



The Cliff Walk Commission Year End Summary 2022



Figure 1: Cliff Walk 40 Steps by Thomas Freeman

A. Cliff Walk Commission Meetings

1. Schedule of Cliff Walk Commission Meetings:

The Cliff Walk Commission met 10 times in 2022 (no meetings in August or November). Due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the first 3 meetings were held by teleconference. The April meeting and subsequent meetings were held in person at the Newport Public Library.

2. Cliff Walk Commission Members (There was a change in the Serving Commission Members in 2022):

Chair: Peter Janaros (attended 10 meetings)

Vice Chair: John Hirschboeck (attended 10 meetings)

Secretary: Donna Lennox (attended 10 meetings)

Members: Dave McLaughlin (attended 8 meetings)

Peter Ranelli served as Commission member from January - April (attended 2 meetings)

Christopher Jones served as Commission member from May forward (attended all 6 meetings)

3. Other Meeting Attendees:

- Scott Wheeler, City of Newport Superintendent of Parks, Grounds and Forestry
- Professor Samuel Sacco, Salve Regina University Sitting Commission Representative

Other Guests, Friends, and Volunteers of the Cliff Walk who attended meetings:

- Captain Todd Silvia and Detective Jack Billings, Newport Police Department
- Terry Dickinson, Preservation Society of Newport County
- Salve Regina University Students, including Mary Orena and Jacob Geary
- Peter Rice, Marc Lewinstein and Bill Corcoran
- Members of the media

B. The Cliff Walk Commission Mission

Goal

Protect and preserve the Cliff Walk as a popular and historic National Recreational Trail and an important State and local asset.

Mission

Advise and assist the City of Newport on critical matters pertaining to the Cliff Walk and its proper maintenance while ensuring the natural character of the Walk is protected (to the extent possible) for the public to enjoy, now and into the future.

Purpose

To preserve, maintain and enhance the Walk, ensuring public access and safety.

Tasks

Assist City Staff in identifying maintenance and encroachment issues that require attention.

Ensure the public is aware of important developments, enhancements, accessibility and environmental issues pertaining to the Walk.

Explore funding opportunities to maintain, preserve and enhance the public's experience on the Walk.

C. Major Accomplishments and Activities

1. March 3, 2022 Slope Failure between Webster St. and Narragansett Ave.

On March 3, 2022, a roughly 20-foot span of the Cliff Walk, just south of 40 Steps between Webster St. and Narragansett Ave., suffered a significant slope failure. Due to the slope failure, a part of the Cliff Walk was rendered impassable and remains closed for the foreseeable future. The City of Newport, with the assistance of Peter Janaros, Chair of the Commission, moved forward with a series of steps designed to restore this section of the Walk and to keep the Cliff Walk open for walkers until the slope is repaired.

- A. The City Council approved a proposal from GZA Geotechnical. GZA is currently doing a study of the affected area and will be supplying the city with a design concept to address the slope failure. This design concept will be used to determine the cost to repair the slope failure and will be used to seek funds from the state and federal governments.
- B. A detour was created at Webster St. and Narragansett Ave., so that walkers could continue walking the Cliff Walk, avoiding the area that is impassable. Almost all the Cliff Walk remains open and walkers can walk the whole length of the Cliff Walk from Memorial Blvd. to Bailey's Beach. The only part of the walk that is closed is one small section between 40 Steps/Narragansett Ave. and Webster St. - where the detour is located. The detour is well defined; there are barriers and signage in place to detour walkers around the affected area.
- C. Signage was posted on Ochre Point Ave. to further inform walkers about the detour.

- D. The city installed a new sidewalk on the ocean side of Ochre Point Ave. to make the detour even easier for walkers to traverse.
- E. Information about the detour was posted on the City Website, the Discover Newport Website, on the Cliff Walk general information line, on the 2022 Cliff Walk printed map, and on the AllTrails App.

