



The mission of the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission is to evaluate issues, make recommendations, and provide support to the City of Norwalk in preserving and enhancing the use, vitality, and quality of life associated with the Norwalk Harbor and Long Island Sound.



City of Norwalk, Connecticut

Summer 2016



WALK Bridge Project and the Norwalk Harbor Management Plan

By Geoff Steadman, NHMC Planning Consultant

Most everyone in Norwalk has heard or read recently about the Walk Bridge. Built in 1896 and now included in the National Register of Historic Places, the 562-foot long railroad bridge across the Norwalk River is owned by the State of Connecticut and operated by the Metro-North Railroad. It's not the first railroad bridge across the river in this location. The first bridge, opened in 1848 when the New York & New Haven railroad was completed through Norwalk, was the scene of the worst accident in the young history of railroading to that date. On the morning of May 6, 1853, the eastbound train hurtled through the open draw into the river. At least 46 people died.

The Walk Bridge is one of many moveable bridges across navigable waterways on the Northeast Corridor rail line. These bridges open to allow the passage of vessels. The three basic types of moveable bridges are the "swing," "vertical lift," and "bascule" types.

The Walk Bridge is a swing bridge. A series of orchestrated and complicated maneuvers is required to swing open the bridge's 199-foot middle span to allow large boats and barges to pass safely up- and down-river. To open, the span is turned 90 degrees on its central pier to a position parallel to the river. But sometimes the span doesn't close properly, causing significant disruption of rail traffic. This obviously can be a big problem since 200 trains with 125,000 passengers pass over the bridge each day.

In 2014, after two malfunctions required emergency repairs, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT) announced it's going to replace the bridge. The Walk Bridge Project is to be part of a 30-year, \$100+ billion transportation vision for the State of Connecticut. CT DOT now says the project may start in 2018, take four to five years to complete, and cost upwards of \$700 million. It's expected that much of this cost will be borne by the Federal Government; the rest by the State of Connecticut.

The Walk Bridge project will be the largest infrastructure project in Norwalk since the Connecticut Thruway was built in the 1950s. It will be an extremely difficult project due to the limited space in which to work. The railroad tracks on the west approach to the bridge, for example, are only about seven feet away from the edge of the Maritime Aquarium building. On the east side, the state must take ownership of privately owned properties to gain construction access to the bridge. Impacts on Norwalk Harbor, South Norwalk, and East Norwalk will be substantial and unavoidable for the duration of the work. CT DOT is required by state law to prepare an Environmental Impact Evaluation for public review, and says that information on the scope of the impacts will not be available until the project design is 60% complete, a milestone expected sometime in 2017.

The Norwalk Harbor Management Commission (NHMC) has a major interest and responsibility with regard to the Walk Bridge Project. As authorized by the Norwalk Code of Ordinances and Connecticut General Statutes, the NHMC is responsible for reviewing all proposals affecting Norwalk Harbor and responding with recommendations to the appropriate regulatory agencies. This review is for the purpose of determining a proposed project's consistency with the Norwalk Harbor Management Plan approved and adopted by the State of Connecticut and Norwalk Common Council, respectively.

The Harbor Management Plan contains a number of provisions relevant to the Walk Bridge Project. For example, the Plan's policies and recommendations call for protecting environmental quality, water-dependent uses, public access to the harbor, and the quality of life in areas near the harbor. While CT DOT doesn't need city permits to replace the bridge, coastal permits from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are necessary. All applicants for DEEP permits are required to submit their project plans to the NHMC for review. CT DOT is no exception. The Connecticut General Statutes specify that recommendations of the NHMC pursuant to the Plan are binding on the regulatory decisions of state officials.

At the outset of the Walk Bridge Project, the NHMC advised CT DOT that its design and construction plans must, to the maximum extent feasible, avoid significant adverse impacts on: 1) public navigation in Norwalk Harbor; 2) the viability of existing water-dependent businesses and activities in the vicinity and upstream of the existing bridge; and 3) environmental quality, including water quality, in the harbor.

