS file from NPS website and other sources
- Solitude - NPS has carrying capacity for Wilderness – limit numbers at each site to preserve experience/solitude. There is a lottery system. Visitors can each experience solitude; they separate and spend some time off exploring alone.
- NPS maintains the Burma Rd. as a trail with limited access spurs to beach.
- Birding - Visitors are filling out their bird list. Also can upload bird sightings into NPS database.
- Visitors pick up trash from Wilderness. Pre-trip info contributes to stewardship ethic.
- By kayak, they explore a protected marine preserve off shore of Wilderness

Day 3 – Kayak to Watch Hill

(Alternate – floating, glass bottom boat/platform; two tents, non-motorized only)

(Alternate – floating hostel/boat house and bedroom with reasonable rents – solar power?)

- Watch Hill – Experience a pristine salt marsh. Ditches have been allowed to disappear. Marsh has returned to natural condition.
- Only camping allowed at Watch Hill – no running water at site
- Watch Hill – Gathering Place; good restaurant with 4-course meal; beers and fun with friends – meet new friends.
- Turn kayak in at Watch Hill

Day 4 – Hike/Walk Trip to Talisman

- Hike to Talisman and stay in
- Talisman – Small, inexpensive, totally sustainable eco-lodge. Water, waste, solar/wind all considered. All new structures are portable. Old hotel building converted to Science Center where visitors can learn about environment
- Special programs at eco-camp/lodge. Focuses on barrier island ecology. College kids and graduates?
- NPS homes and 1960's structures have been removed.
- Food – organic, locally harvested, sustainably produced food.



Day 5 – Hike/Walk to Sailor Haven

- Walk to Sailor Haven
- Sailors Haven - new sustainable, state of the art V.C. and new programs and exhibits. New camping opportunities. Camping is not primitive. Marina could be removed. Educational focus to development.
- New programs – podcasts and cell phone tours – can do on your own
- Body surfing, Geo-caching (geo-caching was not allowed in wilderness)

Day 6 – Appalachian Mountain Club

- Walk into Atlantique - Members of Appalachian Mt. Club. Club gives them kayak go to East and West Islands –
- Stay at AMC cabins and buy food at local store or order special dinner in town for evening.
- Alternative: they could kayak to Patchogue

Day 7 – Beach swimming/Nude Bathing/Lighthouse

- Lighthouse tour, bathing, swimming
- To get home – take bus, ferry, or train

After Trip

- Set up own blog on FI – While on trip you are uploading clips. Everyone can see what you are doing.
- YouTube films
- Reduced rate at eco-lodge (?)
- Children return to Fire Island to visit Science Center

2) School Group Resource-based Experience

Develop a high quality experience for a group of 15 middle school aged students. The program will focus on ensuring that the children have a diversity of enjoyable experiences related to the natural and cultural environment of Fire Island National Seashore. The experience could be for a day, several days or a week. Create an experience that ensures the children return home to rave to their parents about the wonderful experiences they've had and the exceptional qualities of Fire Island National Seashore.

Notes/Findings

Overall

- Current situation – group size is 30 and multiple schools. What is impact? Carrying Capacity?
- Trip must be: enjoyment, adventure, practical, interactive, menu of options, curriculum-based that focuses on learning objectives

Options for Trip Length

- One day trips – morning W. Floyd Estate; afternoon - Beach
- Multiple day – need residential options. Could be “in-depth” option. 3, 4, or 5-day options.