2. Charitable Foundation Grant

Major Progress was made on this task to obtain funding for a grant for the Cliff Walk. The Commission would like the grant to be used to generate a detailed engineering study of the entire Cliff Walk. It would identify issues like erosion and how they can be remedied, and would be used in applying for additional grants. Salve Regina students, under the direction of Professor Sam Sacco, have completed the grant application needed to obtain the grant. It is currently being reviewed by Patricia Reynold, Director of Planning and Economic Development for the City of Newport, prior to being submitted to charitable foundations. A huge thank you to Professor Sacco and his students for preparing the application and to Patricia Reynolds for her review.

Any grant money received will be deposited in the Cliff Walk Restricted account maintained by the City of Newport.

3. Fund raising campaign – #CliffWalkTogether



Figure 2: #CliffWalkTogether Campaign

Working together with the City of Newport and Salve Regina University, and in order to support our mission of preservation, maintenance, and enhancement of the walk, the Commission continues to collect funds through the CliffWalkTogether campaign.

Users can now text CLIFF to 401-388-5177 and donate to the Cliff Walk on their smartphones using credit cards, PayPal, ApplePay, and Venmo!

Donation information and a link to donate is now posted on the city website ([https://www.cityofnewport.com/en-us/city-hall/departments/public-services/tree-parks-open-space/cliff-walk/amenities-\(1\)](https://www.cityofnewport.com/en-us/city-hall/departments/public-services/tree-parks-open-space/cliff-walk/amenities-(1)))

Signage was updated in 2022 and signs were posted in various locations to improve the campaign's visibility and encourage visitors to donate. The result of the campaign has been positive.

4. Elimination of all barbed wire from the Walk

Starting in 2020, the Commission has been working to eliminate all the barbed wire from the Cliff Walk. We feel the presence of barbed wire is unsightly and unwelcoming. We have made great progress and almost all of the barbed wire has been removed from the Cliff Walk. The Commission would like to thank the Newport Restoration Foundation for removing all of the barbed wire from around Rough Point. The Commission would like to thank the Preservation Society of Newport County for removing barbed wire from around the Chinese Tea House and Rosecliff. The Commission would also like to thank the owners of the Seacliff studio apartment for removing the barbed wire from their property.



Figure 3: Tea House Before



Figure 4: Tea House After



Figure 5: Rough Point Before

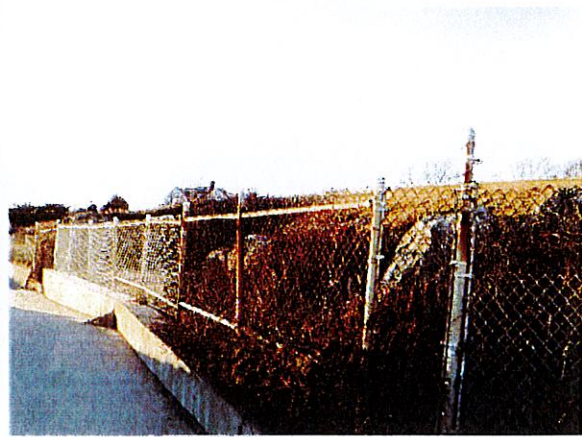


Figure 6: Rough Point After



Figure 7: Rosecliff Before



Figure 8: Rosecliff After



Figure 9: Seacliff Apartment Before

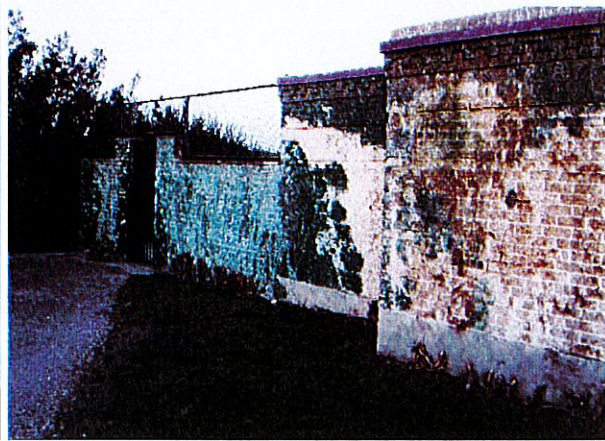


Figure 10: Seacliff Apartment After

5. Maintaining, Preserving and Enhancing the Cliff Walk

The Commission would like to thank Scott Wheeler, Superintendent of Parks, Grounds & Forestry, and his team for all their work, day in and day out, in maintaining the Cliff Walk - from trimming and controlling vegetation, laying gravel, removing graffiti and litter, and many other tasks.

