



THE CLIFF WALK
A SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

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CONTENTS

	PREFACE
1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
1	Study Purpose
1	Resource Significance
2	Current Status
4	Management Alternatives
5	THE CLIFF WALK
5	Introduction
5	Resource Description
8	Background of Study
8	Study Purpose
9	Development of Management Alternatives
10	RESOURCE EVALUATION
10	Cultural Resources
16	Natural Resources
18	Recreational and Scenic Resources
19	SUITABILITY/FEASIBILITY
19	Erosion
23	Resource Protection Efforts
23	Recent Trends
25	Public Concerns
27	MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES
28	Alternative I: Cliff Walk
30	Alternative II: The Cliff Walk & The Mansions
33	Alternative III: Newport's Gilded Age
37	FINAL WORD: PARTNERSHIPS
38	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



PREFACE

This report constitutes an evaluation of the significance of the Cliff Walk in Newport, Rhode Island, and its eligibility, feasibility, and suitability for inclusion in the National Park System and a discussion of management alternatives for its permanent protection.

It was prepared at the request of Congress under the direction of the National Park Service's North Atlantic Region, Office of Planning and Design. Local, state, and other federal agencies were also involved in the study.

The report is intended to provide:

- Assessment of the Cliff Walk's natural, cultural and recreational resources;
- Analysis of the current conditions affecting the status of the walk; and
- A series of management options, including cost estimates for the work required.

The resource evaluations included formal research into the origins and historical development of the Cliff Walk, geological appraisal of the Cliff Walk's significance as a National Natural Landmark, and a broad survey of Cliff Walk visitors.

The study, initiated in April 1988, represents the combined efforts of a team of resource experts in the fields of landscape architecture, recreation planning, engineering, soil conservation, coastal geology and American History. Cooperating agencies involved in the study included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USDA Soil Conservation Service, University of Rhode Island Department of Geology, Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Council, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, and the City of Newport Cliff Walk Commission and Department of Planning and Development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study Purpose

Management and protection requirements for Newport's famous Cliff Walk clearly exceed the resources available to the City. Despite hazardous conditions and increasing maintenance needs, the Cliff Walk remains among Rhode Island's most popular destinations. This study provides an evaluation of the Cliff Walk's national significance, an analysis of its suitability and feasibility for inclusion in the National Park System, and a discussion of a range of options for its management and protection.

Resource Significance

Cultural

The primary cultural significance of the Cliff Walk is derived from its proximity and access to the architectural heritage of Newport's Gilded Age which serves as the landward backdrop for this scenic coastal trail. The Cliff Walk is incorporated in the Bellevue Avenue Historic District National Historic Landmark. The Cliff Walk was included in the National Historic Landmark designation by virtue of its proximity to the historic structures which comprise this district.

Natural

The Cliff Walk's geological resources have been formally evaluated and recommended for designation as a National Natural Landmark. Again, the significance of geological formations on the Cliff Walk draws upon the cultural context of the mansions, as well as the public access provided by the Cliff Walk. "The major advantage of the Cliff Walk is that it shows so much geological variety in a relatively short distance and in such a scenic and accessible setting." (Professor J. Allan Cain Cliff Walk National Landmark Evaluation).

Recreational

With an annual visitation rate estimated at 150,000, the Cliff Walk is one of the most popular destinations in Rhode Island. The 1987 User Profile indicates that there is great demand for the resource by Newporters and that it is a primary attraction to the City for tourists. As a unit of the National Recreation Trail System, the Cliff Walk shares the collective significance of the more than seven hundred recreational trails which comprise this nationwide system.

Summary

The Cliff Walk is a nationally significant resource when viewed in any but the narrowest perspective. Its management and protection must be built on recognition of the collective value of its natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources.

Current Status

Physical

The Cliff Walk is facing serious threats to its existence which need to be addressed to preserve and protect the qualities of this resource. Since 1981, \$867,000 has gone into stabilization projects, yet washout sections remain and many other trail segments lie precariously close to falling into the sea.

A fatality on the cliffs in 1987 and a near fatality in 1988 underline the urgency of stabilizing the treadway. The most recent accident involved a twelve year old girl who survived a forty-foot fall from the Cliff Walk. The fall occurred in an area where vegetation masks severe undermining of the cliff.

1988 evaluations of the Cliff Walk's stability by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the USDA Soil Conservation Service indicate a serious level of hazard to Cliff Walk visitors.

The Army Corps estimates that a total of approximately \$ 2.6 million (a 30% increase over a similar estimate made in 1981) in design and construction is needed to rehabilitate the Cliff Walk to a safe and passable condition. Four "Critical Areas" along the walk have been identified where conditions "are considered hazardous and in need of immediate attention to prevent further deterioration and to minimize potential injury to walkers." Estimated costs to repair these "Critical Areas" is \$794,000.

The Soil Conservation Service has identified 7 critical areas where "immediate action is needed to maintain a safe treadway for pedestrians on the Cliff Walk." Overall, the SCS estimates a total of \$404,000 for 23 identified sites with \$172,000 for design and construction of the 7 critical areas.

Management

The current level of management is not consonant with the current level of Cliff Walk use. Basic maintenance needs of the Cliff Walk, i.e, litter control and pruning, exceed the limits of local municipal resources. Annual volunteer efforts to address these basic needs have been organized, but the results, combined with intermittent municipal trash collection, have been insufficient. In addition, lack of vehicular access to most sections of the walk complicates maintenance management. Providing security along the Cliff Walk is similarly difficult; the absence of adequate security is a problem for property owners, the City and Cliff Walk users. Cliff Walk is an extended trail in an urban setting. It lacks rest facilities, public transportation to major access points, and written guide materials.

Ownership

The Cliff Walk is owned collectively by the 57 properties which abut the walk. Despite its long tradition of private ownership, the status of the public's right to access along the Cliff Walk has never been successfully challenged. Research into this issue strongly suggests that public access may be based on right-of-way privileges incorporated into the Rhode Island Constitution in 1843. A review of current deeds reflects the complexity which surrounds this issue. Better than 90% of the current deeds of property along the Cliff Walk refer to the right of public access in terms which neither affirm nor deny its existence.



Massive construction work by the Corps of Engineers in the vicinity of Salve Regina College is visible in this view looking south from Narragansett Avenue.

For its part, the City of Newport has never taken steps to formally establish the Cliff Walk, either through the negotiation of easements or outright acquisition of the trail corridor. This complexity of ownership has led to two related problems. The first is a management vacuum; since neither the property owners nor the City accept ultimate responsibility for the walk, neither overtly assumes accountability for its management. The second problem is liability; lack of management of the resource has led to hazardous conditions, causing concern for both property owners and the City.

Zoning

Scenic views of the mansions along the Cliff Walk are vital to a Cliff Walk experience of national significance, and yet these views are unprotected. Enforcement of current zoning regulations has been generally successful in maintaining the integrity of the Bellevue and Ochre Point National Historic Districts. However, no comprehensive zoning approach which considers the impact of fencing and plantings on visual access is in place to preserve scenic views of the mansions from the vantage point of the Cliff Walk visitor. Recent assessment of visual access along the Cliff Walk shows that 9500 feet, or better than half of the landward views are obstructed by fencing and vegetation.

Summary

The physical integrity of the Cliff Walk is severely threatened by the constant forces of coastal and soil erosion. The basic cost of stabilization is estimated at \$2.6 million . Maintenance efforts are clearly inadequate to the volume of visitors. The vagaries of Cliff Walk ownership contribute to the problems of management and liability. Finally, scenic views, one of the Cliff Walk's most significant resources are unprotected under current zoning.

Management Alternatives

Three approaches to resource preservation for the Cliff Walk are examined in this report. These approaches represent points on a continuum of management options. Combinations of various features of the different approaches are possible. Partnerships between the three levels of government and the private sector are likewise possible.

Alternative I: Continuation of existing use patterns and reliance on volunteer efforts for basic maintenance tasks. The Cliff Walk would be minimally managed by the City or a local non-profit group and supported by planning assistance from the state and federal government.

Estimated Annual Operating Cost: \$ 67,000

Alternative II: Cooperative arrangement between the State of Rhode Island and relevant municipal departments whereby the Cliff Walk would be operated as an adjunct to other state facilities in Newport.

Estimated Annual Operating Cost: \$ 140,000

Alternative III: Implementation of a plan for full-scale interpretive development and preservation of the Cliff Walk's cultural, natural and recreational resources.

Estimated Annual Operating Cost: \$ 680,000

THE CLIFF WALK

Extending some three and a half miles around the southern coast of Aquidneck Island, Newport's Cliff Walk runs along the raw boundary between the forces of nature and the works of man. Subject at times to the violence of one and the neglect of the other, it clings to an often tenuous existence on the troubled cliffs. It has measured the fury of the storms that have battered that exposed stretch of coast, and it has served as a gauge of changing social and political values. Even today, though somewhat faded and tattered, the Cliff Walk can still claim to be, as it was described in 1905, "the most beautiful and extended walk in the country." (Mrs. J.K. Van Rensselaer, Newport Our Social Capital. Philadelphia/London: J.B. Lippincott, 1905 p.55).

Introduction

Battered by storms, fenced by landowners, blamed for its hazardous conditions and its drain on municipal funding, the tenacious Cliff Walk yet remains among Rhode Island's most popular tourist destinations. Recognizing that the management needs of the Cliff Walk were beyond their ability, the Newport City Council initially requested assistance from the NPS in 1986. In 1987, NPS conducted a profile of Cliff Walk visitors which began to shape the critical issues surrounding the Cliff Walk.

