

Safety & Emergency Reminders

- Paddlers need to follow the same safe boating practices as any other small boat operator. All paddlers should take a course in safe boating like those offered by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection or other organizations. All paddlers should know the principles of navigation and seamanship and be comfortable in the water. Guided tours and instruction are offered at the Small Boat Shop in Norwalk and the Wilton Outdoor Sports Center.
- When crossing boating channels stay in close groups and cross at right angles. Make yourself visible and never assume a larger vessel has sighted your vessel or that you have the right of way.
- Throughout most of the year the prevailing winds blow out of the southwest. The average tidal range in the Norwalk Islands area is 7.5 feet. Each tidal cycle (from low to high) has a duration of approximately 6 hours. Tidal currents are strongest on the mid-outgoing and mid-incoming tides and are more intense during foul weather conditions. Strong tidal currents can be felt between Shea Island and Chimon Island, and the sheer force of their flow can also cause difficult eddy and wave conditions, even on calm days.
- When fog occurs, it can result in sudden and total disorientation. You will need a compass, but you may gain orientation from the sound of bells or foghorns as well as steady wave and wind direction. If fog or heavy rain sets in and the shore cannot be seen from the islands, heading in a northerly direction gets you to the mainland.
- Know the weather forecast and leave a float plan. Paddlers must constantly keep an eye on the weather and know their limitations.
- There is no fresh water on the public islands and only Shea Island and Sheffield Island have sanitary facilities (seasonal). Carry your own water, food and other necessary supplies.
- Children 11-years and under are required by state law to wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) at all times while on a vessel. However, PFD usage is strongly encouraged at all times for both children and adults while on any vessel. ALL paddlers MUST wear a PFD from October 1st through May 30th.
- In addition to food and water, bring warm clothing, spare paddle, a space blanket, hat, flares, first aid kit, an emergency whistle, horn or light and any other necessary equipment. The light is crucial before sunrise and after sunset and is required by the Coast Guard - make sure that you are visible to other larger vessels.
- Bring along a VHF marine radio, weather radio and/or cell phone. If you run into problems contact **Channel 16** on marine radio.
- Do not tamper with lobster pot buoys or shellfish bed stakes: the shellfish industry is a very important component of the local and state economy.

Directions to Calf Pasture Beach in East Norwalk, Connecticut: If you are approaching from the west on **I-95** take **Exit 16** and turn *right* at the end of the ramp onto East Avenue. If you are approaching from the east on I-95 take a *left* at the end of the ramp onto East Avenue. Follow East Avenue for about 0.4 miles to a railroad trestle bridge. Continue straight under the railroad trestle for 0.1 miles, then bear left around a cemetery, then immediately bear right onto Gregory Boulevard. Go 0.6 miles to the monument, go left around the monument, and then make the next right onto Calf Pasture Beach Road. Go 0.6 miles to the beach. Follow the parking lot around to boat launch area. (Look for signs to Calf Pasture Beach.)

Geologic History: The Norwalk Islands and coastline attained their present shape and character as a result of glacial activity that overrode Connecticut during the past 150,000 years. These glaciers smoothed the bedrock (ledge) that now dominates the Norwalk shoreline and helped shape Long Island and Long Island Sound. Prior to the glacial activity, the Long Island Sound area was a series of fresh water streams, swamps and fresh water lakes. Most geologists consider the Norwalk Islands “terminal moraines” or glacial rock deposits. Where the moraine is still above water it is characterized by an assortment of rocks, gravel, sand, silt and clay. In many places, wave action has sorted these deposits and created cobble beaches. Historians speculate that these island rocks were used as ballast in the sailing ships returning to New York and then sold as cobble stones.

Environmental/Wildlife Consideration: Harbor seals have been spotted with greater frequency on the southwest corner of Sheffield Island on the rocks at low tide in the winter months. Recent studies suggest that kayak and canoe approaches disturb the seals who may sense predatory danger from the low-draft silent vessels. Please maintain a safe distance (50 yards) from the harbor seals. The Marine Mammal Protection Act protects these mammals from harassment and sets limits as to how close observers can approach these animals. Visit the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk or their website at www.maritimeaquarium.org for more information on Long Island Sound and harbor seals.

Contact the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) at (860) 424-3034 or visit their website at <http://dep.state.ct.us> for more detailed information and maps concerning Long Island Sound, geologic formations, coastal access and wildlife habitat. A CTDEP guide entitled *Sharing the Waterways: A Code of Ethics for Wildlife Watching Along the Connecticut Coast* is especially useful.

Other Local Attractions: Norwalk has many fine restaurants and pubs ranging from casual to formal. The South Norwalk (SONO) district is especially diverse in terms of excellent international cuisine. The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk is also located in South Norwalk and provides interesting exhibits and an IMAX theater.