Some major tasks performed in 2022 include:

- a. Filling of cracks on the Walk from Webster to Ruggles

There was cracking in the paved sections of the Walk that if left untreated, would have gotten worse and more expensive to repair. Some crack filling had been done in late 2021. This was a continuation of the work. This work was funded by the generosity of Salve Regina University and The Preservation Society of Newport County.



Figure 11: Crack Filling on Walk

b. Volunteer Activities - So much of the maintenance and preservation of the Cliff Walk is done by our volunteers. We would like to thank Chris Jones (now a member of the Commission) for his many contributions, including the following maintenance activities:

- Resolving the ponding issue on the Walk in Rough Point area
- Repair of bronze medallions on the southern end of the Walk
- Fixing the exposed gravel pavement in front of the Rest Rooms at 40 Steps
- Picking up litter, removing love locks, stickers, and removing graffiti
- Cleaning swales and gratings to improve drainage
- Painting Trail Marker posts and the gate at Marine Ave.
- Generating monthly reports on the condition and status of the Cliff Walk

We would like to thank volunteer Marc Lewinstein for continuing to improve the Walk in The Waves area. Thank you to Marc for all his work!!

6. Publications and Communications

a. Printed Cliff Walk Maps

The third edition of the free Official Cliff Walk Map was produced in partnership with Discover Newport with 70,000 copies distributed. This map provides useful information to visitors (similar to the Discover Newport website, the City of Newport website and the dedicated phone line) and is distributed by Discover Newport and many of the hotels and venues in Newport and Middletown. There are also two outdoor map holders where visitors can help themselves to a map; one at 40 Steps, and one at the entrance on Memorial Blvd.

A special thanks to Peter Rice, a volunteer, who refilled the map holders daily (sometimes more than daily). Over 22,000 maps were distributed on the Cliff Walk alone thanks to Pete!



Figure 12: Cliff Walk Map - front panel



Figure 13: Cliff Walk Map - back panel

- b. Point of Interest web pages will be hosted by the City of Newport.

The Cliff Walk has 16 Points of Interest, marked by a Trail Post with a QR code. When the QR code is scanned by a user with a smartphone, a web page displays with information about the Point of Interest. For example, when the QR code at The Breakers is scanned, a page displays with information about the history of The Breakers. These webpages have been hosted by an outside company, but are currently being transferred over to the City of Newport website. The work should be completed in early 2023. Special thanks is extended to Tom Shevlin, Communications Director, City of Newport, for creating these new pages.

7. Photo Journal

Every year for the past 6 years, Clean Ocean Access has recorded a Photo Journal of the Cliff Walk. Photos of the same spots (along with the GPS coordinates) are taken along the entire Cliff Walk. This record is saved every year and can be used to evaluate any changes to the Cliff Walk due to weather, natural disaster, encroachment or other occurrence. In this way it is used to maintain the integrity of the walk. The Commission would like to thank Clean Ocean Access for past Journals and for the 2022 Photo Journal which should be completed in December 2022.

8. Extended Hospitality to Visiting Firefighters from Greece



Figure 13: In front of the Breakers



Figure 14: On the Cliff Walk

The Cliff Walk and The Breakers were must see places in Rhode Island for a group of volunteer firefighters from Greece who were training at the Union Fire District's training facility in South Kingston this last November. The firefighters were in South Kingston training for a week in order to take their experiences back to Greece and share them with their fellow firefighters back home. They managed to take a break in their training to visit The Breakers and enjoy a walk on the Cliff Walk. The Preservation Society of Newport County and the Cliff Walk Commission were happy to extend a warm welcome to these visiting firefighters!