At the request of Senator Claiborne Pell, the National Park Service (NPS) initiated a study of the Cliff Walk for possible addition to the system. In accord with NPS planning process, a reconnaissance survey is the first step in evaluating a proposed addition to the national park system. The survey is a fact-finding effort based on readily available information and is used primarily to determine significance of the area's resources, the degree of existing protection, and its suitability/feasibility for inclusion in the national park system. To be eligible for favorable consideration as a unit of the national park system, an area first must be nationally significant. A natural, cultural, or recreational resource will be considered nationally significant if it meets all of the following criteria:

It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.

It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.

It offers superlative opportunities for recreation, public use and enjoyment or for scientific study.

It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

An area that is nationally significant also must meet criteria for suitability and feasibility to qualify as a potential addition to the national park system. To be suitable for addition to the national park system an area must:

represent a natural/cultural theme or type of recreational resource that is not already adequately represented in the national park system, unless such an area is comparably protected and presented for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity.

Adequacy of representation will be determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the proposed

addition to other units in the national park system, considering differences or similarities in character, quality, quantity, or combination of resources and opportunities for public enjoyment.

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area must:

be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration, considering natural systems and/or historic settings, to ensure long-term protection of resources and to accommodate public use, and it must have potential for efficient administration at reasonable cost.

Important feasibility factors include landownership, acquisition costs, access, threats to the resource, and staff or development requirements.

New additions to the national park system will not usually be recommended if other arrangements can provide adequate protection for the resource and opportunities for public enjoyment.

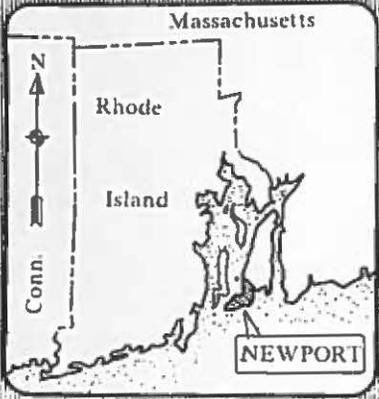
If an area is determined to be of significance and meets the criteria for suitability/feasibility, it may merit further study to determine the best means of protecting and managing it; a study of alternatives report is then prepared. The report uses and elaborates upon the information contained in the reconnaissance report and may require extensive fieldwork. The study of alternatives report evaluates reasonable alternatives for the management, protection, and use of the area and analyzes the perceptual, economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of the alternatives. It is at this stage that possible boundaries and alternatives to fee acquisition and federal management are explored.

This reconnaissance survey will provide NPS management with basic information to determine whether the area merits further evaluation and development of alternative management strategies.

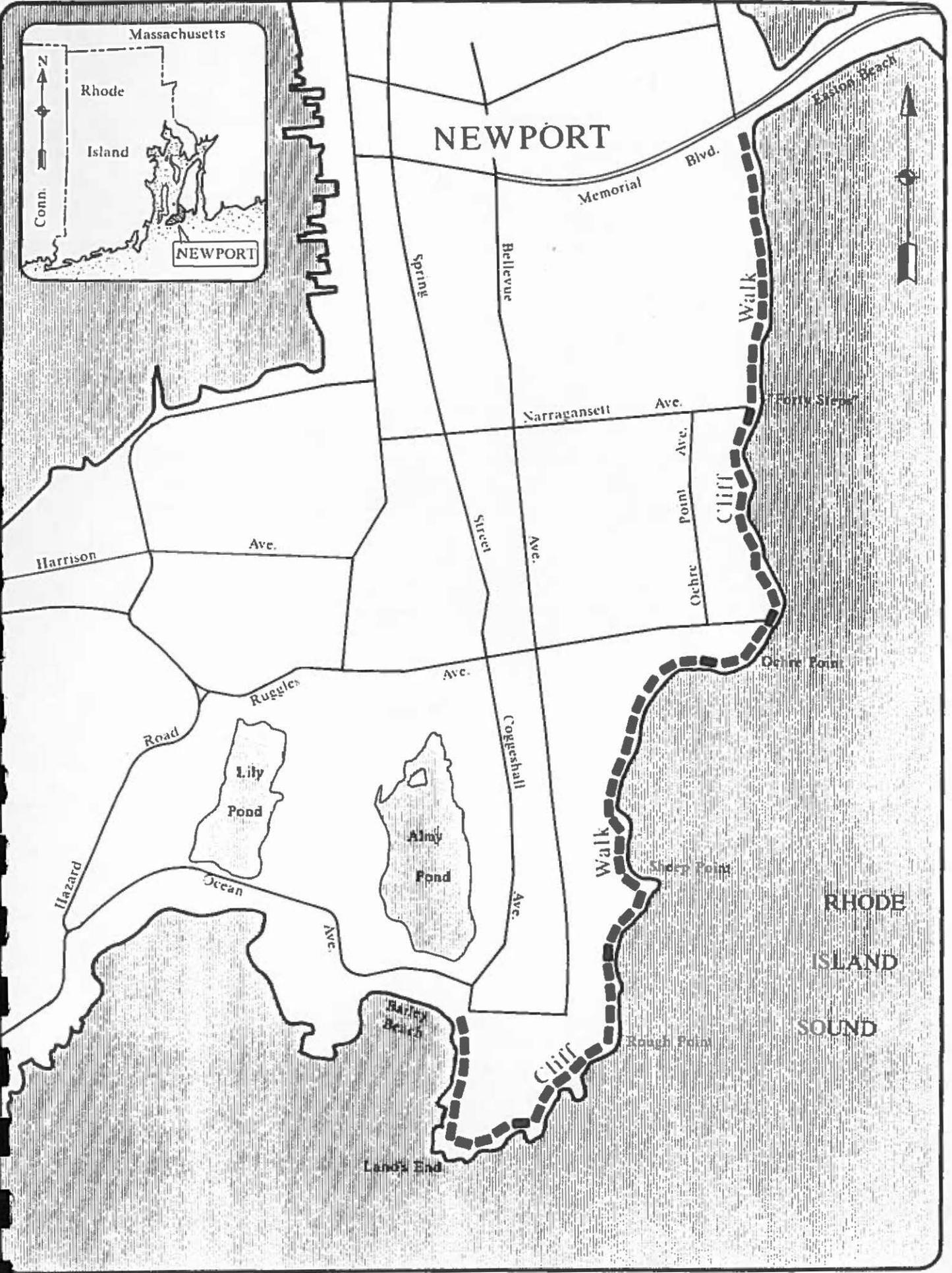
Resource Description

From Easton Beach south to a point midway between Sheep Point and Rough Point, the walk's surface is mostly asphalt, interspersed with areas of gravel. An exception is a short east-west section south of Ochre Point washed out by a leaking drain from above; from there south to Marine Avenue the walk is on coarse riprap. There are two tunnels, one beneath the Teahouse at the Marble House, the other at Sheep Point.

Beginning at a point about 1/4 mile north of of Rough Point the walk deteriorates markedly. Much of the vegetation is overgrown, forcing walkers onto a narrow disintegrating seawall; other portions have been eroded, exposing the extremely uneven rocks on which the now-eroded concrete path was laid. Across much of the granite at Rough Point and Lands End, the walk is a rocky scramble. The walk ranges from 50 feet above sea level at Salve Regina College to essentially sea level along the gravel beach north of Rough Point.



NEWPORT



RHODE
ISLAND
SOUND

The view north from Sheep Point exemplifies the essence of the Cliff Walk: outcrops of Precambrian metamorphic sediments, major revetment, riprap and seawall engineering construction; several outcrops of black shale; views of the Teahouse, Astor's Beachwood, Rosecliff, and, on the northern skyline, the unmistakable profile of The Breakers; a large zone of quartz impregnated cliffs east of Marine Avenue; and the graceful sweep to Ochre Point. This integration of important geological outcrops, in a scenic coastal setting, with the cultural features of the mansions, together with the seawalls and revetments makes Cliff Walk extraordinary.

Background of Study

Serious damage to the Cliff Walk and its seawall occurred during the hurricanes of 1938 and 1954. Even in the late 1950s, the alarming deterioration of conditions on the Cliff Walk, conditions which seemed beyond the capability of the property owners or the City to manage, moved Newport authorities to attempt to transfer the problem to the federal government by incorporating the Cliff Walk into the National Park System. A resolution to this effect was introduced in Congress, but the federal review was unfavorable. In December 1959, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Roger Ernst concluded, "We do not believe that Cliff Walk has the essential natural and historic qualities that justify its inclusion in the National Park System.

In recent years, despite an investment of over \$2 million dollars by state, local, and federal governments for its stabilization, sections of the walk are washed away and visitors are forced to scramble over rocks. Inevitably, hazardous conditions along the walk have lead to annual accidents and occasional fatalities.

In 1975, the Cliff Walk was designated as the first unit of the National Recreation Trail System east of the Mississippi. In 1976, the Bellevue Avenue Historic District and Ochre Point Historic District were established as National Historic Landmarks, recognizing this spectacular assemblage of American architecture and including the Cliff Walk as a component of the district designations. The Cliff Walk was nominated for National Natural landmark status in 1980 for reflecting "the most interesting geologic, aesthetic, and cultural history of Rhode Island."

In 1987, NPS prepared a User Profile of Cliff Walk visitors and Newport residents as a Technical Assistance project funded by the State and Local River Conservation Program. The User Profile concluded that the Cliff Walk is indeed a widely recognized and valued resource, with better than half of its estimated 150,000 annual visitors coming from outside of New England, and recommended further study done in cooperation with state and local officials.