Facilities/ Needs

- Classroom meeting space, shelters, transportation, orientation information.
- No new built facilities except classroom learning area?
- Subsidize cost through weekend use of facilities
- Floating classroom/transportation (Could retrofit ferry to classroom)
- Campground (Need to consider waste removal - Carry in / carry out philosophy)
- Capitalize on VCs – exhibits and information – could double as classroom
- Boardwalks to provide access to resources for access and viewing
- Utilize vacant homes on F.I. → F.I. Institute



Pre-Trip Planning/Partnerships

- Teacher Workshop and Institutes
- Cosponsored with university (accredited)
- Partnerships with other organizations: Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), Suffolk County Organization for Promotion of Education (SCOPE), United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and/or teacher centers, county and state parks. (BOCES is in New York State – aids in marketing and support)
- Floating classroom/transportation (Could retrofit ferry to classroom). Provide in-depth opportunities to learn about the resource and move people to and from the island

Information/Media for Pre-Planning

- Packet of info (teacher's packet)
- Internet/electronics, PDA's, virtual tour and Web cam, interactive programs,
- Student - Web streaming – get them excited and convey basics – visuals and content

Transportation

- Floating classroom (dormitory possibly) – could go from island to mainland. Be docked somewhere.
- Bus, Train, Cars/Vans (Sustainable new forms), kayak

Criteria for Experience

Should be:

- water and land based
- Interactive
- Special – unique to F.I.
- Builds Appreciation and Fosters stewardship
- Learning-based/curricula-based NYS Learning Standards

Activities

- “Scientist for a day” Students collecting data – hands-on directed program
- Seining

Access – Destinations

- East and West Islands, Wilderness, Town Beach, Bellport, Sunken Forest, Floyd Estate (marsh?), Talisman, Water Hill, Lighthouse, V.C., Smith Point

Topics

- Topic focused – encourage multiple experience (holistic)
- Geology (shoreline changes etc.)
- Bay/ocean (Habitat focused),
- Maritime history (lighthouse, life saving)

Residential Options/Accommodations

- Sustainable building/platform (mobile, removable low impact platforms that respond to seasonal changes; uses geothermal/renewable energy source)

Post-trip follow-up

- Renewable resources – samples to take back
- Technology to convey to parents the character of the experience → load it back for parents “hey, this is what I did”

Don't forget...

- Must be incorporated into school curriculum



- Look at Fire Island School and other partners
- Concept of Facility sharing
- Could it be an Institute?
- Tri-angular trip – could be for other user groups too
- Role of mainland and ferries in interpretation/education

3) Family with Children and Seniors – Week Long Summer Vacation

The family includes a husband and wife, two children (boy 10, girl 13) and the children's grandfather and grandmother. Neither of the grandparents speaks English. The grandfather is in a wheelchair, but is highly alert. Both love the beach, fishing and social activities. They are independent and want to spend time exploring the island on their own. The rest of the family enjoys a broad diversity of day and evening activities and likes to stay very busy. They love beach activities but don't like to spend much time merely lying on the beach.

Notes/Findings

Party Composition

- Husband, wife (married 15-20 years), grandparents (no English), boy 10, girl 13 (both need fun)
- Need for Technology (kids use)– Website, iPod, cell phones etc. (entertainment)

Why is Fire Island an Attractive Destination?

- Beach, great family environment
- Options for staying
- Easy to get there – multi-modal, airport (airtrain) (train/bus) luggage
- Good info on website: such as videoclips – what to do (co-partner with other LI attractions)
- variety of activities (by age groups)
- Not stuck here – (ease of movement)
- Proximity to NYC and Long Island and what they offer – Broadway Theater, Shopping, local theatres/rest/shopping, wineries, aquarium

Transportation and Access - How to get there

- Visitors must have confidence with transportation – easy and reliable
- Airport → train – bus – ferry: Connections between modes must be made easier.
- Kiosks with street maps (in communities, gateways)
- Stop at Mastic Beach

Lateral Transportation

- fun/reliable/affordable
- boat
- trail (bikes/wheelchairs)/bike rental
- Segway – sand wheels
- bike taxi
- 4-wheel drive beach taxi
- beach limo (water)
- pedal boats
- scheduled water taxi
- consider land use and space limitations. Preference is for no vehicles

Activities by Age Group/Interest

- Boy (10) - kites, beach combing, sand, fishing, surfing (body), boogie boards
- Girl (13) - some, ^, day trip to shop, clambake, teen party
- Grandparents – sailing lessons, (no English) – beach, fishing, touring communities, mobile chair, sailboat



