

DRAFT

TOWN of WETHERSFIELD

HARBOR MANAGEMENT
PLAN

Foreword

After its brief 19th-century heyday as a trading center, the town of Wethersfield became a sleepy village once more, changing little until the currents of industrialization and suburbanization made it a bedroom community for the city of Hartford. For generations, its rich history including the largest historic district in the State, placid Cove, and wetlands, has defined the image and character of the town.

But as the historic town of Wethersfield enters the twenty-first century, its scenic Wethersfield Cove and riverscape and quality of life have been rediscovered as a waterfront destination. The town and its charming setting have become a popular spot for recreation and tourism. It has become a premier destination for tourists to the largest historic district in Connecticut. Visitors arrive by tour boats, (when water depth permits) and private vessels. Tourism is an important revenue source for our Town.

The new found popularity, the revitalized Wethersfield Cove Yacht Club, and resurgence of recreational fishing, are reflected in increased pressures for waterfront facility development and boating opportunities, posing a number of challenges to Wethersfield's coastal management. The most challenging have been the demand for a new modern dock system, increased mooring capacity, and maintaining the entrance channel to The Cove as a navigable waterway serving the increasing number of boaters. The popularity of canoes and kayaks has boomed in Wethersfield aided in part by the canoe and kayak accessibility to the Connecticut River. This popularity has in turn caused overcrowding and delays at the Town boat launch, and led to calls for additional paddle-craft access points. The increasing level of motorized marine traffic has led to increased demand for dock space and a dock and boat launch ramp that is accessible during the frequent high water conditions. The Harbormaster emphasized the need for the Town to install a new dock system and boat ramp and dredge the channel. Increased boating traffic of all types has given rise to numerous use conflict issues, ranging from complaints of jet skis zooming around The Cove to paddlers harassing wildlife, to fishermen interfering with boaters and beachgoers. All of these issues reflect the challenges Wethersfield must face in managing its future in the face of rapid change.

The Harbor Management Commission, in cooperation with other town agencies and citizens groups, has undertaken the development of a Harbor Management Plan. Once this document is approved, the Commission will submit it to the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) for formal approval and finally to the Wethersfield Town Council for final approval by adoption of the enacting ordinances. Pursuant to §22a-113n (b) (1) of the CGS, The Commission will also recommend to the DEEP that this Plan be incorporated into water use and development boundaries designated under CGS §22a-360, with the approved plan serving as the "general plan for the region" required under the latter statute.

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Wethersfield Harbor Management Plan

I. Existing Conditions: Town of Wethersfield

A. Physical Setting

The jurisdiction of the Harbor Management Commission includes the tidal and intertidal waters below the mean high water line within the territorial limits of the Town including the Wethersfield Cove and its entrance channel. This area of jurisdiction – the Town’s Harbor Management Area” (HMA) – is bounded on the north by the City of Hartford, and on the east by the centerline of the Connecticut River. It is delineated on *Appendix A*. The channel was dredged to a minimum depth of six feet in 1986, but gradually fills and shoals. It consistently shoals at the south entrance marker and at the west end of the channel. Some bank erosion exists along the north shore of the channel. The Cove includes a dredged anchorage/mooring area of 30 acres that was dredged to a minimum depth of six feet and an average depth of approximately eleven feet. There is some sedimentation in the north end of the Cove where the flats are expanding southward. The water quality currently prohibits swimming. There is no known biological habitat in the Cove or channel. The entire area is subject to frequent flooding particularly during spring and fall. The 100 year flood boundary is shown on *Appendix B*.

B. History

Wethersfield was first founded in 1634 when the pilgrims ventured south to warmer climes and fertile soil along the Connecticut River. The Connecticut River was integral to the development of Wethersfield’s prosperity and growth as a town. The river was far too shallow for large trading vessels to sail above Wethersfield, making the town the farthest shipping port into interior Connecticut. In 1649 Thomas Deming built the first Connecticut Colony’s vessel, the Tryall, in today’s Cove. Goods from the West Indies, Britain, Portugal, the Mediterranean, Ireland, South America and the northeastern ports of Boston and New York were all being exchanged at Wethersfield. Six warehouses lined the bank of the river ready to store goods for trade. Wethersfield was a bustling shipping center; not only was the trade beneficial to merchants, but also local farmers were able to

sell to faraway places items such as wheat, Indian corn, peas, rye, wool, flax, flaxseed, hemp, salt beef, salt pork, shipbread, barley, apple cider, cornmeal, flour and, of course, onions. During the flood of 1692 the deep water shipping port was transformed into a Cove. The Cove, as it is now today, became obsolete for commerce and was transformed into a place of recreation.

The waterfront environment has an overall positive effect on the Town's character and quality of life and is a source of income to the Town of Wethersfield. The Town has 20 (with room for an additional 48), town-maintained moorings that are rented by the season. The Town also maintains a boat launch ramp and sells approximately 100 seasonal and 800 daily launch permits. Some important concerns are associated with current and future conditions in and near the Wethersfield Cove and Connecticut River. The major concerns regard boating safety, water quality, protection of wetlands, public access to the water, dredging, and management responsibilities.

In response to these challenges, the Town of Wethersfield has established a Harbor Management Commission. The Harbor Management Commission is authorized to exercise all the powers and duties conferred on such a commission by the State Legislature through the passage of the Connecticut Harbor Management Act of 1984 and any subsequent changes enacted by the State Legislature and the Wethersfield Town Council.