Study Purpose

Several previous studies relating to the Cliff Walk have been completed by the Department of the Interior. This study, however, presents new research in the areas of history and geology, and up-to-date assessments of the problems of coastal and soil erosion. It concentrates on issues currently facing the Cliff Walk and the various tools and techniques which could be used to deal with them.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to provide information to Congress on:

- the significance of the area
- critical resources
- threats to the area
- public needs and concerns
- feasible alternatives for preservation and use
- alternative management systems and their costs

Development of Management Alternatives

The approach taken in developing alternatives for Cliff Walk management was to discuss a range of options including those which rely on local, state and private resources and efforts, as well as those of the federal government. In light of the energy and concern of several local institutions concerned with the Cliff Walk, exemplified by the Forty Steps, Inc., it is evident that partnerships could play a key role in a Cliff Walk management concept and should be explored. Partnerships have become increasingly appealing today in the face of political and economic limitations. Recent trends in federal legislation have provided a number of innovative models such as Lowell National Historical Park in Massachusetts and the newly developed Blackstone Heritage Corridor in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

This study was developed by the National Park Service working in conjunction with other federal agencies, state and local officials, and private citizens. The management alternatives presented here were introduced broadly via an informational brochure and discussed at a public workshop in Newport. The alternatives presented should be viewed as a point of departure, rather than all-inclusive. It is anticipated that they may be modified and refined after the release of the report.



This view from an 1897 tourist publication is particularly interesting, as it shows not only a glimpse of the well-maintained Cliff Walk, but some of the early seawalls built by the estate owners. Photo collection of Patrick G. Kirby II

RESOURCE EVALUATION

Cultural Resources

In the course of preparing this report it became apparent that formal research into the historical origins of the Cliff Walk had never been fully carried out. The following section summarizes the key findings of a historical investigation undertaken by Lawrence Lowenthal, Park Historian at the Springfield Armory Historic Site.

The Birth of the Walk

The durable Newport tradition as to the origin of its famous Cliff Walk can be found as early as 1852: "When the colonists took land from the Indians, a right of way along the sea was secured to them forever, for fishing and the gathering of seaweed."(G.W. Curtis, *Lotus-Eating: A Summer Book*. New York: Harper & Bros. 1852, p.183). This seems to refer to the colonial charter which was incorporated into the Rhode Island Constitution in 1843 and has served as the legal basis for the Cliff Walk's existence ever since. Since the cliffs deny normal access to the shore by creating a vertical intertidal zone, the customary rationale for the Cliff Walk has been that it substitutes for a largely non-existent beach. The public right of access has been transferred to a higher elevation.

Because the legal basis of the Cliff Walk can be traced back to the formative period of Rhode Island, an assumption has grown up that the Cliff Walk itself has existed since then. That is not to say no one walked along the cliffs in colonial times or earlier, but it is unlikely that anything resembling the present Cliff Walk existed much before 1850. In essence, although the right of public access may have been recognized, there was little reason for the public to exercise this privilege.

The Walk Takes Shape

As with many other aspects of Newport's present appearance, the Cliff Walk took shape as a result of the town's nineteenth century development as a resort. One of the earliest references to the Cliff Walk as a distinct entity occurs in the same 1852 account cited previously. The writer describes a footpath along the cliffs, with walls and fences which must be scaled. The path is unimproved, but "convenient stiles and holes in the walls, even upon properties already settled" are evident.

The timing of this account is highly significant, for it coincides with a major turning point in the history of Newport--the opening to development of the entire southern end of the island. This step represents the town's commitment to a future as a vacation spa. The profound and rapid shift in the character of Newport had immediate effects on the nascent Cliff Walk. As houses began to fill the area between Bellevue Avenue and the ocean, the question of public access to the shore became more urgent than in the days when the land had consisted of "solitary fields along the ocean, so long given up to haystacks, lovers and fishermen."(Harpers, August 1854, p.315). Whereas it had been possible to view the ocean from nearly any point along the low ridge that Bellevue Avenue occupies, now one had to go nearly to the water's edge for a view. Whatever ancient right the public possessed to traverse the cliffs now became more valuable.

In its formative period the Cliff walk seems not to have been as prominent a feature of Newport as it later became. One reason for the relative lack of recognition may be that the Cliff Walk did not extend to the full length it later attained, though this is a difficult point to confirm. There is considerable evidence that prior to 1875 the "Cliffs" were considered to extend south to only Ochre Point. Several early accounts describe visits to the Cliffs and the context makes it reasonably clear that the northern portion is meant.

As early as 1867, Newporters began to recognize that they possessed an invaluable asset in the path along the cliffs. One writer in a local newspaper opined that "the singular want of fine scenery along the monotonous coast of the United States will compel people to seek Newport--the only place between Maine and Mexico where pleasant scenery exists along the coast."

Scanning the horizon for competition in the resort realm, usually only Saratoga came to mind as a potential rival, and this was an unsatisfactory matchup; for the New York resort had taken the route of becoming a hotel oriented spa. Other seaside resorts such as Long Branch and Cape May, New Jersey, could be dismissed as weak imitations of Newport; even European spas were sometimes brought into the fray, only to be found wanting.

The Promenade

As the fashionable image of Newport continued to evolve in the 1870s and eighties, so did the prominence of the Cliff Walk. By this time the Cliff Walk was maintained and improved on most of the private properties it passed through. On many properties no attempt was made to isolate the Cliff Walk; instead it was interconnected with the system of drives and walks on the various estates. Atlases from 1876 and 1883 show at least thirteen properties south of Marine Avenue in which this situation exists. On the northern section of the walk the 1883 edition shows a linkage of the Cliff Walk and residential walks on the property of the Cliff Cottage Association.

Promenaders were thus not only able to pass through the estates along the walk, but to wander with relative freedom through most of the estates themselves. As an 1885 guide notes "The stranger who is within the gates of Newport need have no fear that any desire he may have to view these beautiful structures to advantage will be difficult to gratify, for in the majority of cases the grounds are open, and no well behaved person has ever been refused permission to wander through the millionaire's premises whether they are on the Cliffs or facing the Avenue." In this halcyon era of the Cliff Walk there was thus little distinction between public and private parks, from the point of view of the curious stroller.

The Cliff Walk In Transition

Moving on into the 1890s, the trends already visible in Newport's development were accentuated. If possible, the resort became even more opulent. If the term "Gilded Age" has any meaning, it must be defined at least partly in terms of Newport. At the same time, however, this current was colliding with the long-term trend of American leisure time, which was moving toward progressive democratization. The conjunction of these conflicting social trends caused changes which affected the shape of the Cliff Walk.

One by one, landowners along the cliffs began to insulate themselves from the Cliff Walk and the increasingly large number of people who strolled on it. Accepting the idea that they had no legal basis to block the walk, they resorted to confining it as much as possible. One method was to sink the walk so that it would no longer be on the same grade as the estate grounds. This was being done at the new "Breakers" in December 1894 and had been done earlier at the Goelet and W.K. Vanderbilt estates. Mrs. Astor built a brick wall to shield her property; others resorted to fences or vines, or built footbridges to move the walk further from their residences. Evidence of all these methods are visible today.

Although channeled and confined, the Cliff Walk must have been well maintained and accessible within its limits, for it was reported in 1894 that bicycles were to be prohibited because of frequent abuses. Furthermore, while the property owners hemmed in the Cliff Walk, the various walls, fences, gates, and tunnels were often attractive and in harmony with the architectural styles of the mansions themselves. Thus, promenaders of the Cliff Walk, while continuing to enjoy spectacular views of the coast, also received of the architectural variety and cohesion that was available to passersby on Bellevue Avenue. Moreover, by the very act of erecting structures and improving the Cliff Walk, the landowners were conceding that the public had some rights, whether acquired by custom or precedent, to pass along the cliffs.



A 1907 view of "The Grotto," probably located in the vicinity of Rough Point, shows the meticulous care given the Cliff Walk at that time. As typified by this section, much of the walk was a well-drained gravel path. The lowering of the Cliff Walk below the grade of the neighboring cottages is evident. Photo collection of Patrick G. Kirby II.

Coastal Erosion and the Hurricane of '38

Another threat to the cliffside properties could not be restricted so easily. In a contest that has elements of a biblical parable, estate owners pitted their immense resources against the restless sea. Accounts of construction to hold back the sea appear regularly during the life of the Cliff Walk. For example in 1892 it was reported that "Plans and specifications are out for a new seawall to be built in front of Mr. Ogden Goelet's cottage and estate" in the Ochre Point area. In the following year work was nearing completion on a seawall on Mrs. Gammell's estate farther north on the cliffs. There was no thought of calling the Army Corps of Engineers, these sometimes massive projects were financed entirely by the individual property owner.

Despite the best efforts to restrain the sea, significant damage occasionally occurred. A slide at the foot of Webster Street on the Goelet property erased 50 to 60 feet of the cliff face in 1909. Winter storms seemed especially destructive; two in close succession in 1912 caused considerable damage. The Goelets had constructed a retaining wall after the 1909 assault, and both 1912 storms hit nearby. Soon after the Astors began work on a new seawall. None of these storms caused direct damage to the Cliff Walk, but each threatened and undermined it.

Whatever destruction had occurred previously came to seem insignificant after the great hurricane of September 1938. This once-in-a-century storm brought immense devastation to the southern coast of New England and the Cliff Walk, with its exposed location, could hardly hope to be spared. Large sections were washed out, including many costly improvements, and the Forty Steps were badly damaged. Whatever the Cliff Walk had been before, it would never be the same again.

After the great storm the City of Newport appropriated funds to repair its beloved Forty Steps. This appears to be the first occasion in which public funds were spent on a site related to the Cliff Walk, although not directly a part of the walk. Because it was situated at the end of a public road, questions of property rights were avoided. Some individual property owners also repaired sections of the Cliff Walk. During World War II the walk was closed; then in 1944 another hurricane undid much of the restoration which followed the 1938 storm.

