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Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
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Designation of Ellisville Harbor as an
Area of Critical Environmental Concern
and Supporting Findings

Following an extensive process, including nomination, research, informal meetings with local groups, public information meetings, public hearings, on-site visits, and a formal evaluation of all assembled data, I, the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, hereby designate Ellisville Harbor an Area of Critical Environmental Concern pursuant to the authority granted to me by G.L. c. 21A, s. 2(7).

I also hereby, find that the Ellisville Harbor ACEC is significant to flood control, the prevention of storm damage, the protection of land containing shellfish and fisheries; public interests protected by the Wetlands Protection Act, G.L. c. 131, s. 40.

1. Boundary of the Ellisville Harbor ACEC

The Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) extends from the intersection of the southerly side line of Mayflower Lane and the easterly side line of Center Hill Road, near Center Hill Point, in a southerly direction along the easterly side line of Center Hill Road to the point of intersection with the easterly side line of Route 3A. The ACEC boundary then extends in a southerly direction along the easterly side line of Route 3A to a point of the second intersection with the easterly side line of Ellisville Road. The ACEC boundary extends from this point of intersection in a southerly direction along the easterly side line of Route 3A to a point of the third intersection with the easterly side line of Ellisville Road and continues from this point in a southerly direction to the point of the intersection of the northerly side line of George Street. The ACEC boundary then extends in an easterly direction along the northerly side line of George Street to the eastern most point of George Street and thence in a straight line to the mean low water (MLW) line. The ACEC boundary then proceeds from this point in a northerly direction following the MLW line to a point of intersection with the southerly side of the entrance to the Ellisville Harbor inlet channel. The ACEC boundary continues to follow the MLW line of the southerly side of the Ellisville Harbor inlet channel in a northwesterly direction to a point of intersection coincident with the landward limit of the coastal dunes which comprise the barrier beach spit immediately south of Ellisville Harbor inlet channel. From this point of intersection, the ACEC boundary extends straight across the Ellisville Harbor inlet channel in a northerly direction by the shortest distance to the point of intersection with the MLW line on the northerly side of the Ellisville Harbor inlet channel.

The ACEC boundary then extends from this point of intersection following the MLW line in an easterly direction along the northerly side of the Ellisville Harbor inlet channel. At the northerly side of the entrance to the Ellisville Harbor inlet channel, the ACEC boundary continues along the MLW line in a northerly direction to a point of intersection with a straight line which extends in an easterly direction from the southerly side line of Mayflower Lane. From this point of intersection the ACEC boundary follows the above-mentioned straight line and the southerly side line of Mayflower Lane in a westerly direction to the point of origin.

II. Designation of the Resources of Ellisville Harbor

The Ellisville Harbor area is an extensive and largely unaltered resource system. Among the natural components of the system, many are specified as Significant Resource Areas (SRA's) in the Massachusetts CZM Program. These include a barrier beach system, dunes, three miles of sandy beach, 55 acres of salt marsh, productive shellfish beds, 195 acres of floodplain, and numerous significant scenic sites. The area is a spawning and nursery ground for many marine species as well as an important habitat for upland species and waterfowl. The beaches, dunes, and salt marshes provide protection against storms for low lying inland areas. The area clearly meets the regulatory criterion of the ACEC Program, that an area proposed for designation must contain at least five of the Specified Significant Resource Areas.

III. Procedures Leading to ACEC Designation

The Ellisville Harbor area was first proposed for ACEC designation by the Plymouth Conservation Commission in November of 1978. Active planning began in December, 1978. Public information meetings were held in January, March and June of 1979 at the Little Red School House in Plymouth. These meetings were attended by local officials, a member of the Conservation Commission, members of the CZM Citizens Advisory Committee, local residents and property owners.

On January 30, 1979, the Board of Selectmen unanimously voted to endorse the nomination. As a result of the aforesaid actions, I called for a full public review of the proposed area, which took place on November 29, 1979.

Notice of the receipt of the nomination request and a public hearing notice were published in the Environmental Monitor on November 23, 1979. The public hearing notice also appeared in two local newspapers: the Old Colony Memorial and the Patriot Ledger. Additional information on the area was collected by the CZM staff in consultation with local officials, town boards and natural resource officers. The results of this research were forwarded for comment and review to the Selectmen, Conservation Commissions, Planning Boards and members of the CZM Citizens Advisory Committee for the Plymouth area. Copies also went to interested individuals and were available to the general public upon request.

A public hearing was conducted on November 29, 1979 in the Little Red School House in Cedarville. The record testimony was largely favorable. There were eleven residents of the Plymouth area in attendance. As a result of questions raised by an attorney representing one of the landowners, a comprehensive response was drafted by CZM legal staff and sent to the attorney and other interested persons.

The hearing record remained open until December 10, 1979 for those persons who wished to submit written comments. No written comments were received.

IV. Discussion of Factors Specified in Section 6.48 of the CZM Program Regulations

Prior to designation of an area as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, the Secretary must consider the factors specified in Section 6.48 of the CZM Program regulations. Based on research and information from local residents, I find the following factors are applicable to the Ellisville Harbor area.

Quality of Natural Characteristics: The area possesses outstanding natural characteristics. The vegetation and wildlife habitat is diverse. To a certain extent, the area is undeveloped; marsh production is unimpaired; the dunes offer highly effective storm protection; and the unpolluted water helps create optimal conditions for shellfish and waterfowl.

Public Health: The area has a high water table. Building in certain areas may create health problems. The use of the harbor and coastal waters for shellfishing and fishing is dependent upon maintaining the high water quality that exists. Any pollutants discharged into these waters could adversely affect the health and safety of the users. Public safety could also be threatened if dune destruction occurs. Currently, they act as a storm buffer protecting the harbor and residential areas.

Uniqueness: Ellisville is an area on the Massachusetts coast that remains undeveloped. A scenic rural quality is given to the area by the farms where horses graze on the upland meadows, by a small harbor that shelters several commercial lobster boats, and by a small cluster of homes known as Ellisville Center.

Irreversibility of Impact: The destruction of dunes and marshland is generally irreversible. Uncontrolled development can exacerbate coastal bluff and dune erosion. This may lead directly to potentially greater damage to adjacent homes, beaches, and shellfish resources. Siltation of ponds and marsh areas could cause adverse effect on aquatic and marine life.

Economic Benefits: The barrier beaches of Ellisville Harbor provide an important buffer to storm wave damage. The protection of the adjacent harbor, marshlands and uplands is provided without cost. Without this

naturally functioning system, costly man-made structures would have to be constructed. Although the long-term effectiveness of any of these structures against storm damage is questionable, the costs of maintaining these structures are not.

Ellisville Harbor is also the site for a small amount of shellfishing. In addition, the harbor also serves as a mooring area for 7 commercial lobstermen. Historically, marsh haying was an important economic activity.

Supporting Factors: The ACEC designation will help support local efforts to protect this area. There is also a strong consensus among the area residents that Ellisville Harbor ought to be protected.



JOHN A. BEWICK
Secretary of Environmental Affairs

1/16/80

Date