

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

RELATIVE TO

PROVIDING FOR THE ACQUISITION BY THE

COMMONWEALTH OF SOUTH CAPE BEACH

IN THE TOWN OF MASHPEE AND THE

MAINTENANCE THEREOF.

January 1, 1969.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
STATE OFFICE BUILDING, GOVERNMENT CENTER
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON, December 18, 1968.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives:

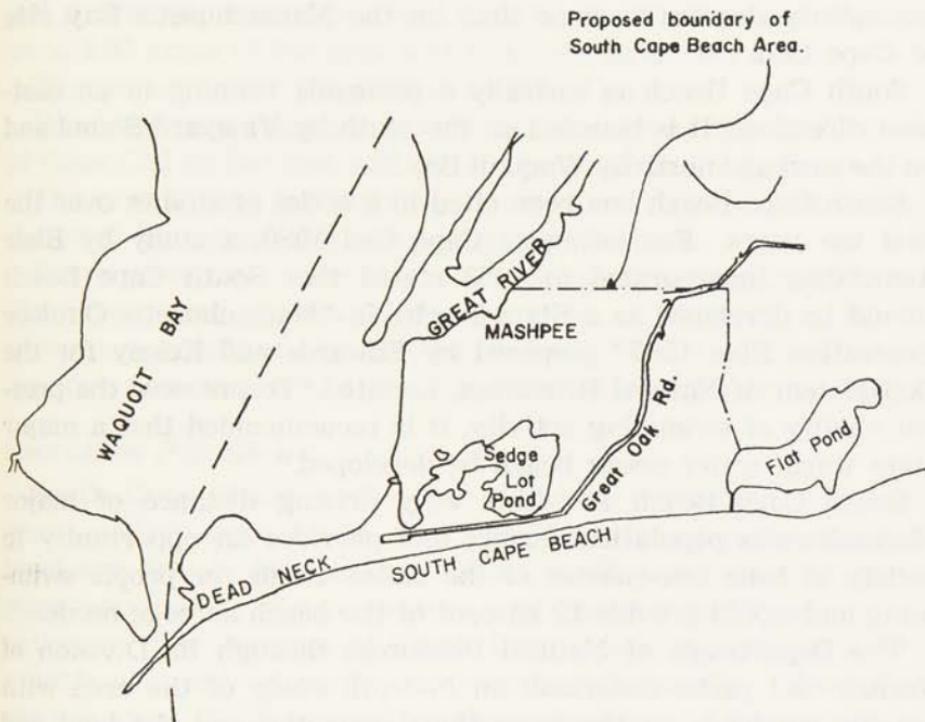
The General Court adopted the following measure in the form of Chapter 116, Resolves of 1968.

It resolved for an investigation and study by the Department of Natural Resources relative to providing for the acquisition by the Commonwealth of South Cape Beach in the Town of Mashpee and the maintenance thereof.

In accordance with the authorization given in the above Resolve, the Department of Natural Resources submits the following report.

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT L. YASI, *Commissioner*



SOUTH CAPE BEACH STUDY
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

SOUTH CAPE BEACH

INTRODUCTION

South Cape Beach is located in the Town of Mashpee on Cape Cod. It abuts Vineyard Sound where average water temperatures are twenty degrees warmer than on the Massachusetts Bay side of Cape Cod.

South Cape Beach is basically a peninsula running in an east-west direction. It is bounded on the south by Vineyard Sound and on the west and north by Waquoit Bay.

South Cape Beach has been cited in a series of studies over the past ten years. For example: Cape Cod 1980, a study by Blair Associates, Incorporated in 1963 stated that South Cape Beach should be developed as a State beach. In "Massachusetts Outdoor Recreation Plan 1966" prepared by Edwards and Kelcey for the Department of Natural Resources, it stated "To preserve the present quality of swimming activity, it is recommended that a major state warm water ocean beach be developed."

South Cape Beach is within easy driving distance of major Massachusetts population centers and provides an opportunity to satisfy at least one-quarter of the states' needs for people swimming and would provide 12 percent of the beach acreage needs.

The Department of Natural Resources through its Division of Forests and parks undertook an in-depth study of the area with specific emphasis on the recreational potential and the land and water needed to contain the recreation values.

THE STUDY OF SOUTH CAPE BEACH

Description of the Area

The area studied at South Cape Beach encompassed an area from the west shore of Flat Pond westerly to the jetty at the entrance to Waquoit Bay then northerly along the easterly shore of Waquoit Bay to the entrance of Great River, so-called, then easterly to the Great Oak Road and then due south to the westerly shore of Flat Pond.