C. Land Use

The Wethersfield Cove is bordered on the north and northeast by undeveloped flood plain and includes a wildlife preserve in the City of Hartford. The southeast, south and southwest section is bordered by parkland owned and maintained by the Town of Wethersfield. The west section is bordered by historical preservation lands that are primarily residential, private property and include the Wethersfield Cove Yacht Club. The remaining area within the Commission's jurisdiction is bordered primarily by undeveloped flood plain southward along the Connecticut River, but does include an office park (light industry) and agricultural land that is

used by local farmers. The approved land uses in the harbor management area are shown on the zoning map designated as *Appendix C*.

D. Water Use

The water use areas of Wethersfield Cove include an entrance channel with aids to navigation maintained by the US Coast Guard, and a mooring and anchorage area designated as Federal waters, regulated and maintained by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The Cove water use areas also include tidal and intertidal flats in the northern section, areas for fishing, an area for future swimming when permitted, as well as unrestricted navigable waters. The Cove waters are enhanced by a dock system, a boat launch ramp, and moorings maintained by the Town of Wethersfield. The Cove also has a dock system and moorings owned and maintained by the Wethersfield Cove Yacht Club. Both Town and Yacht Club facilities are maintained under the jurisdiction of the Harbormasters. Water use areas are delineated on the map designated as *Appendix D*.

E. Jurisdictions:

1. Federal

- a. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- b. U. S. Coast Guard

2. State

- a. Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
- b. Department of Transportation
- c. Department of Public Health

3. Regional

- a. Metropolitan District Commission
- b. Central Connecticut Health District

4. Local

- a. Town council
- b. Police Department – Marine Unit
- c. Fire Department
- d. Harbor Management Commission
- e. Parks & Recreation Department

- f. Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission
- g. Historic District Commission
- h. Planning and Zoning Commission
- i. Zoning Board of Appeals

F. Harbor Management Issues:

1. Maintenance of consistently accessible public and private marina space and boat launching areas.
2. Maintenance of adequate navigable water depth and width in the entrance channel from the River into and including the anchorage area.
3. Efficient utilization and arrangement of moorings within the anchorage area.
4. Maintenance of safe harbor and shore access for transient vessels.
5. Protection of Wethersfield's tidal wetlands.
6. Protection of unique wildlife areas.
7. Management of appropriate restrictions on water uses and users in order to minimize conflict between competing activities.
8. Coordination of harbor information and activity among agencies, commissions, departments with interests in the use and regulation of the water and waterfront.
9. Protection of coastal property from damage caused by periodic flooding.
10. Assurance of safe operation of all vessels within the harbor.

II. GOALS

A. Harbor Management Goals:

1. Regulate the use of the harbor to resolve conflicts between harbor uses, in a manner which provides for the safe, orderly and efficient use of the water and waterfront.
2. Provide for water dependent uses in areas suitable for supporting such development.
3. Respond to the increasing demand for coastal recreational opportunities by:
 - a. Giving highest priority and preference to water dependent uses in suitable waterfront locations.

- b. Encouraging the development of marine recreational facilities including pump-out equipment.
 - c. Pursuing opportunities for improving existing access and providing new areas for public access.
4. Provide for the maintenance and enhancement of Wethersfield's existing (Federal) navigation channels, and anchorages.
 5. Provide for the efficient and equitable distribution of public, commercial and private moorings.
 6. Provide adequate anchorage, mooring, and dockage for the public and sufficient anchorage with shore access for transient boaters so that the harbor is open to all on an equitable basis.
 7. Provide for public utilization and enjoyment of the waterfront by preserving Wethersfield's historic maritime character and by encouraging maritime uses which create additional opportunities for public access.
 8. Recognize the importance, both historically and economically, of the town's tourism industry and take appropriate measures to ensure its growth and continued viability.
 9. Provide unobstructed access to (Federal) navigation channels, anchorages and harbor facilities.
 10. Encourage non-structural solutions to flood and erosion problems except in those instances where structural alternatives, (e.g. groins, sea walls, revetments) prove unavoidable and necessary to protect existing inhabited structures, roads, sewer and water lines, other utilities, or water dependent uses.
 11. Protect Wethersfield's tidal wetlands from further degradation.
 12. Maintain the value of the wildlife habitat and Wethersfield's recreational open space.
 13. Improve water quality in the harbor.
 14. Improve existing waterfront facilities, as needed.

III. Policies

To implement the goals presented in Section II.A, the following items are included as part of the Wethersfield Harbor Management Plan: a water use plan, transient anchorage plan, mooring grids, and harbor administration plan.

A. Water Use Plan

The Wethersfield Water Use Plan represents the Harbor Management Commission's policies for conservation, development and use of Wethersfield Harbor. In accordance with Section 22a-113n of the Harbor Management Act, all state and municipal regulatory decisions within the area of the Harbor Management Commission's jurisdiction shall be consistent with this water use plan, unless contrary actions are supported by a "show cause" justification. The water use areas referenced in the Water Use Plan are shown on the map designated as *Appendix D*.

1. Preservation of Resources

The preservation and improvement of significant natural resources in Wethersfield Harbor is consistent with the Connecticut Coastal Management Act and is supported by the Wethersfield Harbor Management Plan.

a. Tidal Wetlands and Intertidal Flats

The ecological values of intertidal resources for habitat, breeding, nutrient productivity, storm water retention and pollution control are well established. Tidal wetlands and intertidal flats, as defined by state statute, are depicted on the water use plan. Consistent with state statutes and regulations, the following state policy applies:

The priority use for tidal wetlands and intertidal flats is preservation.