- Dad – boys? fishing, golf, drinking
- Mom – beach reading, shopping, fishing, golf
- Together – dining, group trip (lighthouse, sunken forest) kayaking trip, nature travel

Activities (General)

- kite workshop/contest
- photography canoeing/kayaks/bike rentals
- Fun events – campfire, clambakes, sandcastle contest
- Rainy day – city trip or William Floyd Estate

Eco-Camp (or Eco-Resort)

- safari camp open seasonally (April – November)
- high season (May 15 – Oct. 15)
- Look at “NEED Program”
- off-season (groups, lectures) (Oct. 15 – Nov) (Apr. – May 15)
- cabins for families, 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, suites, dormitories
- community space
- hybrid camping/rental
- Could be at Talisman Beach

Itinerary

- Could offer cruise ship type itinerary (Concessioners?). Creating packages.
- Work with transportation partners

Needs

- Better Web site (multi-lingual, videos)
- RFEI (Request for Expression of Interest)
- eco-friendly requirements for development
- Transportation network w/partners (easy all access, reliability, affordability)
- plan, define markets (European markets?)

Return Visits/Take-Away Message

- Family memories, good word of mouth, multiple returns, family reunion
- Fire Island National Seashore offers a diverse experience – “Fire Island is important!”

4) Young Couple Visiting William Floyd Estate and Fire Island

One member of the couple is an avid historian who is particularly interested in William Floyd, his family and slavery in the northern states. They also plan to rent their kayaks and bikes to experience the bay and a variety of other areas on Fire Island. They would like to camp and also stay in a couple of different communities. They plan to spend a week vacationing within Fire Island National Seashore.

Notes/Findings

Main Ideas

- Improve lateral transport (combination of bike, water taxi, designated kayak/canoe trails)
- Improve signage to/from William Floyd Estate so easy to navigate
- Secondary route to William Floyd Estate also signed (road name?)
- WFE – Make it more visitor friendly (restrooms, food, put-in sites etc.) while preserving historic and natural resource values. Carefully consider resource values in development.
- WFE – New model. May be run by a partnership, similar to Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society
- Kayak, canoe, bike rentals within and outside the park at various locations (can pick up one place and turn in somewhere else)



- Bike path where makes sense (some compromise must be struck; many community members may object, but others would enjoy; and visitor experience would be improved) Perhaps allow cycling mid-week?
- Better working relationships between private and public sector and communities must occur.
- Website must be very visitor friendly – lots of information. Can purchase package deals there (i.e. passes for wilderness, kayak rentals, coupons for accommodations, coupons for meals in communities etc. – can design own itinerary, but website will have many good suggestions for building it). Passes must convey stewardship and safety messages in advance. Also more educational info in advance so you know what you are experiencing

Composition of Party

- Young couple, 30-35. One is interested in history but other is less so.
- Kayaking, biking-Nature/Recreation. Want to See different parts of Fire Island-community etc.

Kayaks/Making Kayaks Work

- Kayakers interested in short trips is quickly growing community in area, but long-distance kayakers not common.
- Ideal kayak window is short (mid-May to early June – cold water and mosquitoes)
- Kayak “mother ships.” You can load Kayaks onto boats for transport
- Must be designated put-ins: Smith Point, Wertheim, Watch Hill, Old Inlet, etc.
- Must be a place to park car-for overnight kayak/canoe. Increase parking at Smith Point?. Trade-county land for NPS land? Partner with County Park to Park overnight?

Cross-Pollination/Info

- More information at associated sites (WFE will distribute info on Manor of St. George etc.). Increased cooperation among agencies. (Meta-museum that focuses on South Shore?)
- Long Island Visitor and Convention Bureau – their website-network with airlines, promote WFE also all
- Permits-online for Wilderness camping, also to foster better information.