The beach is characterized by being generally flat. It is broken

only occasionally by a low sand dune with sparse vegetation. The vegetation consists of dune grasses, bayberry and wild rose. The area behind Sedge Lot Pond is characterized by gentle sloping topography and is heavily wooded. Vegetation is composed of marsh grasses, low shrubs, pitch pine and various oaks.

The area is totally undeveloped with the exception of access and parking by means of Great Oak Road. The Town of Mashpee owns 4.09 acres of the area which is used as a town beach.

The remainder of the area is privately owned.

Wind and water damage have been extensive on the south shores of Cape Cod in the past and can be expected in the future.

The area is used heavily during the summer by swimmers, boaters, surf fishermen and beach buggy enthusiasts.

Litter currently contaminates the beach, dunes and access road. The access road, maintained by the Town of Mashpee, is in relatively poor condition. No sanitation facilities are available. Buildings from previous development have been destroyed by vandalism.

Recreation Potential

South Cape Beach is the last major opportunity to provide a warm water ocean beach on Cape Cod. Increasingly, available town and private beaches are finding it difficult to provide swimming opportunity for permanent and summer residents and vacationers. The location of South Cape Beach is ideally suited to provide a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. The following are some of the recreation values found within the study area:

THE BEACH

South Cape Beach proper is composed of approximately 190 acres of beach and low dunes. On Vineyard Sound, the beach extends for a distance of 10,000 feet. On Waquoit Bay the beach and shoreline extends over 5,000 feet.

Approximately one-half mile of the beach located southeast of Sedge Lot Pond is ideally suited to development as a major beach facility including a parking lot, sanitation facilities and clothing change facilities. This would be an area of approximately 50 acres of beach devoted to swimming and beach use under adequate supervision. Dead Neck on the west and the remainder of the

beach to the east would be left natural and would be used by the bathers, fishermen and surfers under limited supervision.

The total beach area would be kept as natural as possible to provide an outdoor experience that cannot be matched for many miles around. It would undoubtedly be one of the most unique and popular beaches on the eastern seaboard of the United States.

WAQUOIT BAY

The area bordering on Waquoit Bay provides approximately 3,000 feet of beach protected from wave action normally found on the Vineyard Sound side. From the inlet of Sedge Lot Pond north to the mouth of Great River, the shoreline is made up of woody growth, marsh grasses and flats.

This area is high in shellfish production. (It is reported that the annual sales of shellfish and shellfishing permits in the Towns of Falmouth and Mashpee exceed 75 thousand dollars.) Good bottom fishing exists in all of Waquoit Bay plus excellent striped bass and bluefish fishing.

Migratory waterfowl abound here during both fall and spring migrations. These include swans, geese and a great variety of ducks and shore birds.

The major recreation potential in this area is fishing, hunting, nature walks and boat access to Waquoit Bay.

PICNICKING AND CAMPING

The area west of Great Oak Road and north of Sedge Lot Pond provides excellent opportunities for a picnic facility. Connected with this is an excellent bathing opportunity.

The area east of Great Oak Road and north of Sedge Lot Pond is valuable for a wide range of year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, buffered from neighboring private lands, including hiking, picnicking and riding.

This area appears to have potential for camping, but this requires further study to determine feasibility and alternative solutions to satisfy this regional demand.

The general Study area is without question, a unique area which

can provide swimming, surfing, fishing, shellfishing, upland and migratory bird hunting, bird watching, nature study, hiking, camping, picnicking or just quiet enjoyment of the last piece of Massachusetts coastal area relatively undisturbed by Man. Proper design and maintenance of facilities can and should maintain and improve the unique naturalness of this area.

NEEDS FOR ACQUISITION

The study team considered the ultimate needs to protect the South Cape Beach area and to provide adequate buffer between this proposed State facility and adjacent private land.

In 1960, the Massachusetts Department of Public Works had a survey done of South Cape Beach. The survey was to be the base for the acquisition of 121.69 acres of beach, marsh and water.

Based on the determination that South Cape Beach could provide a greater variety of outdoor recreation opportunities than just a swimming facility, the Department has determined that approximately 402 acres would have to be acquired to adequately satisfy the development of a state area, which could provide recreation opportunities year-round. This would include the 4 acres of beach now owned by the Town of Mashpee. It would further require that Great Oak Road be improved to provide a satisfactory access to this unit of land.

PROPOSED FACILITIES

In such a recreation unit, administration buildings would be required in addition to sanitation facilities, shelters, park roads, trails, tables and fireplaces and possible interpretive buildings and observation platforms. Forest fire fighting equipment would be located on the unit and suitable fire trails and water would be needed to adequately protect the area.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Department of Natural Resources, under its existing statutory authority consider South Cape Beach in determining its over-all priorities of acquisition throughout the Commonwealth and prepare such further plans as may be justified under the State Outdoor Recreation Plan.