Limited uses and structures may receive regulatory approval if the resource impacts are minimal and no feasible alternatives exist.

2. Structures

To assure the orderly, safe, and efficient use of designated mooring areas, anchorages, fairways and other navigation areas, the following state policies shall apply:

a. There shall be a 15 foot setback of all new structures from any designated

channel, turning basin, fairway, mooring area, or anchorage. The areas subject to the setback requirements are delineated on the Water Use Map, *Appendix D*. Existing structures which extend into the setback area may be subject to periodic removal, if required, for maintenance.

- b. Upon adoption of this plan, no vessel at a dock shall extend into the limits of the channel, fairway, turning basin, mooring or anchorage setbacks. The areas subject to the setback requirements are delineated on the Water Use Map, *Appendix D*.
- c. There shall be a 10 foot setback of new structures from property line extensions into navigable waters where practicable. This should not, however, be construed to deny a riparian owner's access to navigable waters.

3. Restrictions

To resolve identified conflicts between harbor uses and to promote public safety, the following policies are incorporated into the water use plan:

- a. To prohibit swimming in all designated channels and fairways.
- b. To prohibit fishing and shell fishing in all designated channels and fairways.
- c. To prohibit water skiing in all designated channels, fairways, mooring areas, and anchorages.
- d. To prohibit any vessel from generating a wake within the Cove or entrance channel.

4. Public Access

Consistent with the Connecticut Coastal Management Act, public access to Wethersfield Harbor should be preserved and improved together with all proposed harbor uses and development. Accordingly, the following policies shall apply:

- a. No proposed structures or uses shall restrict existing public access, as delineated on the Water Use Map, *Appendix D*.
- b. Plans reviewed by the Harbor Management Commission in accordance with Section 22a-113p of the Harbor Management Act shall be examined for potential impacts to existing or proposed public access. The provision

of additional public access in conjunction with proposed plans is encouraged and will be viewed favorably by the Harbor Management Commission.

5. Transient Anchorage

To assist in the implementation of Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 in Section II.A, the Town's central dock shall also serve as an access point for the transient anchorage area. This location provides easy pedestrian access to several restaurants, and stores, and other services required by transient boaters. The Wethersfield Harbor Water Use Plan designates areas offshore of this dock facility which shall be reserved for transient vessels and can accommodate approximately 50 such vessels in the 16 to 35 foot range. This area provides approximately -8' MLW depth. Portions of the protected waters are designated for transient vessel use and for emergency shelter. These areas are designated on mooring grid plans A & B, *Appendix E*, and are also delineated on the Water Use Plan, *Appendix D*.

6. Mooring Grids

To achieve an orderly and equitable distribution of moorings, the Harbor Management Commission has established and will administer mooring grids in the two areas in Wethersfield Cove which are currently the best protected and which are the most accessible from shore. To provide safe mooring without the display of anchor lights, mooring grids A & B have been designated as special anchorage areas and are so identified on nautical charts in accordance with established procedure. Accordingly, mooring grids A & B accompany this text and are incorporated as *Appendix E*. The number and vessel types designated for each mooring area are based on vessel requirements including length, draft, and maneuvering capabilities. These requirements have been generalized, and the Harbormaster may alter them to suit a particular vessel, as necessary.

a. Mooring Grid A – Public and Private

This area is approximately 14 acres in size and provides room for 3 moorings/vessels at anchor for use by the Wethersfield Cove Yacht Club and 28 moorings/vessels at anchor for use or rental by the Town. Of the

above spaces, 9 are designated for use by transient vessels as needed.

b. Mooring Grid B – Public and Private

This area is approximately 15 acres in size, and provides room for 13 moorings/vessels at anchor for use by the Wethersfield Cove Yacht Club and 38 moorings/vessels at anchor for public use. Of the above spaces, 42 are designated for use by transient vessels as needed.

7. Harbor Administration

In order to meet its stated objectives, the Commission will function within an administrative framework regulated by municipal ordinance and enforced by the Harbormaster or his or her designee and Town staff as appropriate. The Harbor Management Plan proposes the following administrative framework:

a. Review of Local Plans

(1) A procedure will be established for the Harbor Management Commission to receive and review plans of any pending proposals for real property contiguous to Wethersfield Harbor that are presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Inland Wetland & Watercourses Commission, and the Historic District Commission.

(2) The plans will be reviewed in a timely fashion at regularly scheduled meetings of the Harbor Management Commission. All meetings shall be open to the public. The Commission shall determine the consistency of each proposal with the Harbor Management Plan and provide input to the primary reviewing agency.

8. Harbor Management Funding

The Town has previously established the Cove Park Preservation Fund under Chapter 44, Sections 1 through 4 of the Town of Wethersfield Code Book. The Cove Park Preservation Fund will assist with the costs associated with administering the Harbor Management Plan.