Post-war assessment found the Cliff Walk in a sorry state. A feature writer in September 1945 visited the walk and drew a dismal picture of gullies and washouts, concluding that the path was still worth a visit if one has the patience and fortitude of a mountain goat. It was noted that Newport's mayor had applied for federal funds to make a survey, apparently the first time the city had looked beyond its own resources to restore the Cliff Walk. This set a pattern that has persisted to the present. The 1938 hurricane seems to have disrupted a fragile equilibrium; thereafter, damage to the Cliff Walk became more severe and more frequent. Perhaps because this balance had been disturbed, surface runoff from the landside also became more of a contributing factor in the disintegration of the Cliff Walk.

Recent Cliff Walk Restoration Efforts

During the 1950s the steady deterioration became more alarming. Large sections became impassable and closures became a regular occurrence. If, however, the Cliff Walk at times seemed to be more a concept than a reality, it remained a popular concept. Despite the physical risks of passage, and disregarding the warning signs that were frequently posted and as frequently vandalized, visitors persisted in walking the increasingly tattered ribbon along the edge of the cliffs.

In 1963 the Army Corps of Engineers was persuaded to examine the situation, and it concluded that substantial restoration of the Cliff Walk would cost \$1.4 million. After considerable delays in securing contributions for a joint federal-state-city funding package, the Corps of Engineers completed the project design in 1969 and work commenced in 1971. It should be noted that during this long period when federal funds were being solicited, it was frequently noted that the uncertain legal status of the Cliff Walk might present a problem. There apparently has never been a transfer of property rights to the city or a formal dedication of the Cliff Walk as a public way.

The work proved extremely difficult, for, contrary to what one might expect, tides and a rock coast prevented offshore work, and all building had to take place from the landside. Four sections--totaling 17% of the walk were relocated and reconstructed. Sizable amounts of money were spent by the city in 1975 and 1976, but as fast as money was filling in one section, other portions were washing out. Another revival of interest came in 1980, when Congress approved \$150,000 for a Corps of Engineers Restoration Study of the Cliff Walk. Eventually this culminated in 1987 with legislation introduced into both houses of Congress to add the Cliff Walk to the National Park System. Meanwhile a private group was formed to raise funds to restore the Forty Steps to a grandeur and permanence they had not previously known.

Each of the earlier projects, but especially the Corps of Engineers' work, left a distinctive footprint on the cliffs. The Corps apparently sought to achieve some harmony of colors and materials, but the heavy use of riprap in itself added a new element. In a sense, this is only the most massive example of a process that has been going on for more than a century.

Summary

The chapters which form the Cliff Walk story exemplify many of the larger social trends in the evolution of American Leisure. From an architectural standpoint the Cliff Walk retains remnants of an astonishing assortment of styles, materials, and treatments, both on the walk itself and on the underlying cliffs. The Cliff Walk has indeed changed drastically within the memory of today's Newport residents, but so it has always been. If it is precarious today, perhaps that is its normal condition. As such, it illustrates the beauty, fragility, and the impermanence of man's relationship with nature.



Looking south from the vicinity of the Forty Steps, this view, probably from the 1870's or 1880's, portrays the rugged cliffs and gives a brief glimpse of a tidy Cliff Walk. Photo-Newport Historical Society

Natural Resources

In 1982, the Cliff Walk was identified as a potential site by the National Natural Landmarks Program. This initial report stated that the Cliff Walk area "exposes major features of regional geology" and illustrates "the most interesting geologic, aesthetic and cultural history of Rhode Island." Based on the criteria of bedrock geology and scenic beauty, the Cliff Walk was judged to be "unquestionably...of national significance, due to a combination of natural and cultural features."

National Natural Landmark Evaluation

As a followup to this preliminary report, a formal evaluation of the Cliff Walk's eligibility for National Natural Landmark designation was conducted for this study by J. Allan Cain, Professor of Geology, University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island State Geologist. Professor Cain's extensive evaluation cites several studies which describe the geology of the Cliff Walk environs and recommends that Cliff Walk be designated as a National Natural Landmark.

The evaluation report shares in the perception that the significance of Cliff Walk is achieved through the combination of resources which comprise its context. In comparing Cliff Walk to other significant geological sites, the report demonstrates that even in terms of geological significance, the strength of the Cliff Walk is in its plurality of resources:

The major advantage Cliff Walk has is that it shows much geological variety in a relatively short distance and in such a scenic and accessible setting. Not only are there examples of important sedimentary, metamorphic and igneous rocks, there are also glacial erosional and depositional features, the results of folding, faulting and jointing, and emplacement of dikes and veins. Added to these are engineering modifications, the coastal scenery and the proximity of the famous Newport mansions. It is this combination of features that makes Cliff Walk unique.

Geological Significance

The five significant geological features identified in the vicinity of the Cliff Walk include:

- 1) Precambrian granite outcrops dating back 600 million years and constituting a major part of the Avalon terrane in southeastern New England. During the Paleozoic period, this separate landmass was joined to the North American plate in a final stage of the evolution of the Appalachians.
- 2) Precambrian metasedimentary and metavolcanic rocks intruded by the granites mentioned in (1). The volcanic rock shows one of the few lava flows found anywhere in this unit.
- 3) Exposures of coal units provide clear evidence of Pennsylvanian sedimentary sequence. On the Cliff Walk, one can see not only the coals but also the adjacent Precambrian and other Pennsylvanian rocks, and the effects of deformation and metamorphism on these units.

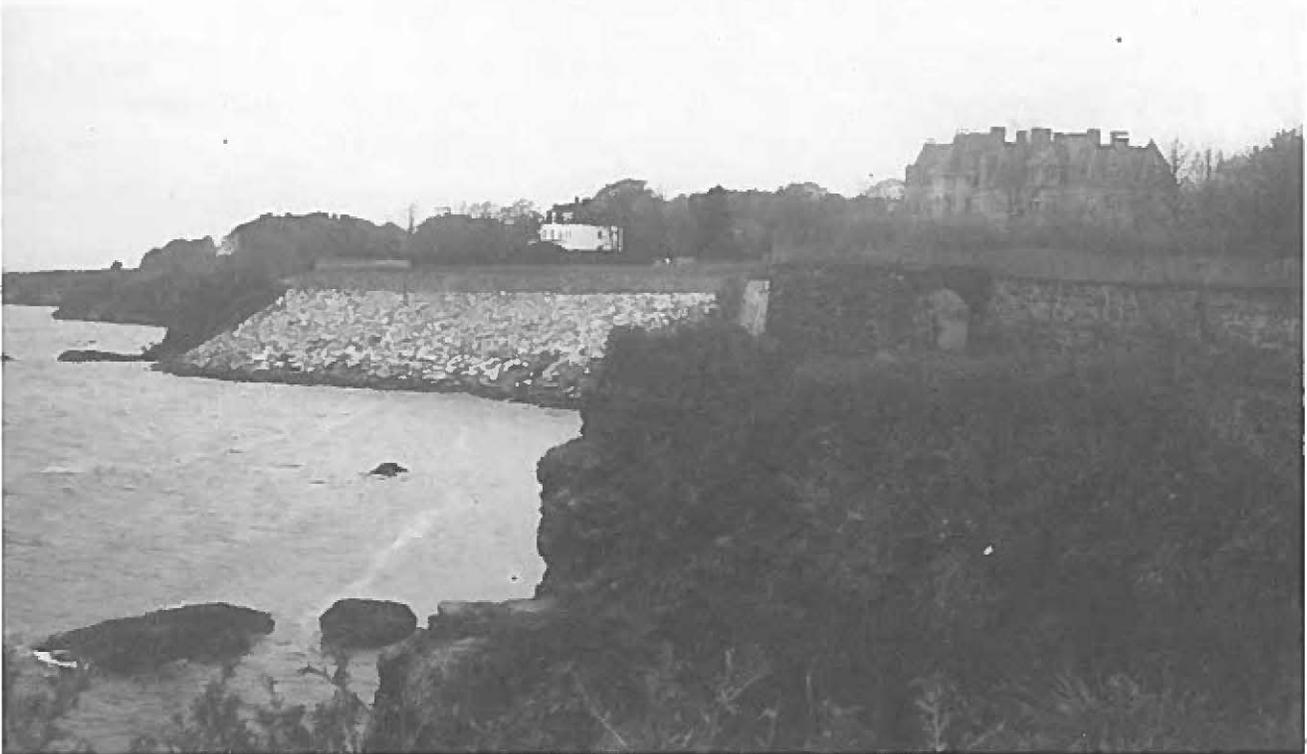
- 4) The rest of the Cliff Walk affords the opportunity to see good exposures of the Rhode Island formation, the major sedimentary unit within the Narragansett Bay.
- 5) Glacial erosional features (striations and grooves) and depositional features (till as ground moraine) are also present but are unexceptional.

Professor Cain's report recommended that the site be designated as a Natural National Landmark. In the concluding "Regional Superlative Statement", he reiterates the values of the unique interrelationship of resources which comprise the Cliff Walk:

In the Avalon Zone of the New England Lowlands, Cliff Walk provides the best combination of (a) accessible outcrops of major Avalonian and Pennsylvanian rock units in (b) a scenic coastal setting, adjacent to (c) the culturally and historically significant Newport mansions.

Summary

Evaluation of the natural, specifically geological, resources of the Cliff Walk area supports the view that the Cliff Walk is indeed a special place, and that its significance is due to a collocation of resources which distinguishes it from other special coastal areas. The recommendation for National Natural Landmark status by Professor Cain and its endorsement via formal peer review by three other prominent geologists clearly supports the Cliff Walk's national significance.



Recreational and Scenic Resources

In 1987, the National Park Service conducted a Cliff Walk User Profile to help develop background information about the estimated 150,000 annual visitors of the Cliff Walk. Two surveys, one of Cliff Walk visitors, the other of Newport residents, were carried out. The major findings are presented below.

The Visitor's Survey

The visitor's survey exemplifies the broad popularity of the Cliff Walk beyond the borders of Newport, with better than 95% of those surveyed coming from outside the City, and almost half coming from outside New England. In addition, 28% of the respondents stated that the Cliff Walk was their primary reason for traveling to Newport.