Additional Opportunities for Interpretation, Accommodation, Transportation

- Bay Houses/shacks on (East or West) Fire Island. Built by baymen. Acquire as they become available. Huge educational opportunity and interesting form of overnight accommodations
- AMC at Atlantique – partner with AMC
- Interpret hunting history – goes along with kayaking through marshes and by sandy islands. (decoys. Ridge Island/Pelican Island hunting history)
- More economical lateral transportation.
- Shuttle to Smith Point-from L.I.R.R.

William Floyd Estate

- Now - lacking facilities at WFE to handle visitors
- Eat at WFE: snacks, lunch (see simplified diagram of drawing.)
- Corduroy Road and others – better interpreted/signed
- Trails are better opened up for public
- Put-in sites: Corduroy Road? Definitely on stream to east of core. Allow/encourage people to contact the water at WFE
- New model for administration - could pay for itself - Joint partnership with foundation/non profit (like Lighthouse)
- Contact station/parking -small Visitor Center, away from resource area on parking (Educational Center). Major views to/from house are carefully considered in siting/development

Itinerary

- Multi-day itinerary drawn on trace paper map (see simplified diagram.)



- **Day 1** – at W.F.E. New orientation center (self supporting); new water access; longer hours; night spent camping at Smith Point
- **Day 2** – canoe/kayak trip. Explore bayside habitats off Wilderness area. Could begin at Wertheim NWR or at Smith Point. Could land at Old Inlet. Designated water/interpretive trail and designated put-ins/secure places to park car and/or kayak at these places. Camp in Wilderness.
- **Days 3-4** – Kayak to Watch Hill. Showers; educational programs; relaxation; spend time on beach. Spend 2 nights camping at Watch Hill (not primitive, like in wilderness)
- **Day 5** – Kayak to Sailors Haven. Turn in canoe/kayak and rent bike. Bike along designated bike trail to Atlantique. Spend nights 5 and 6 in communities (Appalachian Mtn. Club cabin or hotels).
- **Day 6** – Bike to Lighthouse. Turn in bike. Climb the Lighthouse. Take lateral transportation (Water Ferry?) back to Smith Point and pick up car.

Simplified Diagrams from Group 4

Diagram – Fire Island National Seashore Itinerary

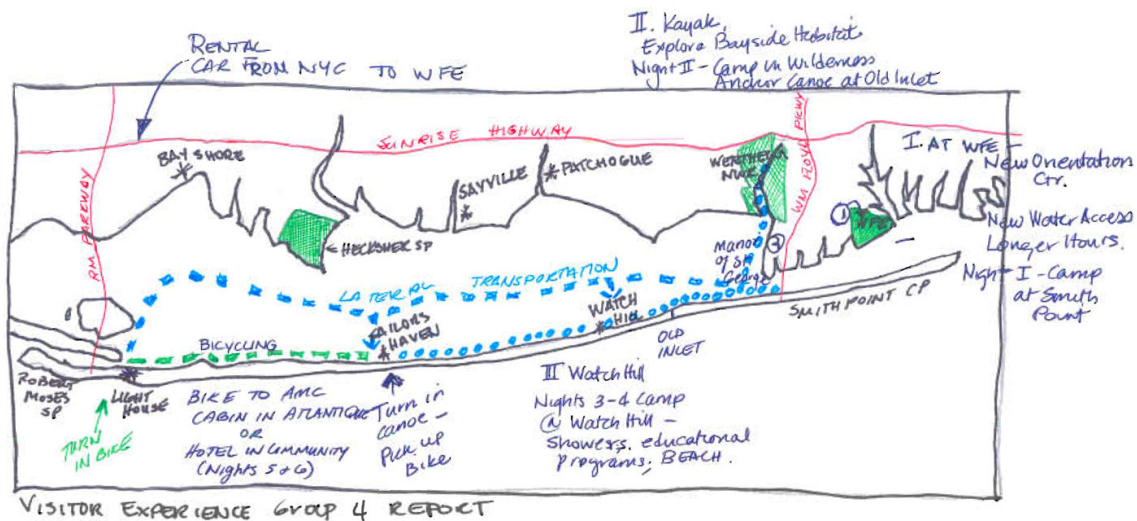
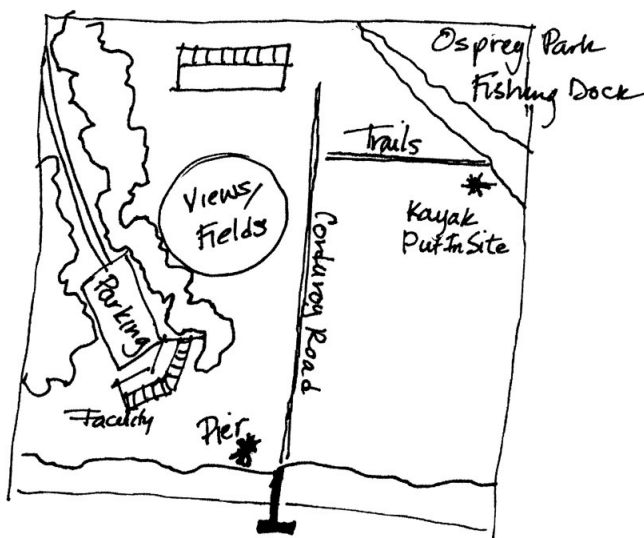