9. Harbormaster Duties

The Wethersfield Harbormasters shall assume the following duties in addition to those existing powers and duties outlined in accordance with Sections 22a-113k, 113r, and 113s of the Harbor Management Act:

- a. Act as a non-voting, ex-officio member of the Harbor Management Commission.
 - b. In conjunction with the Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Department,
 - c. In conjunction with the Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Department, keep records of the location of all moorings, users and vessels within Wethersfield Cove.
 - d. In conjunction with the Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Department, prepare and make available a current waiting list for mooring permits, if demand is greater than the number of moorings available in any given year.
 - e. In conjunction with the Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Department, collect mooring permit fees for deposit into the Cove Park Preservation Fund.
 - f. Implement any ordinance or provision of the Harbor Management Plan.
10. Mooring Grid Administration

In order to provide for the proper administration of the mooring grids presented in III.A.6, the following administrative procedures will be followed:

- a. All owner-set (installed) moorings are to be located according to assigned locations on the mooring grids. The Harbormaster or his or her designee will inspect moorings before placement and issue an annual permit after determining that a mooring has been properly located upon the mooring grid.
- b. Mooring permits are for a one year period and must be renewed annually. An annual fee shall be charged for each mooring and shall be collected prior to the issuance of a mooring permit. The fees are published and are available in the office of the Parks and Recreation Department.
- c. Available moorings shall be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. A minimum of ten percent of all mooring areas will be reserved for transient users, subject to adjustments dictated by local demand. Every effort shall be made by the harbormaster to accommodate specific needs due to draft, beam, length, and available access from the shore. However, it should be noted that 100 percent of the designated mooring areas may not be

available in any given year as a result of unusual circumstances. The Harbormaster may revise this allocation as necessary in such instances.

- d. During periods of high water or severe storm conditions, a number of moorings spaces/moorings, not to exceed the number of slips at the Wethersfield Cove Yacht Club dock, shall be available in Grid B for use by Wethersfield Cove Yacht Club members who must vacate slips.
- e. In accordance with Section 22a-113r of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Harbormaster will keep records of users, vessels, and locations of each mooring. The Harbormaster, in conjunction with the Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Department, shall keep a current waiting list available for public inspection, if necessary.
- f. Private mooring permits are issued to an individual permittee for his or her personal use and may not be leased, sold, or transferred. Commercial mooring permits are issued to commercial operators who provide parking, access, launch services and other shore-side amenities. Commercial moorings may be leased or transferred, but only with the amenities noted above. No privately controlled commercial moorings shall be allowed in federally maintained project areas.
- g. Minimum mooring tackle specifications are recommended to avoid mooring failure and are presented in Section III.A.15. Mooring permits are subject to utilization of secure tackle as determined by the Harbormaster.

11. Transient Anchorage Use

To assure the equitable and efficient use of the transient anchorage areas, the

following policies shall apply:

- a. The transient anchorage is designated for short term use only. Vessels may remain anchored in this area for a period not to exceed seven (7) successive days.
- b. Vessels in all designated transient areas shall be anchored securely and properly.
- c. Operators of transient vessels may go ashore during this period but may not leave the Wethersfield area without notifying the Wethersfield Harbormaster.

12. Boating Safety and Traffic

To assure the safe and efficient movement of vessels in Wethersfield Harbor, a series of rules and regulations are enacted to:

- a. Limit vessel speed and wake to protect other vessels and structures, and to protect the shore from erosive wave action.
- b. Keep channels clear of disabled or anchored vessels.
- c. Enforce, where necessary any and all provisions and designations on the water use plan.

13. Town Facilities

To assure the safe and efficient use of town-owned harbor facilities, rules and regulations are enacted to regulate the use of the town boat launch ramp, landing area and the transient anchorage areas.

Regulations are enacted for the following purposes:

- a. To prohibit tie-ups to the dock area designated for boat launch drop-off and pick-up.
- b. To prohibit transient vessels from anchoring in the vicinity of the dock or boat launch area.

14. "Live Aboards"

To preserve Wethersfield Harbor for water dependent uses, it is the policy of the Harbor Management Commission to disallow the principal use of vessels as abodes in the harbor. The intent, however, is not to deny short-term use of vessels for sleeping as a secondary use to the vessels' primary commercial or recreational uses. Accordingly, a regulation is enacted to prohibit the use of vessels within the harbor as abodes, except by permission of the Harbormaster, and only under temporary, extenuating circumstances.

15. Minimum Mooring Tackle Specifications

Utilization of proper mooring tackle is necessary to secure vessels adequately at their moorings. Storms, wind, waves, tides, currents, and wash must be considered when selecting appropriate hardware.

Therefore, the Harbor Management Commission recommends minimum standards for tackle to secure vessels adequately in the Wethersfield area. These standards are advisory only, and the Town of Wethersfield assumes no liability for personal injury or property damage which results from the utilization of any tackle which meets or exceeds these recommendations.

a. Mooring tackle should meet the following minimum standards:

Registered Boat Length (Feet)	Mushroom Anchor (Pounds)	Bottom Chain (Inches)	Top Chain (Inches)	Nylon or Dacron Line (Inches)	Stainless Steel Wire (Inches)
Under 19	50	5/16	1/4	5/8	1/4
20-25	75	3/8	1/4	5/8	1/4
26-35	100	1/2	1/4	5/8	1/4
Over 35	200	5/8	5/16	3/4	3/8

- b. The maximum length of the pennant should be two and one-half times the distance from the bow chock to the water plus the distance from the bow chock to the mooring cleat or post.
- c. All pennant lines running through a chock or any other object where chafing may occur should have adequate chafe guards.
- d. All shackles, swivels and other hardware used in the mooring hookup should be proportional in size to the chain used.
- e. All shackles should be properly seized.
- f. It is recommended that the pennant be spliced or shackled into the bitter end of the top chain below the buoy so the strain is not carried by the buoy. The use of a second pennant and anchor in heavy weather is encouraged.
- g. Only mushroom and helix anchors will be acceptable on permanent moorings.
- h. In non-grid areas, the minimum distance between any two moored vessels should be 1.25 times the total mooring scope plus the length of the larger vessel.