The NHMC recognizes the vital importance of the Walk Bridge to transportation on the Northeast Corridor. However, while CT DOT's job is to rebuild the bridge, the NHMC's responsibility is to the people and businesses of Norwalk, and its job is to protect the needs and interests of the city concerning Norwalk Harbor. Interested persons can contact the NHMC at any time with questions and concerns about the project and its effect on the harbor. The NHMC meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month in City Hall at 7:30 p.m. The public is always invited.

Information on the Walk Bridge project is provided on CT DOT's project website at www.walkbridge.com.

Dredging, Pollution, and the Yankee Doodle Bridge

By John Thomas Pinto, Ph.D.
Norwalk Harbor Management Commission

Dredging of the navigation channels in Norwalk Harbor is indispensable to the recreational, commercial, and socioeconomic development of Norwalk. In fact, dredging adds substantially to the economic value of all Connecticut ports and harbors. In the three major ports of Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London, the Connecticut Port Authority seeks dredging to expand commercial use and provide new transportation facilities. As for the small and mid-sized harbors such as Norwalk, dredging supports water-based tourism, many water-dependent businesses, public access to Long Island Sound, and may even provide "substrate" material for restoring wetlands and nourishing beaches.

Despite the economic importance of dredging activities in Connecticut, major limitations involve the impacts it may have on ecosystems and biological habitats, particularly in areas where dredged sediments are contaminated. An aerial view of the Connecticut shoreline from Greenwich to Stonington reveals that the state's harbors are located on an urban and in some places industrial coastline supported by one of the most heavily trafficked highways in the nation-- Interstate 95 (I-95). Many I-95 bridges pass over coastal waterways that flow into Long Island Sound. Numerous studies conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) clearly show that proximity of waterways to major highways and exposure to pollutants generated by motor vehicles are leading contributors to marine sediment contamination.

The EPA cites that the major waterway and sediment contaminants are vehicular exhaust constituents (volatile organic compounds and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons aka PAHs) and particulate matter (ultrafine, aerodynamic particles with diameters less than 100 nanometers). For comparison of particle size, bacterial cells are typically 500–5000 nanometers in length. In addition to contributing to environmental pollution, these agents have been implicated in causing major health problems such as cancer and heart disease. However, state agencies such as the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) claim that establishing causality and assessing accurate exposure levels within the I-95 highway corridor requires additional scientific study.

Although environmental scientists have made important contributions to understanding pollutant dynamics near busy highways, the DOT maintains that its first priority is rapid removal of stormwater from its bridges and roadways. This process most often avoids the use of stormwater control systems and results in direct discharge of roadway effluent into harbors and waterways. The DOT has acknowledged to the NHMC that highway traffic volume and roadway drainage may contribute to waterway pollution but, they say, I-95 is not the only culprit and that local roadways also contribute to the problem.

While the debate continues as to who are the prime suspects and what is the extent of the pollution caused by roadway runoff, direct discharge into harbors continues.

An indisputable fact is that Norwalk Harbor is the unfortunate recipient of pollution from the estimated 150,000 vehicles that



travel daily over the I-95 Yankee Doodle Bridge combined with the average daily traffic volume of 5,000 to 20,000 cars over local roads near the bridge. While the DEEP continues to claim that dredged material from Norwalk Harbor near the bridge is too contaminated for open water disposal in Long Island Sound, the DOT alleges the contamination is not caused by runoff from the bridge.

By the way, for all math aficionados, every inch of rain that falls on a one-mile stretch of a four-lane highway (an impervious surface 76 ft wide) produces 250,148 gallons of stormwater runoff. According to the EPA, the yearly average emission of total hydrocarbons per car or truck ranges from 28 – 34 lbs. When we consider that more than 50 million vehicles travel over the Yankee Doodle Bridge each year, the potential hydrocarbon pollution entering Norwalk Harbor in stormwater runoff through the bridge drains seems almost astronomical.