Diagram – William Floyd Estate





5) Local Motor Boat Vacationers

A family from Long Island owns a motorized boat and plans to stay in it while visiting Fire Island. The group includes a couple with a teenager and elementary school child. They want to have a broad range of experiences that please all members of the family. Some of the family's many interests include sunbathing, beer drinking and socializing, experiencing nature in an un-crowded environment, fishing, and discovering the wonders of the bay and the island.

Notes/Findings

Planning/Pre visit

- Respect multiple uses
- Able to acquire information on:
 - Locations: Marinas/Moorings; close to developments/remote
 - Amenities: Water/Electric; food/supplies, Ice, beverages, Onsite bakery, rest rooms/shower (warm), pest-free (mosquito, rats) mobile pump out?
 - Destinations - Places to relax, go to the beach, fish, hike, walk, beach comb, watch the sunset, catch a sunrise
 - Social activities: horseshoe, bocce ball, volley ball, campfire program, surfing, canoeing, and kayaking.
 - Other Activities: Restaurants/bar, snack bar, cutting-edge educational program and things to do
 - Availability: Reservation, slip size, mid-week discount Rates: Reasonable

Wi Fi or latest technology for communications

Marinas

- Big Question: Is National Park Service interested in getting involved with or giving their consent to the development of more marinas?
- Limit marina slips? May not be feasible to meet all of the demand for boat ships (60-70 boats moored at Barrett Beach already?)
- What is a sustainable marina? Need to challenge the idea of what is a marina? e.g.; Sailors Haven is causing geological/erosion problems
- Need to look more at moorings...need to consider different concepts for marinas
- Launch services to boats moored off shore.
- Floating docks, Vs., hard structure.
- Irony-Lots of discussion about expanding certain needs with commercial services which is contrary to our legislation. In considering commercial solutions, don't wreck the resources, use the regional resources. Improve what Long Island has to offer.
- Need to consider perspective of the public. Balance could be addressed in expanding operation into shoulder season
- Take advantage of partnering with others to take advantage other resources

Interpretation/Education

- Docking slip information/rules
- Visitor Center with rotating exhibits (Cutting edge and adequately staffed)
- Wayside Exhibits
- Menus/placemats in restaurants
- More hands on interpretive programs (some high tech)

6) Year-round Resident with Weekend Bike Enthusiasts

A couple with grown children has been living year round on Fire Island for the last ten years. They especially enjoy the natural and small town character of the island and are highly involved in their community and with the National Park Service. Please define a representative day in their life. You can choose any season.