IV. Variance Procedure

When reviewing an application for a state or local permit to conduct activities affecting the riverfront or waters of Wethersfield, The Harbor management Commission may consider recommending a variance from any of the above standards. Variances shall only be in cases where the variance is necessary to improve public access, protect public safety, avoid significant adverse environmental impact, or avoid significant and unusual hardship to a property owner. If the Commission finds that a variance request is justified, it will transmit such recommendation to the appropriate permitting authority.

IV. Appendices

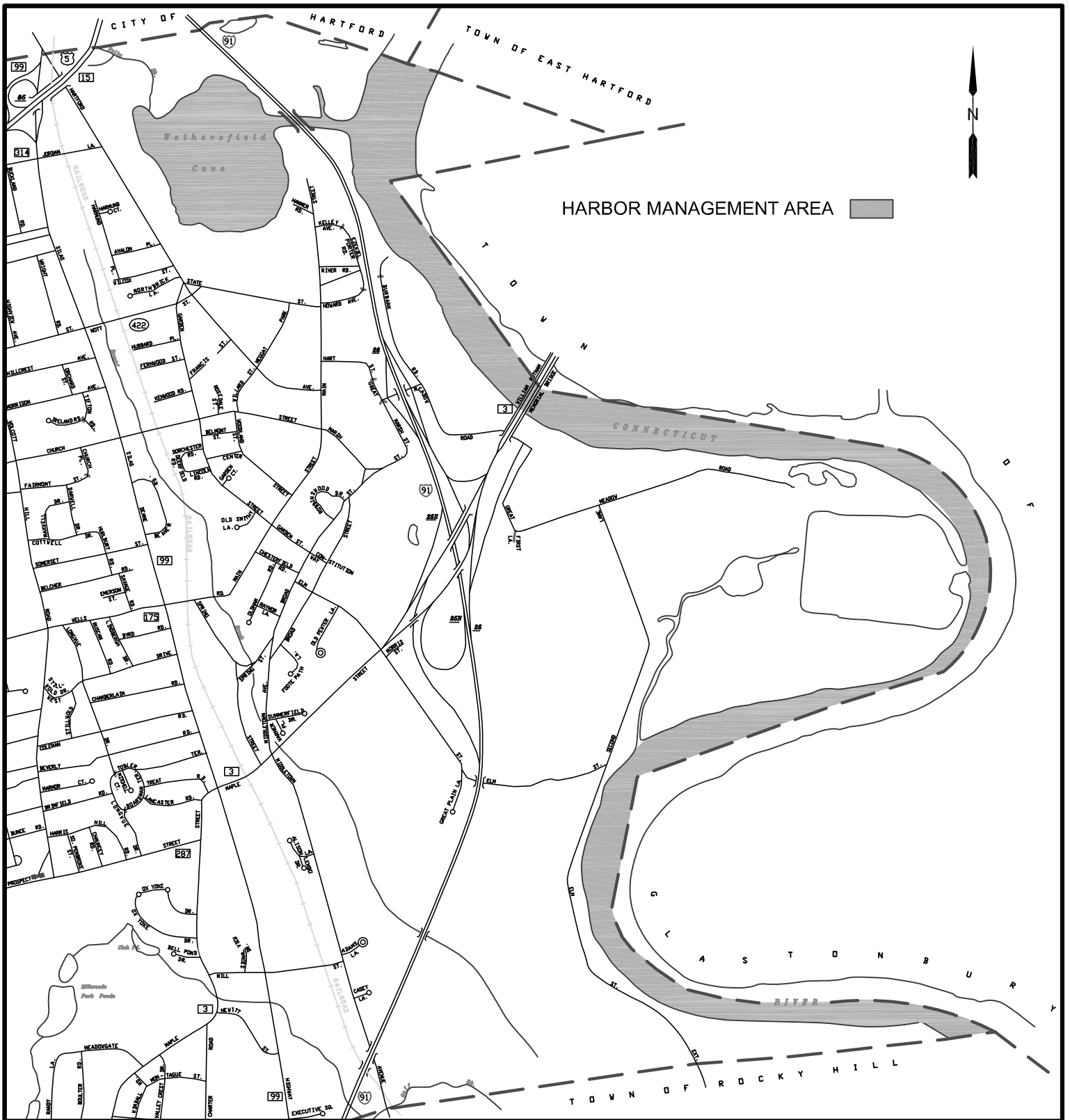
A. Map of Harbor Management Area