In 2007, the Mayor of Norwalk and members of the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission (NHMC) met with DOT officials to discuss the bridge's impact on water quality in Norwalk Harbor and specifically the approximately 90 drains carrying stormwater from the bridge deck directly into the harbor. The meeting followed completion of the dredging project by the Army Corps of Engineers to maintain proper depth of the harbor's federal navigation channel which passes under the bridge. Thirty one thousand cubic yards of sediment centered directly under the bridge were found to contain excessive amounts of PAHs from oil, grease, and automobile and truck emissions.

At that time, DOT officials informed the NHMC that any measures to improve stormwater management would be considered at such time as the bridge is replaced or rehabilitated. Now that rehabilitation of the Yankee Doodle Bridge is underway, the NHMC looks forward to what measures the DOT will take to prevent direct stormwater discharge into Norwalk Harbor and what guidance and authority the DEEP will assert to assist in these matters. Use of stormwater control systems over the Yankee Doodle Bridge would not only benefit Norwalk Harbor, but would be applicable to other highway bridges crossing Connecticut's coastal waterways.

Further Information and Sources

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National Safe Boating

May 21 through May 27, 2016

By Michael Griffin, Norwalk Harbor Master

In 1949 Safe Boating Week first began under a proclamation called Auxiliary Day, through the efforts of a Coast Guard Auxillarist Steve Sadowski from Massachusetts. Three years later it led to what we now know as Coast Guard Vessel Safety Check Weekend, and later it changed to Safe Boating Week in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. In 1956 the idea received a great deal of national attention from a Hawaiian entertainer on the TV show "Hawaii Five-0." After his focus, it was next embraced by the leadership of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and later observed as their Safe Boating Week during June 30 to July 6, 1957.

Interest and focus on Boating Safety continued to grow quickly with the Federal Safe Boating Act of 1958, The Outboard Club of America, Girl and Boy Scouts of America, American Red Cross, and American Yachtsmen Association. The National Association of Marine Dealers soon joined and funded the grass roots effort.

In 1964 the Coast Guard established a Boating Safety Division that later became the foundation for the National Boating Safety Education Committee that quickly signed onto the National Safe Boating Week law.

The Federal Safe Boating Act of 1971 led to funding for state boating safety programs and ultimately a formal change in 1972 into what we now know as the National Safe Boating Committee (NSBC) incorporated in Washington DC, now a year-round commitment. In 1976 the Bicentennial Tall Ships, OPSAIL Celebrations gave the NSBC an even greater level of public awareness through radio and television.

Over the following years with greater public focus, and input from many boating organizations and safety committees both public and private it was decided that Boating Safety Week, as we now know it, will be designated by the U.S. Coast Guard to take place each year during the first full week prior to Memorial day Weekend.

In the year 2000, Canada adjusted their Water Safety Summit to coincide with our U.S. efforts elevating our Coast Guard



Safe Boating campaign to the North American Campaign with activities on both sides of the border now sharing information and safety statistics in both Washington, DC and Ottawa, Canada. In 2003, the information gathered highlighted that in 2001 80% of those who died in man-overboard situations, vessel accidents, and the capsizing of wind or man powered vessels were not wearing life jackets.

"WEAR IT" was soon the national slogan supporting mandatory wearing of life jackets with a great focus on children through the introduction of cartoon characters, Coastie and Sidekicks. Most states, including Connecticut, now have Safe Boating Laws dictating that children of various ages are required to wear life jackets any time they are over the water.

During this past 2016 Safe Boating Safety Week in Norwalk, a higher level of focus was obtained regarding public safety through the donation of a self-inflating life Jacket to each staff member at the David S. Dunavan Boating Center in Veterans Memorial Park. Harbor Commissioner William (Bill) Gardella, along with his son Bill Gardella Jr., presented a life jacket to each of the Center's staff members to wear while on duty on the docks assisting boaters with their tie ups. The mission? Not only for their personal safety but also as a reminder to boaters of all ages that life jackets do save lives, but only if they are worn.