Notes/Findings

- Bicycle and pedestrian access, raises local concerns.
- From Captree to Lighthouse is about 6 miles. Could be first leg in a longer network. LIRR must carry bikes to near Captree. Low speed, relaxing, flat biking experience: not an “extreme adventure.” (See simplified diagram.)
- It would allow access to Robert Moses, Lighthouse, and Captree (heavily used areas). Would require partnerships with state and county.
- Pedestrian/bicycle pathway along the bay, a lovely thought but a huge challenge. Original plan considered a bike path but never came to fruition from concern that a bike path would become a road. Paved bike trail proposed in plan created an uproar because it was reminiscent of Robert Moses. What would prevent communities from taking same position against a bikeway?
- Bike path came up during negotiated rule making for vehicle use.
- National Park Service is still working on new regulation that implements neg/ rule making, Bike path was among resolutions adopted, from Lighthouse to Sailors Haven.
- Robert Moses State Park does not currently allow bikes on their roads that may be changing.
- Year-round residents, visitors would enjoy bike bath.
- Rent bikes on Fire Island – enough over there already?

- Ride bikes from Long Island
- Cantilever bike trail on Robert Moses Bridge?

- Pamphlets, maps, facilities and services

- Communities – segmented, separated experience (good or bad?)
- Separated bike/pedestrian paths
- Business opportunities

A hand-drawn map of the Smith Point area. The map shows a coastline with several locations marked. At the top, from left to right, are 'RR', 'RR BAYSHORE', 'RR JAVILLE', 'RR PATCHOGUE', 'WERTHEIM', and 'RR WFE'. Below these, 'HECKSHERE' is marked with an arrow pointing to a green hatched area. Further down, 'P.O. WOOD' and 'SAILORS HAVEN' are marked. To the right, 'WATCH HILL' and 'WILDERNESS' are marked. At the bottom right is 'SMITH POINT CP'. On the left side, 'ROBERT MOSES SP' is marked. Various trails are indicated: 'Bike + Pedestrian' (green arrow), 'Pedestrian' (green arrow), and 'WILD' (green arrow). Other labels include 'INFO + SVCS' (green text), 'Lateral Ferry' (green text), and 'Wife' (green text). There are also some orange dots and a green hatched area near Wertheim.

From Visitor Experience / Group 6 Notes



Whole Group Discussion

Each small group reported their findings to the other workshop participants and a group discussion followed. Below are a few of the additional points raised during this discussion, which may be of use when developing the alternatives.

- Migratory path of birds can be witnessed on Fire Island, for instance at the lighthouse
- Also, migration of monarch butterflies is a thing to behold. Path can be observed over Sunken Forest, Wilderness.
- Fire Island Inlet provides great snorkeling – best on the island?
- Floating classroom is an interesting idea. Low-impact and traveling. Integrate with summer camp experience
- Education Facility – Consider the building at the Carrington property or old wireless building (see old GMP)
- Accommodations – park housing at Watch Hill could be available for overnight experience off season
- Overnight Programming – Allow it to expand beyond Sunken Forest. (Need program at hotel and Sailors Haven.)
- Consider Estuary Steward-on Hudson River as a model for educational partnership/program. Originally developed by BOCES- Especially engineered for education and use
- Brookhaven Open space stewardship program-FIIS is part of this program but has not been adopted by a school
- Classroom Space – consider Dune Station at Watch Hill
- Thirty is a good school group size. Common bus/train group size.
- Transporting school children has become very expensive. One bus can cost up to \$800/day.
- Need to have a very worthwhile program, otherwise may not be perceived as being worth the money.
- Dormitory setup is a good idea for school children – ideal scenario.
- Problem on Fire Island: Do not have enough rooms to accommodate overnight visitors.
- People are turning their houses into hotels.
- Accommodations-use mainland hotels as like between LIRR and hotel van services
- Links between all modes of transportation very important
- LIRR can play expanded role in educating public regarding Fire Island and marketing it.
- At WFE-many need something like the FI light Preservation Society.
- Economics of a lateral ferry between FI lighthouse and Smith Point. Could be very expensive and would take a long time. Not feasible?
- Idea behind the “package deal:” making all facets of the experience easily accessible online.