B. Map of Waterfront Land Uses

C. Map of Governing Regulations for Waterfront Land Uses

D. Chart of Waterway Uses

E. Map of Mooring Grids



TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

WETHERSFIELD HARBOR MANAGEMENT AREA - APPENDIX A

ENGINEERING DIVISION

WETHERSFIELD COVE PARK

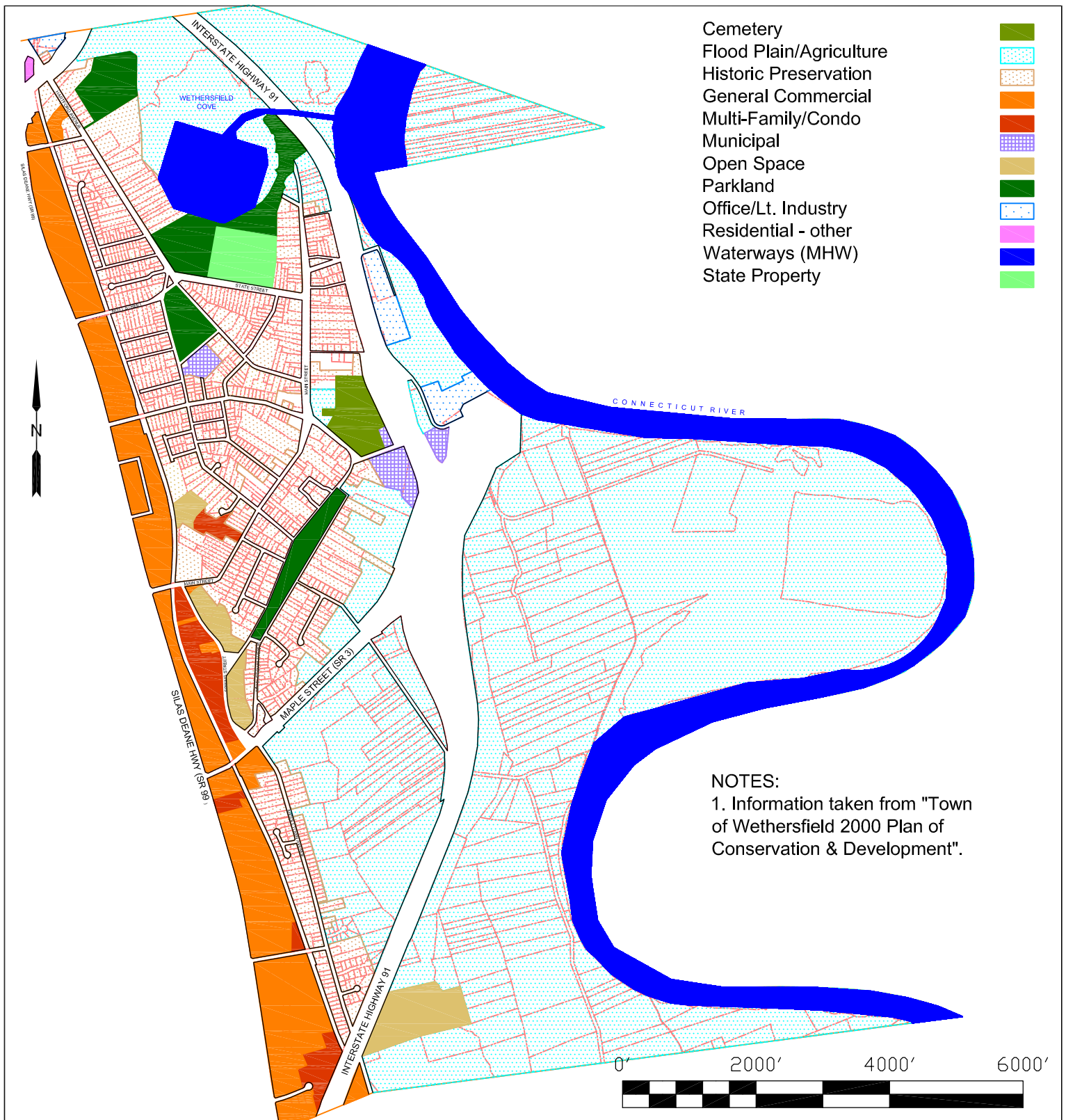
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TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

WETHERSFIELD COVE PARK LAND USE MAP - APPENDIX B

ENGINEERING DIVISION

WETHERSFIELD COVE PARK

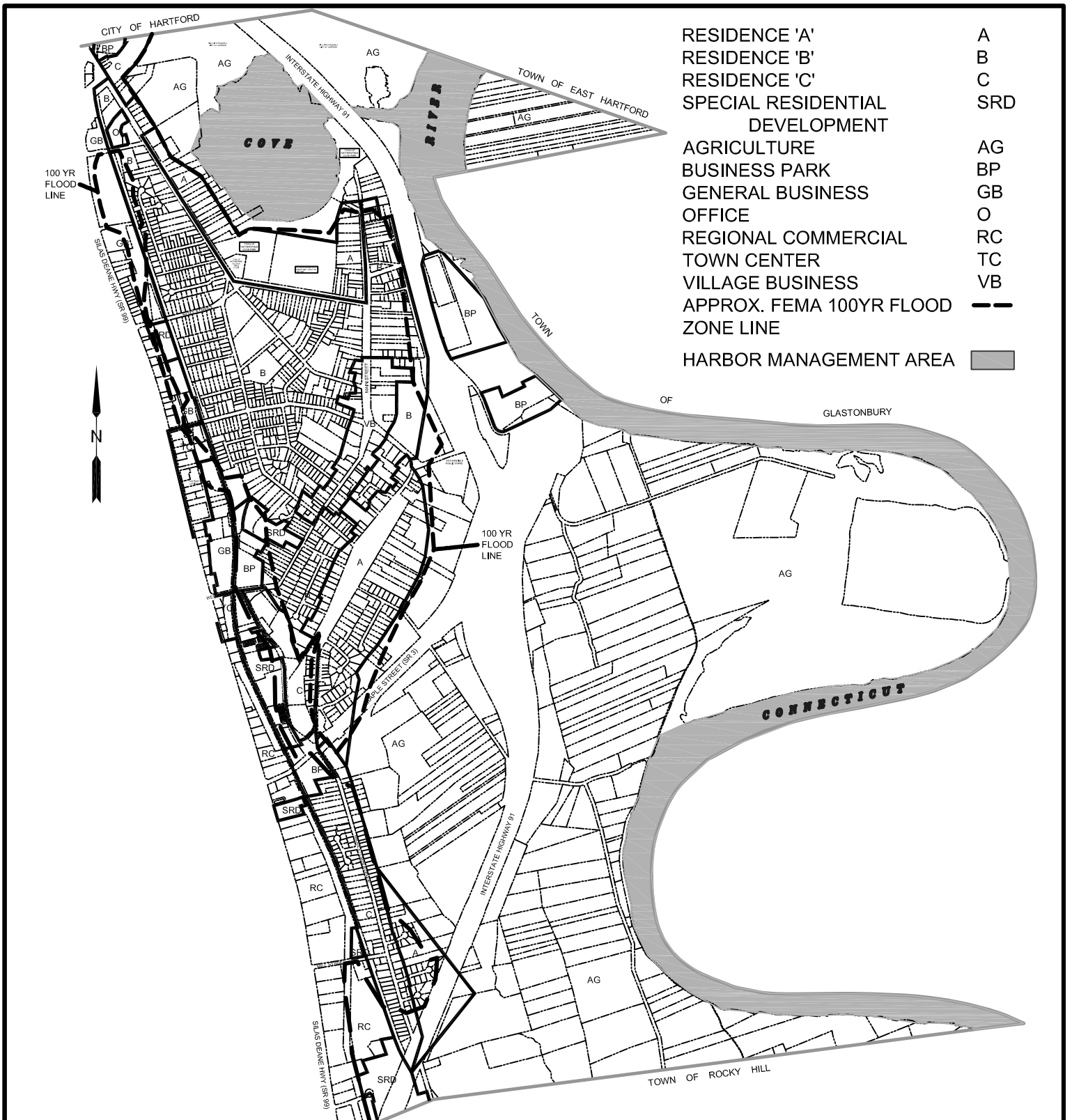
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TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