Respondents were asked what attracted them to the Cliff Walk. Enjoying the ocean views and the fresh air were the most frequent responses, followed by viewing the mansions. However, expectations of the famous Cliff Walk were often inaccurate. Only about 14% knew the length of the walk. When asked whether or not they would expect a ride back to where they started upon reaching the end of the Cliff Walk, 29% expected such a service, 24% also expected to find restrooms, 41% looked forward to benches or reststops along the way. However, most visitors did not want to see the Cliff Walk expanded to provide for any additional uses.

The Resident's Survey

The resident survey demonstrated that the Cliff Walk is equally important to Newporters. 87% of the resident respondents reported visiting the Cliff Walk at least once during the past year and approximately 33% more than ten times per year.

Residents recognize the need for immediate measures to assure the preservation and maintenance of the Cliff Walk. In terms of maintenance, trash along the walk was the major concern of residents (92%). Although the annual clean-up days represents a well-intentioned volunteer effort, the magnitude of the litter problem well exceeds these efforts.

Residents recognize the seriousness of the erosion problem (86%) and the need for immediate action to prevent further damage. Many residents expressed a willingness to support preservation and maintenance, preferably through donation to a non-profit organization (71%) as opposed to a daily user fee (42%). Residents support the idea that Cliff Walk management should be a cooperative effort shared by agencies other than the local government by a margin of three to one.

Scenic Resources

Although intangible, the scenic resources so clearly identified by recreationists with the very essence of the Cliff Walk experience are among the most vulnerable of its assets. No existing zoning regulations in Newport could prevent complete visual obstruction along the landward edge of the entire Cliff Walk through the use of fencing and/or vegetation. However, it is important to note that new State Historic Preservation Law requires the adoption of regulations which include review of fencing and vegetation by all participating communities.

Evidence of visually obtrusive fencing and vegetation can be found in many sections of the walk, intermingled with vistas of expansive openness. In order to quantify the extent of this trend, members of the study team conducted a visual analysis of the Cliff Walk. The analysis involved measuring sections where landward views along the walk were obstructed by fencing and/or vegetation. The study revealed that direct views of the mansions were closed along a total of approximately 9500 feet, better than 50% of the entire Cliff Walk.

Summary

The results of the Cliff Walk User Profile demonstrate that the Cliff Walk is valued by local residents and visitors from the region and beyond. Cliff Walk visitors and Newport residents alike have indicated a willingness to contribute towards its protection and maintenance. Scenic resources play a major role in attracting visitors to the Cliff Walk and yet their impact is gradually being undermined by fencing and obstructive vegetation.



An early postcard view of The Cliff Walk from Bailey's Beach

Overall Resource Evaluation

Few sites can boast inclusion on the National Historic Register combined with National Natural Landmark and National Recreation Trail status. The Cliff Walk's management and protection must be evaluated within this broad context, rather than narrowly defined as a footpath. Based on an assessment of its comprehensive values, the Cliff Walk is a nationally significant resource.

SUITABILITY/FEASIBILITY

Introduction

To be considered suitable for inclusion in the NPS system an area must not only possess national significance, but must also represent a theme or type of recreational resource not already adequately represented within the System. The Cliff Walk must be compared with other similar historic coastal promenades and recreational trails to evaluate if it offers unique qualities.

In addition, the feasibility of an area, in terms of management and protection requirements, must also be evaluated. The primary consideration for feasibility is that the size and configuration of an area be sufficient to assure that the resource's integrity is preserved. For the Cliff Walk, the issues of erosion, access and adjacent development need to be studied. Further, the width of the corridor under consideration will play a significant role in determining whether it is feasible to protect the Cliff Walk.

Erosion

The physical deterioration of the cliffs along the Cliff Walk is by far the most serious and longstanding issue affecting current use of the area and the development of a feasible management alternative.

Prior to the involvement of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, numerous protective structures, plantings, parapet walls and walk surfaces were constructed by private property owners at great expense, many dating back before the turn of the century. Many of these structures were damaged by the 1938 hurricane and were permitted to deteriorate due to the diminished ability of private owners to maintain them.

The great storm of 1938 seems to have disrupted a fragile equilibrium; thereafter, damage to the Cliff Walk has become more frequent and more severe. It has been suggested that because this balance has been disturbed, soil erosion from the landward edge has begun to play an increasingly larger role along with coastal erosion in the ongoing disintegration of the Cliff Walk.

In order to assess the current impact of soil erosion and wave action, two separate assessments were conducted in conjunction with this study by representatives of the USDA Soil Conservation Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Summaries of both reports follow.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Report (1988)

In 1981, the Corps of Engineers prepared an extensive report which estimated a total repair cost of \$2 million. The 1988 report was developed for the current study to provide an update of conditions on the entire walk and surrounding area, including a description of current conditions and an estimate of quantities and construction costs for needed repairs to the Cliff Walk. The total 1988 repair cost estimated by the Corps of Engineers is approximately \$2.6 million. This represents the cost to rehabilitate the Cliff Walk to a safe and passable condition.

The Corps of Engineers report was highlighted by a note of urgency regarding at least four areas, characterized as "Critical Areas" where conditions are "considered hazardous and in need of immediate attention to prevent further deterioration and to minimize potential injury to walkers." Measures for protection of these threatened areas (see map), estimated at \$794,000, are summarized as follows (names of property owners reflect 1981 conditions):

1. Approximately 270 feet of stone slope protection in the vicinity of the Firestone property is needed. The problem is the result of erosion at the top of the cliff and from wave action below. In some areas temporary shoring has been placed to prevent the walk from collapsing. Estimated cost: \$534,000.
2. Construction of a 20 foot concrete wall is needed approximately 80 feet south of Narragansett Avenue. The walk at this point is extremely narrow and is progressively eroding. Approximately three feet of material remains from the edge of the walk to a vertical drop. Estimated cost: \$40,000.
3. Continuation of the existing stone protection (40 feet) and a new concrete wall (30 feet) is needed at the O'Donnell property. The stone protection is needed at the base of the cliff because of a severe undercut. The concrete wall is needed at the top half because of severe cracks in the rock above. This area is extremely narrow and could possibly cave-in. Estimated cost \$191,000.
4. Reconstruct a 50 foot section of wall and walk at American Capital Corp. property. The walk and the wall are washed out, posing a dangerous situation to walkers trying to complete the entire walk. Estimated cost \$29,000.

The USDA Soil Conservation Service Assessment

This assessment team comprised of soil scientists, engineers, and conservationists from the USDA Soil Conservation Service identified twenty-three sites subject to soil erosion along the Cliff Walk. Preliminary assessment of these sites included an analysis of the soil erosion problem, a "level of hazard" rating, and a cost estimate for the recommended erosion management strategy. The Soil Conservation Service team repair estimate for erosion management totalled \$404,000.

Serious concern about hazardous conditions on the Cliff Walk were also expressed by the team, which noted seven areas where "immediate action is needed to maintain a safe treadway for pedestrians." \$172,000 of the total estimate represents the costs for stabilizing areas receiving the "level one" hazard rating.



Resource Protection Efforts

Maintenance

Owing to the limits of current municipal maintenance staffing the Cliff Walk has been primarily maintained through volunteer efforts. Groups such as the Cliff Walk Beautification Committee and the local Sierra Club chapter have organized annual cleanup days to address the perennial problems of litter and overgrown vegetation.

It is not surprising that the litter problem exceeds the resources which Newport can bring to bear. Estimates from the Newport Preservation Society, which manages three of the mansions bordering the walk, average about 15 cubic yards per week during the summer, policing only the area in front of their properties. In addition to the volume of litter, the relative inaccessibility of many areas on the Cliff Walk makes the collection process difficult and labor-intensive.

The Forty Steps Initiative

Local concern for the preservation of the Cliff Walk has been demonstrated most vividly by the efforts of the "Forty Steps" group. Within the short span of eighteen months, this remarkable group organized, raised funds, designed, built, and dedicated a new set of granite stairs, parapet walls and landscaping at the site of the historic "Forty Steps" on the Cliff Walk. The "Forty Steps" has long been a popular gathering place along the Cliff Walk and may in fact predate the development of the walk itself.