V. The Best Ideas about Visitor Experience and Transportation

Before wrapping up the workshop organizers wished to spend a bit of time recapping the best ideas that were generated during the workshop. In a “round robin” fashion, participants answered the question:

If you could implement only one of the ideas generated today, which one would it be and why?

- Floating School
- Find way to raise dollars for the Seashore
- Sailors Haven and Watch Hill – Series of Photography Blinds
- William Floyd Estate developed and better utilized as an educational resource
- Create sustainable marinas for public use
- Build partnerships (public/private, USFWS, Communities, State Parks, Suffolk County)



- Redevelop Talisman in a green way. Create a “green” environmental education center at Talisman
- Close Watch Hill campground and move it to Barrett Beach
- Provide overnight environmental education programs
- Integrated educational program for Fire Island in the Long Island school curriculum
- Create upscale camping (e.g. platforms; yurts) at Sailors Haven
- Reduce global warming so Fire Island survives
- Ensure Fire Island is in the same good shape as today, but with less driving
- Create Fire Island Institute that focuses on the study Barrier Island dynamics
- Market Fire Island as a more public destination – not just for property owners
- Redevelop the Smith Point interface with the Wilderness Area – create a nice entry after you cross the bridge
- Improve the website so people really know what they can and can’t do at Fire Island
- Make the website more user-friendly. More links to businesses and other partners. Broader information
- Create a Visitor Center on the mainland with emphasis on orientation, interpretation and education.