ZONING MAP FOR THE HARBOR MANAGEMENT AREA - APPENDIX C

ENGINEERING DIVISION

WETHERSFIELD COVE PARK

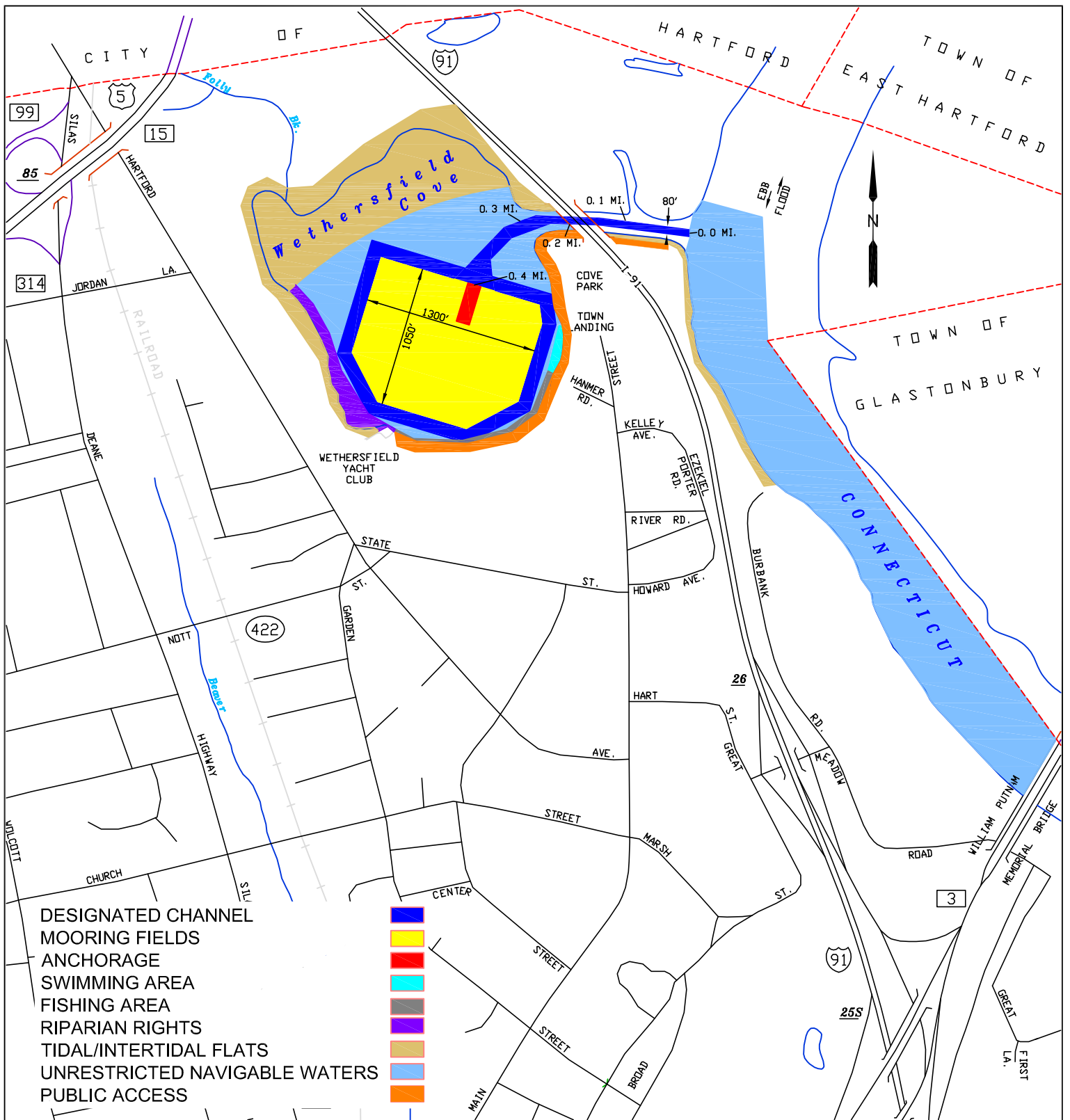
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TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