9. Parking Revenues generated by the Cliff Walk

Parking fees collected for parking at Narragansett Ave./40 Steps were \$80-85,000 in 2022. Also, a substantial amount of the parking fees collected from the West parking lot at First Beach and Memorial Blvd. can be attributed to people visiting the Cliff Walk.

D. Priorities Moving Forward Into 2023

1. Restoration/repair of the Cliff Walk resulting from the March 3, 2022 slope failure.
2. Obtain funding for a grant for the Cliff Walk, to be used to generate a detailed engineering study of the entire Cliff Walk. The study would identify issues like erosion and how they can be remedied, and would be used in applying for additional grants to maintain and preserve the Cliff Walk.
3. Additional restrooms, as in past years, are **desperately** needed on the Cliff Walk. The current 2 restrooms at 40 Steps cannot handle the number of people who visit the Cliff Walk (over 1 million people per year). The lines to use the restrooms, especially in the summer, are unacceptably long. The hinges and latches on the doors wear out because of the extremely heavy use. This situation needs to be resolved as soon as possible.
5. Continue to work toward establishing a more robust social media presence for the Cliff Walk in order to raise funds for the Cliff Walk Ambassador Program and other enhancements to the Cliff Walk.
6. Continue to maintain and improve the condition of the Walk. Projects under consideration include:
 - Painting and repair of the railings at Anglesea Estate and Ruggles Ave. area
 - Improve appearance of the Breakers Overlook
 - Laying additional gravel on the Walk in The Waves area.
 - Improve the accessibility for walkers in the Cliff Terrace area. There is currently a wooden platform installed because of water ponding in the area. In 2022 accessibility was improved by installing ramps on either side of the platform. Moving forward, we would like a more permanent solution that would eliminate the wooden platform.



Figure 15: Cliff Terrace Platform

E. Summary and Thanks!

We offer our thanks to Mayor Jeanne-Marie Napolitano, the Newport City Council and the City Administration for their support. The Commission looks forward to working with Mayor Xay Khamsyvovong. Thank you to Tom Shevlin, Communications Officer, for his support of the Cliff Walk Point of Interest pages. Thank you to Scott Wheeler and his team for their time and dedication to the Cliff Walk. Thank you to Bill Cocoran for his coordination of joint projects between the Commission and the Preservation Society of Newport County. Thank you to Bill Boardman and his team for their expertise and support of the Cliff Walk.

We are grateful to Professor Sam Sacco, and the Salve Regina University staff and students for their valuable contributions in 2022.

Many thanks to Clean Ocean Access for their contributions, especially for the Cliff Walk Photo Journal.

Thank you to Kathryn Farrington, VP of Marketing, and Evan Smith, President & CEO of Discover Newport for their support; most notably for their support of the Cliff Walk Map, the new Cliff Walk website (<https://www.discovernewport.org/things-to-do/cliff-walk/>), and the dedicated phone line.

Thank you to the many volunteers who give of their time to preserve and maintain the Cliff Walk.

We are grateful to our Cliff Walk sponsors and advertisers who provide funding for the Cliff Walk map and improvements to maintain and preserve the Cliff Walk.

Many thanks to our Cliff Walk neighbors for their continuing cooperation which is vital to the success of the Cliff Walk mission.

We would also like to thank Police Captain Todd Silvia and the Newport Police Department for their commitment to keeping the Cliff Walk safe for everyone.

The Cliff Walk is a treasure. It is enjoyed by over 1 million visitors a year. With the cooperation and dedication of everyone mentioned in this report, the Cliff Walk remains a unique, internationally famous walkway. Thank you again to everyone for another successful year of stewardship of this beautiful walkway.

Submitters:

This report respectfully submitted by:

Donna Lennox - Secretary, Cliff Walk Commission

Peter Janaros - Chair, Cliff Walk Commission

December, 2022