Appendix I. List of Participants

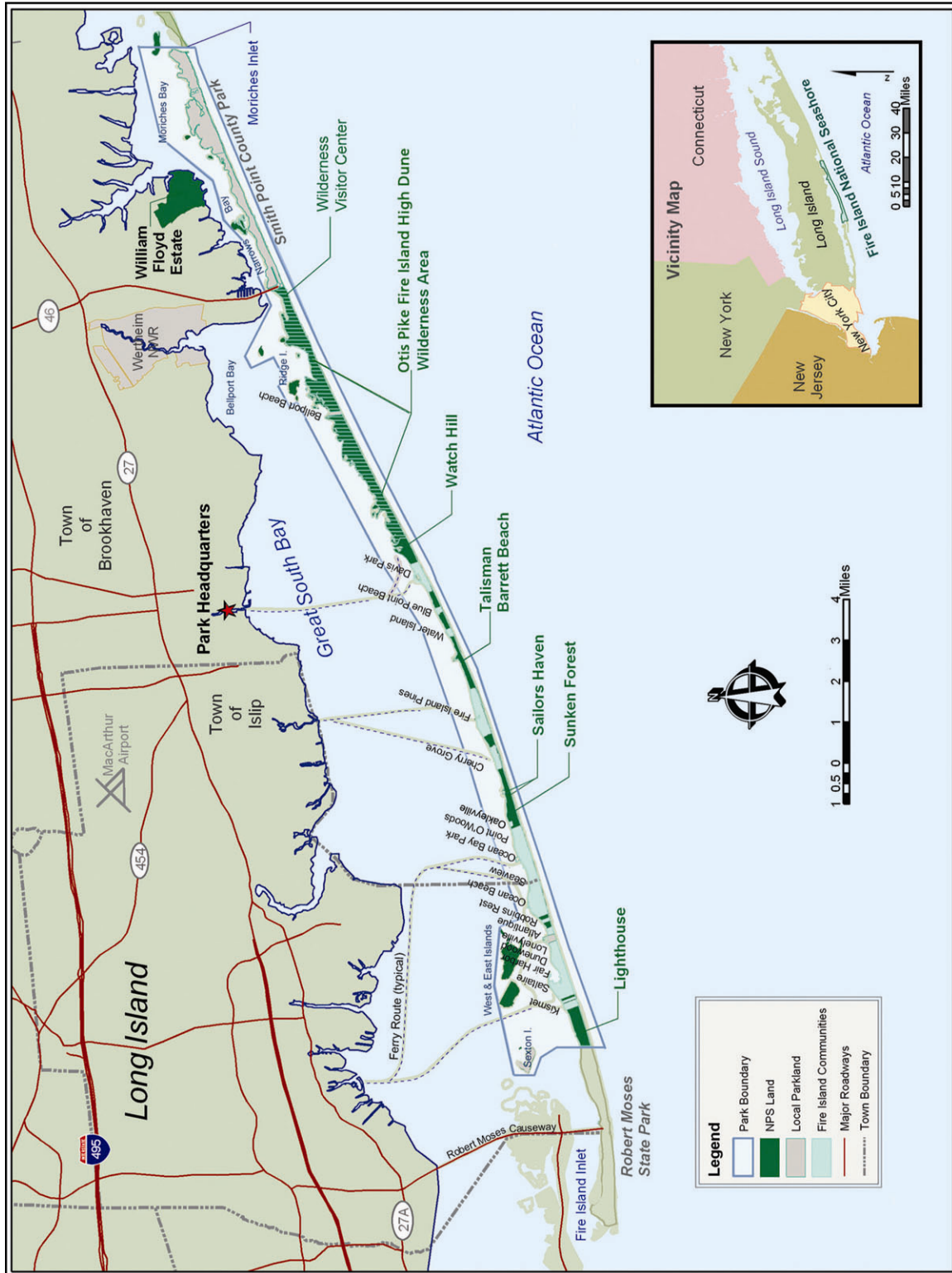
Diane Abell Park Planner/ Landscape Architect	Fire Island NS
Anita Barberis Coordinator	Appalachian Mountain Clum
Karl Beard NYS Director	NPS/ RTCA
Pam Boyle President	Friends of Watch Hill
Ellen Carlson Project Manager	NPS/ Northeast Region
Steve Czarniecki Cultural Resource Management Specialist	Fire Island NS
Mike Eagan Lauren Kristy	South Bay Paddle Wheel Cruises
Tom Gibney Associate	Shapins Belt Collins
Dave Griesse Administrator	Fire Island Lighthouse
Scott Hirsch Proprietor	Island Mermaid
Luke Kaufman Boat Operator/ Concessioner	Fire Island Ferries
Bob LaRosa Vice President	Fire Island Lighthouse
Diane Larsen Director, Leisure Travel	Long Island Railroad
Robin Lepore Coastal Mgmt Specialist	NPS / Northeast Region
Jay Lippert Chief Ranger	Fire Island NS
Janet Clark Manager, Information Services	Long Island Convention & Visitor Bureau
Warren McDowell Publisher	Fire Island Tide
Sean McGuinness Deputy Superintendent	Fire Island NS
Ann Moss Principal	Shapins Belt Collins
Elizabeth O'Connor Owner/ Manager	Sea Kayaking Skills & Adventures
Derek Rogers Manager	Suffolk County Parks
Patti Reilly Education Specialist	NPS/ Northeast Region
Michael Reynolds Superintendent	Fire Island NS
Irene Rosen Park Interpreter	Fire Island NS
Douglas Schmid Outdoor/ Environmental Educator	Western Suffolk County BOCES
Matthew Sherman Boat Operator/ Concessioner	Davis Park Ferry Company
Ken Stein Boat Operator/ Concessioner	Sayville Ferry Service
Peggy Unger Enrichment Excursions	Western Suffolk County BOCES



Paula Valentine Public Information Specialist	Fire Island NS
Eric Von Kuersteiner CEO	Pines Commercial Properties
Joe Zysman President	Fire Island Wilderness Committee



Appendix II. Park Map



Map originally published in *Fire Island National Seashore Business Plan*, FY 2004, © 2005, NPS