WETHERSFIELD COVE PARK WATER USE MAP - APPENDIX D

ENGINEERING DIVISION

WETHERSFIELD COVE PARK

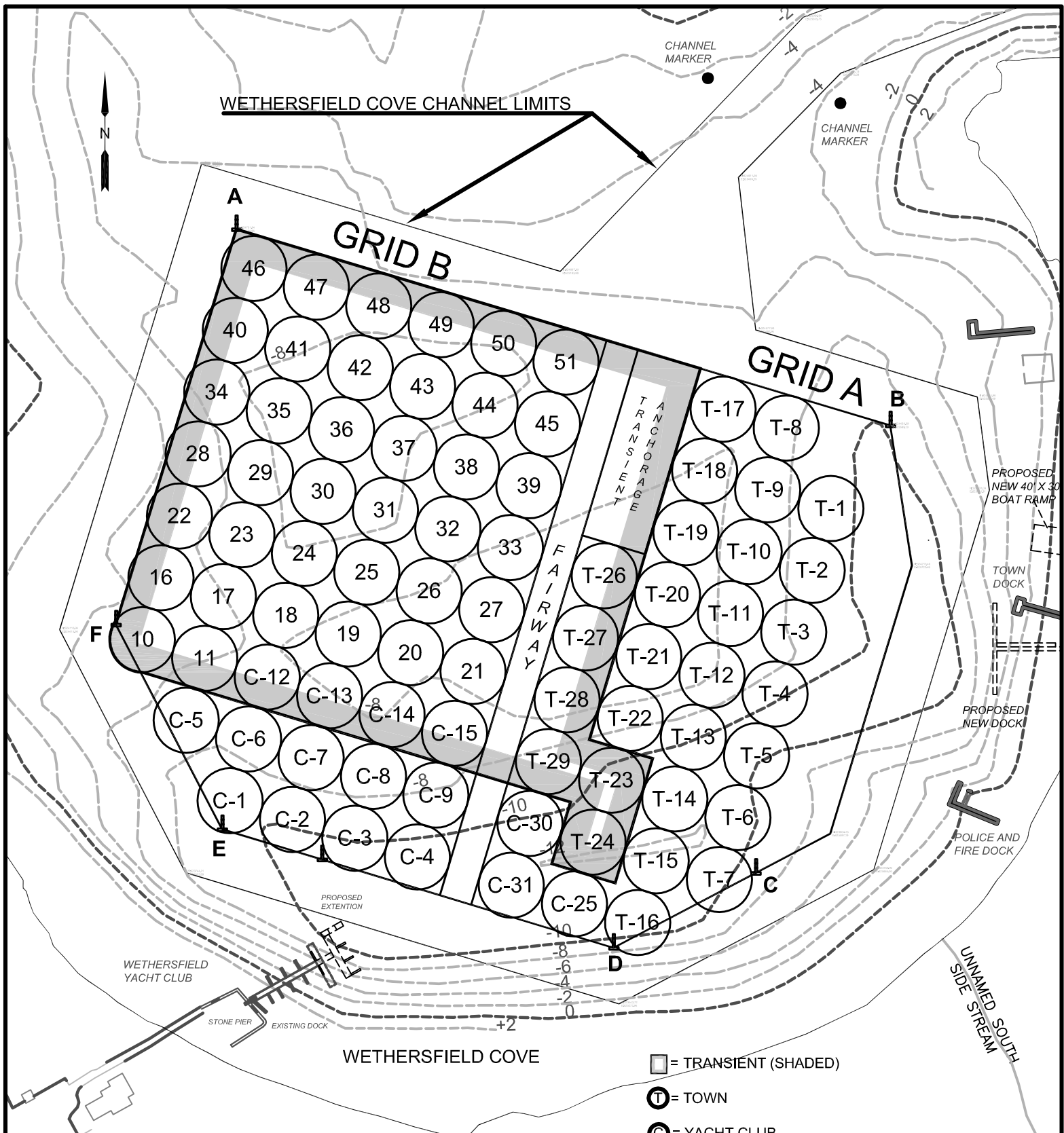
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- ◻ = TRANSIENT (SHADED)
- ⊙ = TOWN
- ⊙ = YACHT CLUB

APPENDIX E

TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD		
WETHERSFIELD COVE		
ENGINEERING DIVISION	SCALE: 1" = 200'	DRAWN BY: CZ CHECKED BY: MJT
PROPOSED MOORING LAYOUT		
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NOTES:

1. THIS MAP IS BASED ON A MAP TITLED "TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD SITE PLAN-WETHERSFIELD COVE, WATER QUALITY INVESTIGATION" BY FUSS AND O'NEILL, INC.

2. HORIZONTAL DATUM NAD 27, VERTICAL DATUM NGVD 29.

3. CHANNEL LIMITS FROM A MAP TITLED "CONNECTICUT RIVER BELOW HARTFORD, WETHERSFIELD COVE, CONN. 6-FT. ENTRANCE CHANNEL" BY U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NEW ENGLAND DIVISION OCTOBER 1967