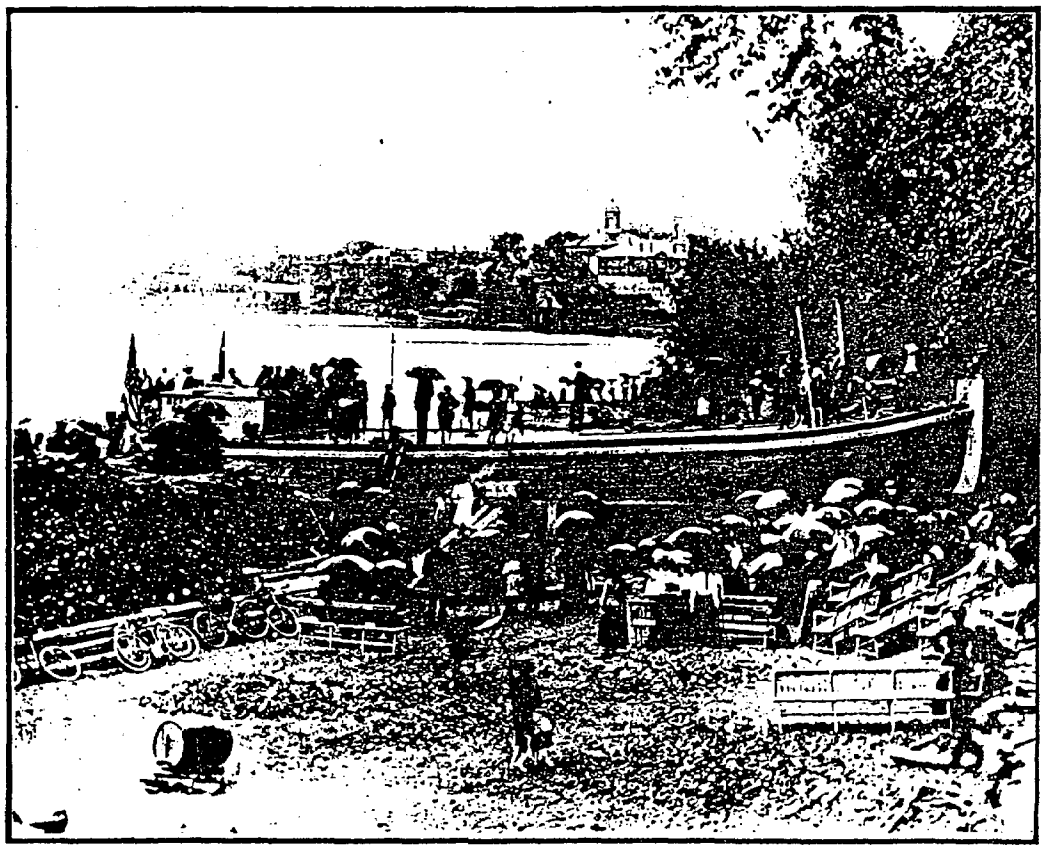
Squamscott River Harbor Management Plan

June 1991



Prepared for:

New Hampshire Port Authority
555 Market Street
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03801

Prepared by:

IEP, Inc.
39 Bow Street
P.O. Box 1136
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03802-1136
(603) 433-5800

and

Cambridge Systematics, Inc.
American Twine Office Park
222 Third Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142
(617) 354-0167

NH WORK TASK 90-5.2.10 ATTACH. #17

CONTENTS

Section I	Introduction
Section II	Issues/Goals Statement
Section III	Harbor Management and Water Use Plan
Section IV	Situation Analysis
	References

TC225
.S68
S68
1991
c.2

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The Squamscott River, flowing through the towns of Exeter, Newfields, and Stratham, New Hampshire, is one of the Seacoast's most significant natural and recreational resources. The River originates in downtown Exeter, New Hampshire and is fed primarily by the Exeter River. It flows north to Great Bay where the Squamscott, Bellamy, Cochecho, Oyster, Lamprey, Salmon Falls, and Winnicut Rivers converge. The Squamscott River, to its tidal limits, is part of this estuarine system. The Bay is a prime recreational resource and one of the east coast's largest and most important estuaries. Pursuant to the federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, Great Bay was recently designated a national estuarine sanctuary -- the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR).

In the past, the Squamscott River and its Great Bay access spawned textile and shipping industries along Exeter's riverfront and the Town emerged as a regional center of commerce and trade. The Squamscott River supported the development of the ship building and lumber industries and was consequently responsible for Exeter's growth during the 17th and 18th centuries. The channel was much deeper then and the Exeter landing became a major trading post, with trade conducted as far away as the West Indies. Downtown Exeter's existing historic mills, homes, and commercial buildings are part of this legacy. In the Town of Newfields, a ship building industry and foundries were built along the River, while agriculturally-based industries developed along Stratham's riverfronts.

Today, the Squamscott River presents somewhat different opportunities for the three communities through which it travels. The River's variety of waterfront land uses and resources create a wealth of recreational, open space, and waterfront opportunities.

Downtown Exeter, located at the tidal head of the Squamscott River is revitalizing its waterfront -- the mill buildings on the River's eastern bank have been renovated for residential use and the Town has just completed a new waterfront park on the west bank. In addition, the potential exists for Exeter to redevelop its waterfront and reorient its existing downtown businesses towards the river.

With the exception of downtown Exeter, much of the Squamscott River study area remains undeveloped. Exeter and Stratham have both taken steps to preserve key riverfront parcels in order to protect the River's diverse range of wildlife, wetland, fish, historic, scenic, and other critical resources. These resources provide Seacoast residents with recreational opportunities ranging from hiking and fishing (year-round), to boating, birdwatching, and skating. Further, they create the potential for the Squamscott River to meet, in part, the recreational demands of the region's growing population.

A need exists to plan for the wise use of this resource by identifying key Squamscott River issues, opportunities, and priorities, and planning for future needs. In order to accomplish this, the N.H. Port Authority and the N.H. Office of State Planning contracted with IEP, Inc. and Cambridge Systematics, Inc. to prepare a Harbor Management Plan for the Squamscott River.

The Squamscott River Harbor Management Plan is designed to address expanding recreational use of the Squamscott River, to provide for its potential waterfront development and, at the same time, protect the natural and marine environment within the river corridor. The Squamscott River study area includes the tidal portion of the River from the dam in downtown Exeter to the River's mouth on Great Bay (approximately 6.2 miles) as well as adjacent land areas in the towns of Exeter, Newfields, and Stratham (see **Map 1**).

Section II of the Squamscott River Harbor Management Plan, Issues/Goals Statement, discusses key issues raised during the planning process as well as goals and objectives developed to guide future activities along the tidal Squamscott. The Harbor Management and Water Use Plan, Section III, includes detailed recommendations and implementation strategies. Section IV, Situations Analysis, provides a detailed inventory and analysis of existing and future land and water uses and natural resources along the tidal Squamscott. In addition, it describes local growth and development trends and existing and potential public infrastructure.

NOAA COASTAL SERVICES CTR LIBRARY
3 6668 14111709 5