To Bill Sr. and Bill Jr. Our most sincere THANK YOU
Please have a Safe Boating Season
God Bless You, God Bless your family and God Bless America



(Top L to R) Staff Jim Thompson, Harbor Master Mike Griffin, Staff Joe Rotondo, Staff Neil Hershawitz, Staff Dan Lyons (Lower L to R) NHMC member Tony Aitoro, Vice President Rex Marine Center, Bill Gardella Jr. , Bill Gardella Senior President Rex Marine Center, Recreation and Parks Director Mike Mocciae , NHMC members Dennis Santella and Joseph Perella



POLLUTION SOLUTION

What is stormwater pollution?

Stormwater pollution is caused when rain flows over the ground, rooftops, lawns, driveways, and streets, and carries contaminants into storm drains. These contaminants include detergents from car washing, motor oil, lawn fertilizers, grass clippings, pet waste, and other materials that are in yards or on paved surfaces.

How does this affect our local waters?

The contaminants carried by the stormwater runoff get washed into storm drains, which lead directly into our rivers, the Norwalk Harbor, and Long Island Sound. This pollution can be harmful to birds, fish, and other aquatic life. It can create health hazards for swimming. It can also threaten the health and safety of our recreational and commercial fishing and shellfishing.

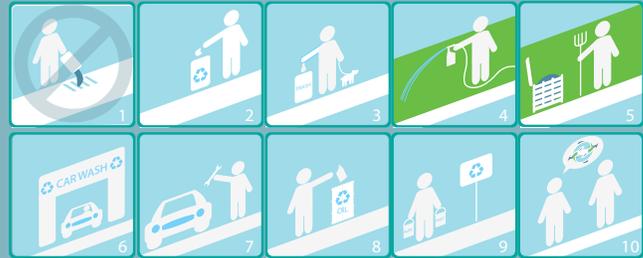
Does this happen just near the shoreline?

This is not just a problem by the shoreline. All of the storm drains in Norwalk are connected through an underground network, and they eventually lead into our rivers, Norwalk Harbor, and Long Island Sound.

Help keep our water clean.

All of Norwalk's storm drains lead directly into our rivers, Norwalk Harbor, and Long Island Sound. When it rains, the stormwater carries contaminants from rooftops, lawns, driveways, and streets into the storm drains, and then into our local waters. So, things like fertilizers, pesticides, chemicals, motor oil, detergents, and pet waste get washed into the rivers, harbor and sound, untreated. Help us keep our local waters clean by preventing stormwater pollution.

10 things you can do to keep our water clean:



1. Never dump anything down a storm drain
2. Place litter in trash receptacles
3. Dispose of pet waste in trash receptacles or flush in a toilet
4. Limit use of fertilizers and pesticides, and don't use before heavy rain
5. Compost or mulch yard waste
6. Use a commercial car wash that treats or recycles its wastewater
7. Check your vehicle for leaks and repair them
8. Recycle motor oil and other vehicle fluids
9. Dispose of paints and hazardous waste properly
10. Tell a friend how to prevent stormwater pollution

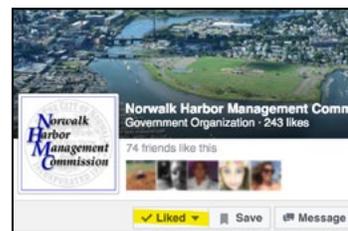


Be a part of the Pollution Solution.
Help keep our water clean.

For more info, visit www.norwalkct.org



Norwalk Harbor Management Commission



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TBD Mayor's Water Quality
Mike Griffin Waterfront Facilities Advisory
Tony Mobilia Bridge Committee

The Commission meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30PM in P & Z Conference Room located in Norwalk City Hall.

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To contact the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission, call 203.854.7780 or visit us at: www.norwalkct.org

For state information: www.ctharbormanagement.org