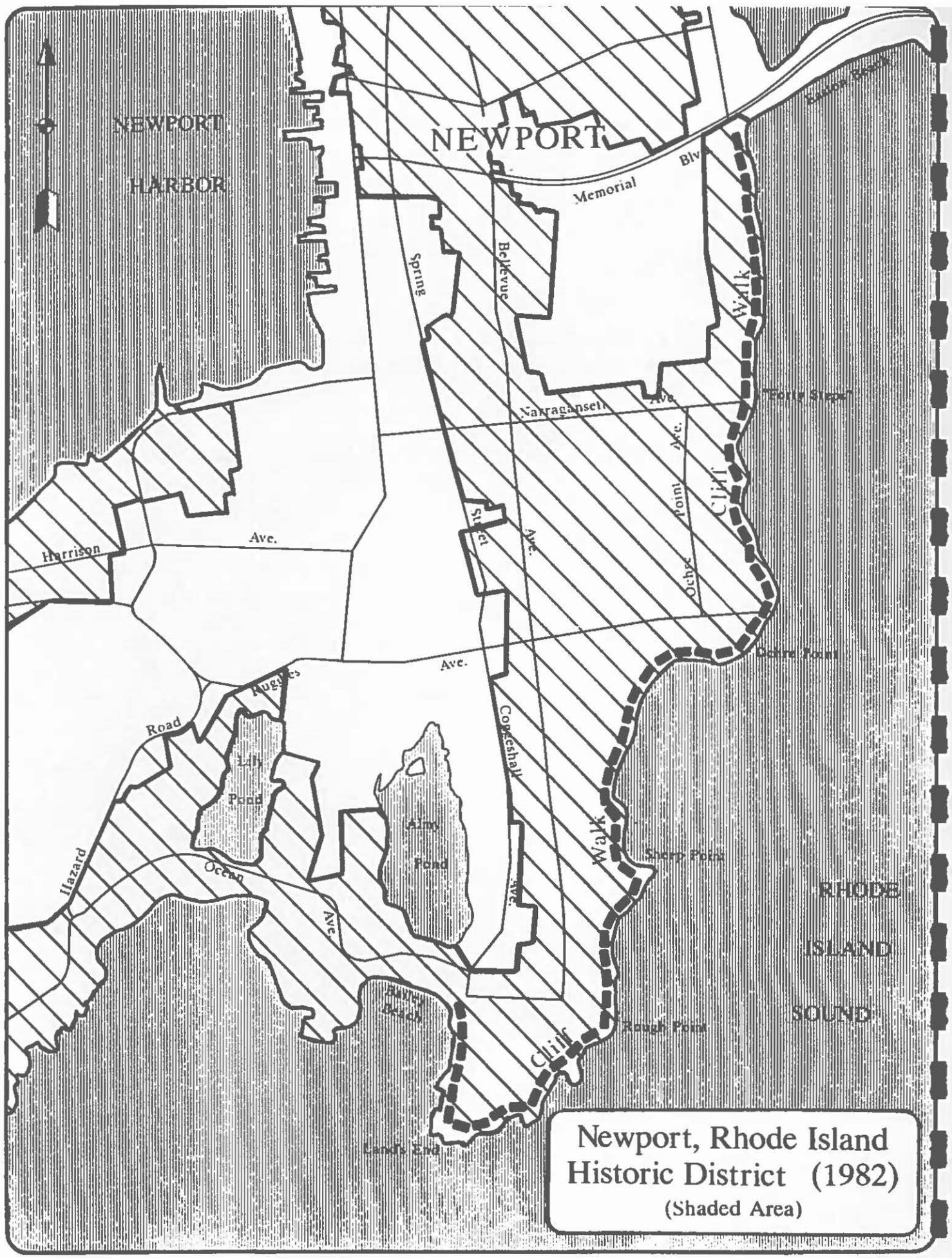
Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Council

Another avenue currently available for protecting the Cliff Walk is technical assistance provided by the Soil Conservation Service (USDA) through the Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC & D). Through the coordination of the RC & D Office, the assessment of soil erosion conditions described previously was carried out. This site visit was followed up by a survey of depth to bedrock conditions in selected areas of the Cliff Walk to determine the feasibility of installing a subsurface drainage system. The RC & D Council has expressed a willingness to further investigate a soil erosion plan which would significantly retard the ongoing sloughing of the soil at the edge of the bluffs.

Recent Trends

Three of the more important trends currently impacting the Cliff Walk are new development, fencing, and vandalism.

The current level of development pressure along the walk suggests the need for stronger protection of the integrity of architectural context which serves as the Cliff Walk's landward backdrop. Obstructive fencing is a related concern which must also be addressed if this architectural context of Cliff Walk is to remain a component of the walk's scenic quality. The results from a recent scenic assessment demonstrate that roughly half of the landward views along the walk are now obscured by fencing or



Newport, Rhode Island
 Historic District (1982)
 (Shaded Area)

vegetation. Both issues, new development and fencing, will require formulation of long-term protection strategies which recognize the significance of the walk's visual resources.

Although fencing is becoming a threat to the Cliff walk's scenic quality, it is a long way from limiting physical access to the walk. In fact, the difficulty of controlling access to the walk has in large part contributed to the problem of vandalism. Most of the vandalism, which involves destruction of fencing, littering and unruly behavior, occurs at night. While not a major issue, this problem points to the difficulty of regulating access to the Cliff Walk. The configuration of the walk and its varied relationship to the large number of properties adjacent to it render it a problematic area for local law enforcement officials.

Public Concerns

Concerns about current conditions on the Cliff Walk and a series of proposed Cliff Walk management alternatives were discussed at a public workshop held on September 19, 1988, in Newport City Hall. The workshop was announced through city-wide distribution of an informational brochure which outlined three potential management alternatives for the Cliff Walk. In addition to the brochure, a brief questionnaire was prepared for the meeting as a further means of soliciting public input.

Public response at the workshop regarding the primary recreational values of the Cliff Walk served largely to confirm the findings of the 1987 User Profile. The natural beauty of the Cliff Walk's coastal setting and the relative absence of user regulations were identified as the Cliff Walk's two most important features, providing an opportunity for an unstructured recreational experience within a beautiful setting.

Problems identified during the workshop were almost entirely limited to basic maintenance issues. Litter, overgrown vegetation, and hazardous treadway conditions formed a recognizable consensus of the Cliff Walk's shortcomings which emerged during the meeting. The focus on basic maintenance needs is reflective not only of the fact that these problems are indeed the most obvious and most pressing, but also may relate to the preference for a recreational experience on the Cliff Walk which entails an unobtrusive management system. It was also broadly recognized that the Cliff Walk's problems in the basic maintenance areas cannot be met by municipal resources.

The workshop's discussion of management alternatives centered on the potential impacts of National Park Service management policy on the Cliff Walk. Many respondents favored a management approach which would vigorously address the Cliff Walk's maintenance and stabilization needs and simultaneously promote the unstructured setting so many users enjoy. In terms of the three alternatives presented in the brochure no one alternative achieved consensus. Instead it appeared that a management scheme involving the high level of maintenance capacity suggested in Alternative III, "Newport's Gilded Age," coupled with a continuation of current use patterns described in Alternative I, "Cliff Walk," was taking shape as a preferred management style during the course of the discussion.

Summary

Evaluation of the Cliff Walk's suitability/feasibility is inextricably linked to a determination of the potential boundaries of the corridor under consideration. While certain issues like erosion of the coastline remain critical regardless of the width of the area, the definition of the interpretive theme, its uniqueness and the requirements for its protection can vary greatly. For example, if the resource theme for the Cliff Walk is defined narrowly as a coastal recreational route, the area is less unique than if it were defined more broadly in conjunction with the history of the Gilded Age of its heyday. While there are coastal trails at Acadia NP and at most National Seashores, none can compare with the architectural backdrop provided by Newport's mansions by the sea nor with the story of the Cliff Walk's historical development.

Although a broader definition of the interpretive theme for the Cliff Walk enhances its suitability in terms of the NPS criteria, the opposite holds true for feasibility considerations regarding management and protection of the resource. By expanding the theme from a recreational trail along the coast to a reflection of the Gilded Age, or even to the development of Leisure Time in America requires that the corresponding area of concern for management and protection be expanded beyond the simple walkway to include the entire Historic Preservation Zone. The increased costs of the wider preservation effort in terms of funding and the need for stronger regulations weaken support for the program.

Evaluation of the Cliff Walk's suitability/feasibility must evolve from the development of realistic management alternatives which illustrate the continuum of the boundary definition and management/protection costs which they imply. Analysis of the alternatives presented in the following section strongly suggests that partnerships are the key to the future protection of the Cliff Walk, regardless of the resource boundaries and the theme it illustrates. Each of the alternatives described attempts to draw on the strengths of all levels of government and to preserve elements of the mosaic of significance of the site.



The Chinese teahouse originally constructed by Mrs. O.H. Belmont and still extant in a slightly different location, is one of the noteworthy architectural features along the Cliff Walk. Photo-collection of Patrick G. Kirby II.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The Alternatives which follow present a range of possible options for preserving the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Cliff Walk. These are conceptual alternatives which represent several levels of possible involvement by federal, state and local governments, and private interests.

Many factors were considered in formulating the management alternatives, including the following:

- 1) A major capital improvements program, estimated by the USACE at \$2.6 million is needed to restore and protect the Cliff Walk treadway and seawall. This cost represents the baseline figure needed for all of the proposed management options. For the purposes of this present discussion, it is assumed that this essential repair work, which would likely involve cost-sharing by the City, State, and Federal governments is an essential component of each of the proposed alternatives.
- 2) The visitation figures for the Cliff Walk suggest that opportunities for revenue generation to support ongoing maintenance costs should be explored.
- 3) The current ownership pattern along the Cliff Walk corridor needs to be clarified. Resolution of this issue is viewed as a prerequisite to implementation of any management scheme.
- 4) The Newport Preservation Society, The Forty Steps group, and other non-profit associations in Newport are a vital resource which merit inclusion in programs for the Cliff Walk's preservation.

The Cliff Walk presents management complexities which are not met by traditional administrative approaches. Hence, the alternatives were formulated specifically to meet the special needs of the Cliff Walk. The discussion for each alternative includes a general description that highlights major management roles and responsibilities as well as specific resource preservation strategies. Impacts associated with the implementation of a particular alternative are also discussed.

All of the following alternatives assume a major public investment to stabilize the cliff face.

Alternative I: Continuation of Existing Policies

"Cliff Walk"

Goal: Preserve the Cliff Walk as a scenic coastal trail

Under this alternative, strategies for protecting the Cliff Walk would continue to depend entirely on existing volunteer efforts and limited municipal support. The City of Newport or a local non-profit agency would continue a limited role in Cliff Walk management. However, it is recommended that the City take steps to negotiate formal easements for the walk from property owners. This action would serve to protect the continuity of the trail should erosion make segments of the walk impassable.

Development of the Cliff Walk would be limited to only the most modest improvements. An informational brochure and trail markings could do much to address the confusion and inaccurate expectations which are commonly held by Cliff Walk visitors. Small plaques placed along the walk would provide visitors with a self-guided tour. Properly informed about such issues as trail distance, walking time, level of difficulty, potential hazards and the absence of trail facilities, visitors could use the trail more judiciously and with greater enjoyment. Public parking facilities at strategic access points along the walk would be designed to generate revenue for ongoing management needs.

The key to this proposal is the continued active support of local groups of interested citizens, such as the "Forty Steps" Group and the Cliff Walk Commission, and the renewed support of the business community. Coordination between the City and private efforts would likely follow a pattern which draws on the strengths of both. For example, the City would take the lead in negotiating for trail easements and installing parking facilities. Private efforts would be focused on developing interpretive material, possibly through greater cooperation with the mansions open to the public along the Cliff Walk. Private efforts might also provide additional manpower needed for Cliff Walk maintenance.

The "Cliff Walk" alternative would continue informal use of the trail and encourage an independent experience for users. However, it provides only minimum development of historic themes related to the Cliff Walk and the Newport Mansions.

Impacts associated with this alternative include:

Retention of local autonomy in Cliff Walk management

Improved protection measures for trail continuity

Greater coordination of Cliff Walk management functions between the City, business community, and local volunteers

Expanded opportunities for visitor parking and interpretative services for visitors (plaques, brochures)

Continuing difficulties with the labor intensive tasks of litter control and pruning

Alternative II Local Initiative with State Assistance

"The Newport Mansions & The Cliff Walk"

Goal: Interpretation of the historic Cliff Walk within the context of the Newport Mansions

This alternative relies heavily on the use of existing capacities of municipal and state facilities in Newport in a cooperative management effort. At the same time, it calls for greater coordination between existing private organizations and institutions concerned with protecting the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Cliff Walk. In the past, the state has not been involved in Cliff Walk management. One means of establishing greater cooperation with state agencies would be the development of cooperative management agreement in which local municipal and private initiatives would trigger state assistance.

Local municipal initiatives would include:

Negotiating with property owners for acquisition or protective easements for the Cliff Walk with a stipulation requiring inland relocation of the trail should coastal erosion make repair work infeasible

Establishment of stronger local zoning regulations within the adjacent historic districts to protect visual access along the walk

Development of a public transportation link between the Newport Gateway Center and Cliff Walk access points

Establishment of a small Cliff Walk visitor facility to be operated by the state

Local private initiative would include

Formation of a "Friends of the Cliff Walk" organization comprised of local support groups which would function as the primary coordinator for a broad range of private initiatives such fundraising, organizing exhibits at the Gateway Center, annual clean-up days, and interpretive brochures

Having demonstrated local willingness to share in developing a management structure for the Cliff Walk through completion of its initiatives, state involvement would be activated. Drawing upon the resources of other state facilities situated in Newport, the state would provide:

Seasonal staff to promote a stronger management presence and operate the seasonal visitor center

Scheduled maintenance to handle trash pickup and shrub pruning (supplemented by annual volunteer efforts)

"The Newport Mansions & The Cliff Walk" offers greater development of the area's potential for tourism and greater protection for its valued resources. It is, in a sense, a partnership which can only work if each partner is willing to operate openly and flexibly. At the local level, the impetus to participate may come from groups outside the formal municipal government structure, as evidenced by the recent renovation of the Forty Steps. Partnership representatives from the state should be selected for sensitivity in dealing with local issues.

Alternative II: Estimate of Annual Operational Costs

ASSUMPTIONS:

- 1. This is basically a seasonal operation:
 Memorial Day to Labor Day - 7 days a week
 May & September - weekends
 VC will close for lunch (i.e, 7 hr/day open)
- 2. Facilities:
 Small Visitor Center on Walk
 Restrooms available on Walk
- 3. Optional:
 Manned Exhibit at Gateway Center

STAFFING:	Salary/Benefits/% of Year
Management:	
Project Coordinator (GS -09 or equiv)	\$27,000/6,000/1.0
Administrative Assist (GS-05 or equiv)	\$17,000/4,000/1.0
Info Services:	
Park Ranger (GS-025-05 or equiv)	\$12,000/1,000/.7
Maintenance:	
Maintenance Worker (WG-05 or equiv)	\$6,000/500/.4
Laborer (WG-03 or equiv)	\$5,000/500/.4

SUBTOTAL **\$79,000/3.5**

OTHER COSTS

Uniforms	\$1,000
Utilities	\$5,000
Supplies & Materials	\$16,000
Services	\$10,000
Travel	\$1,000
Capital Equipment	\$3,000
Printing	\$25,000
(250,000 Brochures @ .12 ea)	

SUBTOTAL **\$61,000**

TOTAL **\$140,000/3.5**

OPTIONAL

Park Ranger	\$12,000/1,000/.7
(GS-025-05)	
Uniform	\$500
Misc Support Costs	\$2,000

TOTAL **\$15,000/.7**

Alternative III: National and/or State Management

"Newport's Gilded Age"

Goal: Protect and interpret the Cliff Walk's cultural, natural and recreational themes, with particular emphasis on its heyday during the "Gilded Age" and its role in the history of leisure activities in the U.S..

This alternative offers the fullest interpretive development and preservation of the Cliff Walk's natural, scenic, and historic resources. This option would go beyond the previous options in using the Cliff Walk as a vehicle for geologic interpretation and the historic interpretation of life during the Gilded Age. The overall theme would be the Evolution of Leisure Time Activities in America.

Different sections of the Cliff Walk would be designed to offer a variety of walking experiences coordinated with interpretive themes. One section would offer a rocky scramble over natural cliff formations and would focus interpretation on the remarkable geologic features. Another section would highlight the historical development of the walk through design restoration of the historic promenade which existed during its Gilded Age heyday. Since the Cliff Walk's development is so closely intertwined with the life of Newport Mansions, interpretive development would also require coordination with the existing management of the Newport Mansions open to the public. The Cliff Walk would be managed by a small year-round staff, augmented during summer months and located in an on-site visitor facility. The Newport Gateway Center would also be utilized for the placement of ongoing exhibitions relating to the Cliff Walk.

Unified ownership of the trail corridor and scenic easements would be required for this level of development on the Cliff Walk. The National Park Service and/or Rhode Island's Department of Environmental Management would be responsible for development and operation of the site, in cooperation with local nonprofit agencies and the City. As outlined in Alternative II, state or federal action might be contingent on local initiatives to assure involvement.

Some of the likely impacts associated with this option include:

Regulations governing the development of lands adjacent to the Cliff Walk to preserve its historic context

Restricted patterns and hours of use to insure safety and preservation of the resource

Safety fencing and barriers to control pedestrian movement along the Cliff Walk

Establishment of a user fee structure

Expansion of parking facilities at major public access points along the Cliff Walk

The management proposals discussed in Alternative III reflect a level of protection commensurate with the significance of the resources which comprise the Cliff Walk. It should be noted, however, that the national significance of the Cliff Walk's resources -cultural, natural and recreational- justify consideration of regulations pertaining to development on adjacent lands, changes in user patterns and expansion of facilities for visitors, including rest facilities and transportation to major public parking areas. This proposal contemplates such actions; the result would be a permanently preserved, protected and enhanced Cliff Walk. To a much greater extent than the other proposals, Alternative III maximizes the likelihood that the Cliff Walk will be enjoyed in the future as it has been in the past.

Alternative III: Estimate of Annual Operational Costs

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. This alternative envisions a year round operation with operations varying by season. Daily June through August; Weekends November through March; 5 days a week, spring and fall.

Highlights of the proposed alternative include:

- Major Visitor Center with Exhibits and Audio-Visual Program
- Manned Exhibit at Gateway Center
- Extensive Cooperative Agreements with other groups in the area
- Restrooms on the walk
- Interpretive markers along the Walk with special guided tours during the summer
- Periodic Special Events
- No law enforcement authority per se; support to uniformed interpretive rangers provided by the City of Newport
- Significantly higher level of maintenance

STAFFING:	Salary/Benefits/% of Year
Management:	
Park Manager (GS-12 or equiv)	\$38,000/9,000/1.0
Management Assistant (GS -11 or equiv)	\$32,000/8,000/1.0
Secretary (GS-5 or equiv)	\$17,000/4,000/1.0
Administration:	
Administrative Officer (GS-9 or equiv)	\$27,000/6,000/1.0
Purchasing Agent (GS-5 or equiv)	\$17,000/4,000/1.0
Administrative Tech (Typing) (GS-5 or equiv)	\$17,000/4,000/1.0

Interpretation: (Info Services)	
Supervisory Park Ranger (GS-9 or equiv)	\$27,000/6,000/1.0
Park Ranger (GS-5 Perm or equiv)	\$52,000/13,000/3.0
Park Ranger (GS-5 Temp or equiv)	\$10,000/1,000/.6
Park Ranger (GS-4 Temp or equiv)	\$23,000/2,000/1.5
Maintenance:	
Foreman (WS-7 or equiv)	\$25,000/6,000/1.0
Journeyman Level Trade (WG-9 or equiv)	\$20,000/5,000/1.0
Maintenance Worker (WG-6 or equiv)	\$18,000/4,000/1.0
Maintenance Worker (WG-5 or equiv)	\$17,000/4,000/1.0
Laborer (WG-03 or equiv)	\$15,000/4,000/1.0
Laborer (WG-3 Temp or equiv)	\$21,000/2,000/1.4
Laborer (WG-2 Temp or equiv)	\$11,000/1,000/.8
SUBTOTAL	\$470,000/19.3
OTHER COSTS:	
Uniforms	\$7,000
Travel	\$7,000
Transportation	\$3,000
Utilities	\$12,000
Supplies & Materials	\$56,000
Services	\$35,000
Printing	\$60,000
Capital Equipment	\$10,000
Cooperative Agreements/ Special Events	\$20,000
SUBTOTAL	\$210,000
TOTAL	\$680,000/19.3

OPERATIONAL COSTS

General Basis for Formulation

1. Operational costs are estimated on the basis of a typical year's operation and costed in 1989 dollars.
2. Operational start-up costs were not included (i.e., acquiring desks, office equipment, tools, basic supplies and materials, etc.).
3. Development costs were not included and need to be considered in evaluating the various alternatives.
4. All salaries calculated are for federal employees using the General Schedule Pay Chart effective January 1989 and the Federal Wage System Rates for Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, effective 8 March 1988.
5. Benefits were calculated at 25 % for permanent employees assuming all employees would be covered by the FERS Retirement System and 8% benefits were used for seasonal/temporary employees.
6. Salaries were based on Step 4 for General Schedule Employees and Step 3 for Wage System Employees.

FINAL WORD: PARTNERSHIPS

Cliff Walk management has always been a cooperative venture. Historically the walk's existence depended on the collective support of the property owners who privately funded all facets of its management, from everyday maintenance to major investments for seawall stabilization. Major public investment in recent years also reflects this cooperative approach, chiefly through cost-sharing by the City, State and Federal governments.

This report emphasizes the value of partnership, drawing on the strengths of all levels of government and the private sector, in seeking a viable management structure for the Cliff Walk. Some of the possible roles for a Cliff Walk partnership have begun to take shape during the course of this study.

For example, the City has capability in addressing the law enforcement and security needs of the Cliff Walk. The City is also the obvious choice for handling negotiations with property owners. The State has the local facilities and manpower, on the other hand, for solving the Cliff Walk's ongoing maintenance needs. The Federal role may take the form of technical assistance in the area of resource interpretation.

In any case, the full and creative involvement of Federal, State and Local government and non-profit organizations is essential to this proposal; all have vital roles to play under this proposal if the full protection and potential of the Cliff Walk is to be realized.

Acknowledgements

Cliff Walk Study Team

Terry W. Savage, Chief, Office of Planning & Design
Steve Golden, Manager, River & Trail Conservation
Charles Tracy, Landscape Architect
Dwight Pitcaithley, Historian
Janet Wolf, Management Specialist
Matthew Lynaugh, Graphic Designer
Jeff Krueger, Cartographer

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Contributors

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Steve C. Yadoff, Coordinator, Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Council

Everett Stuart, Soil Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service USDA

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Bruce Bartlett, Director, Newport Department of Planning, Zoning and Development

Christopher Zepp, Planner, Newport Department of Planning, Zoning and Development

Dr. Fred R. Alofsin, Chairman, Newport Cliff Walk Commission

APPENDIX

[State and Local Resolutions of Support for the Cliff Walk]

A. Newport City Council

B. Rhode Island House of Representatives

C. Rhode Island State Senate

RESOLUTION
OF THE
COUNCIL

No. 33-82.....

- WHEREAS, on December 10, 1986, by Resolution No. 96-86, the Council of the City of Newport considered Cliff Walk as a candidate for inclusion in the National Park System; and
- WHEREAS, on January 13, 1988, the Council of the City of Newport, by Resolution No. 4-88, reaffirmed the position of the City regarding the consideration of Cliff Walk as a component of the National Park System; and
- WHEREAS, the Final Draft Report prepared by the National Parks Service, a division of the Department of Interior, has been prepared and indicates that the Cliff Walk is a nationally significant resource; and
- WHEREAS, the Final Draft Report is to be presented to Congress in the near future; and
- WHEREAS, the Final Draft Report, while recognizing the Cliff Walk's national significance, remains silent on a recommendation for inclusion of the Cliff Walk into the National Park System. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT
- RESOLVED: that the Council of the City of Newport respectfully requests the Secretary of the Department of Interior to include a recommendation in the Final Draft Report for inclusion of the Cliff Walk into the National Park System prior to its submittal to the U. S. Congress. AND BE IT FURTHER
- RESOLVED: that copies of this resolution be forwarded to the State of Rhode Island's Congressional Delegation, the Governor of the State of Rhode Island, and the City's State Legislative Delegation, requesting their assistance in securing national park status for the Cliff Walk. AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLUTION
OF THE
COUNCIL

No. ...33-88.....
Page Two

RESOLVED: that the City of Newport, the State of Rhode Island, and the United States Government work closely together in developing the appropriate management plan and implementation schedule for the restoration, protection and preservation of the Cliff Walk.

THE NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL

IN COUNCIL

READ AND PASSED

March 8, 1989


Jane A. McManus, CMC
City Clerk

89--H6053 SUBSTITUTE A
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 1989

A N A C T

AUTHORIZING THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND TO ISSUE
GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS AND NOTES IN AN AMOUNT
NOT TO EXCEED \$61,500,000 FOR THE PURPOSES OF
ACQUIRING AND PRESERVING OPEN SPACE, ACQUIRING,
PRESERVING, RESTORING OR IMPROVING RECREATIONAL AREAS,
FINANCING CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS TO ROGER WILLIAMS PARK,
FINANCING THE RESTORATION OF THE CLIFFWALK IN NEWPORT
AND FINANCING AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION

Introduced By: Reps. Boyle, Weygand, Teitz,
Hernandez and B. Kennedy

Date Introduced: February 9, 1989

Referred To: Committee on Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Proposition to be submitted to the
2 people.--
3 At the next general or special election there shall be
4 submitted to the people of the State of Rhode Island for their
5 approval or rejection the following proposition:
6 "Shall the act, passed by the general assembly at
7 the January session, 1989, entitled, 'An Act Authorizing the
8 State of Rhode Island to Issue General Obligation Bonds and
9 Notes in an Amount Not to Exceed \$61,500,000 for the Purposes
10 of Acquiring and Preserving Open Space, Acquiring, Preserving,
11 Restoring or Improving Recreational Areas, Financing Certain
12 Improvements to Roger Williams Park, Financing the Restoration
13 of the Cliffwalk in Newport and Financing Agricultural Land
14 Preservation', be approved?"
15 SECTION 2. Ballot labels and applicability of general

1 election laws.--

2 The secretary of state shall prepare and turn over to
3 the state board of elections ballot labels for the proposition
4 provided for in section 2 hereof with the words "approve" or
5 "reject" next to such proposition so that each voter may
6 indicate his or her approval or rejection of such proposition.
7 The general election laws, so far as consistent herewith, shall
8 apply to voting on the proposition authorized for in section 1
9 hereof.

10 SECTION 3. Approval of proposition by people.--

11 If a majority of the people voting on the proposition
12 provided for in section 1 hereof shall vote to approve said
13 proposition, said proposition shall be deemed to be approved.

14 SECTION 4. Bonds for acquisition and preservation of
15 open space and recreational areas.--

16 The general treasurer is hereby authorized and
17 empowered with the approval of the governor and in accordance
18 with the provisions of this act, to issue from time to time
19 bonds (hereinafter sometimes referred to as "open space and
20 recreational area bonds") in serial or term form in the name
21 and on behalf of the state in such amounts as may be specified
22 from time to time by the governor in an aggregate principal
23 amount not to exceed \$35,000,000 to be designated as "open
24 space and recreational area bonds", provided, however, that the
25 aggregate principal amount of such bonds and of any temporary
26 notes outstanding at any one time issued in anticipation
27 thereof pursuant to section 7 hereof shall not exceed
28 \$35,000,000. All provisions in this act relating to "bonds"
29 shall also be deemed to apply to "refunding bonds."

30 Such open space and recreational area bonds shall be
31 in denominations of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) each, or
32 multiples thereof, and shall be payable in any coin or currency
33 of the United States which at the time of payment shall be

SENATE RESOLUTION
RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE SECRETARY OF
THE INTERIOR TO INCLUDE THE NEWPORT
CLIFF WALK AS PART OF THE NATIONAL PARK
SYSTEM

Presented by

David R. Curtis

IN THE SENATE MAR 10, 1969
Robert F. Welch
Read and PASSED Reading Clerk

PD3513

89 MAR 29 AM 9:4

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 1989

SENATE RESOLUTION

RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO INCLUDE THE NEWPORT CLIFF WALK AS PART OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

Introduced By: Senators Kerins and Carlin
Date Introduced: March 16, 1989
Referred To: Senate Read and Passed

1 WHEREAS, On December 10, 1986, by Resolution No. 9686, the council
2 of the city of Newport considered Cliff Walk as a candidate for
3 inclusion in the National Park System; and
4 WHEREAS, On January 13, 1988, the council of the city of Newport,
5 by Resolution No. 4-88, reaffirmed the position of the city regarding
6 the consideration of Cliff Walk as a component of the National Park
7 System; and
8 WHEREAS, The Final Draft Report prepared by the National Parks
9 Service, a division of the Department of Interior, has been prepared
10 and indicates that the Cliff Walk is a nationally significant
11 resource; and
12 WHEREAS, The Final Draft Report is to be presented to Congress in
13 the near future; and
14 WHEREAS, The Final Draft Report, while recognizing the Cliff
15 Walk's national significance, remains silent on a recommendation for
16 inclusion of the Cliff Walk into the National Park System; now, there-
17 fore, be it

A TRUE COPY
ATTEST
[Signature]
SECRETARY OF STATE

1 RESOLVED, That this senate of the state of Rhode Island and
2 Providence Plantations hereby respectfully requests the Secretary of
3 the Department of the Interior to include a recommendation in the
4 Final Draft Report for inclusion of the Cliff Walk into the National
5 Park System prior to its submittal to the United States Congress; and
6 be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the city of Newport, the State of Rhode Island and
8 Providence Plantations, and the United State Government work closely
9 together in developing the appropriate management plan and implementa-
10 tion schedule for the restoration, protection and preservation of the
11 Cliff Walk; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the secretary of state be and she hereby is
13 authorized and directed to transmit duly certified copies of this
14 resolution to the Secretary of the Department of Interior, the Gover-
15 nor of Rhode Island and to each member of the Rhode Island delegation
16 to the United States Congress.

PD3513