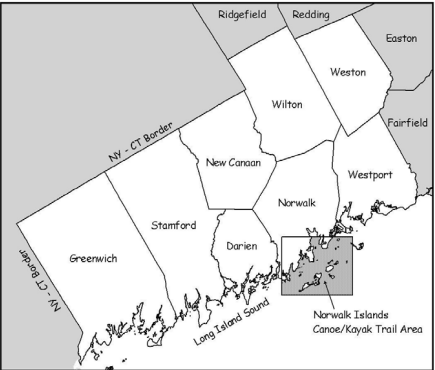
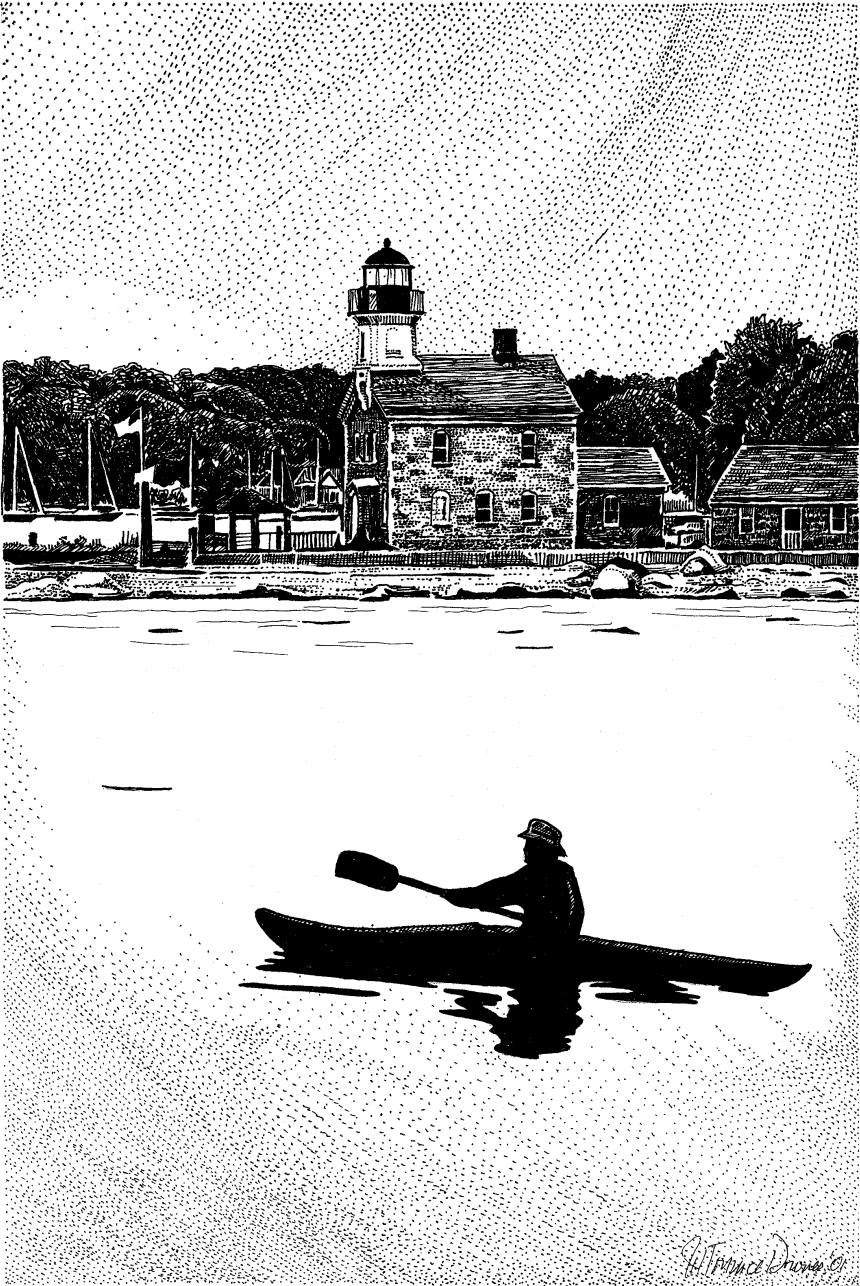
Buying, Renting and Guided Trips: There are several locations in Norwalk and lower Fairfield County where kayaks and canoes can be purchased or rented. The Small Boat Shop on Water Street in South Norwalk (www.thesmallboatshop.com) and the Outdoor Sports Center on Route 7 in Wilton (203-762-8324) offer boats, equipment and knowledgeable staffs.

Acknowledgements

Cover Art – J. H. Torrance Downs
Background Reference- Joe Schnerline
Base Map – Nautical Chart #12368:
Sherwood Point to Stamford Harbor.
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



Norwalk Islands Canoe/Kayak Trail
Calf Pasture Beach, Norwalk, Connecticut



Prepared by the
**South Western
Regional Planning
Agency**

October 1, 2001

Norwalk Islands

There are approximately 23 islands located off the coast of Norwalk, Connecticut. Many of these islands are privately owned with some residents living on them seasonally, and others year-round. The islands of Chimon and Sheffield are part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge (SBMNWR) and have restricted access. The City of Norwalk owns Shea Island and Grassy Island, both of which are open to the public. The islands are located about one mile off shore and provide canoeists and kayakers with daylong sightseeing, wind sheltered, and open-water paddling opportunities. Overnight camping is permitted only on Shea and Grassy Islands. (To obtain camping permits and further information, contact the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department, 125 East Ave., Norwalk or call 203-854-7806 for information and permitting.) No fresh water is supplied to the islands, but there are sanitary facilities on Shea Island.

1. Calf Pasture Beach Boat Launch – Recognized point of entry for car-top carrier boats. There is a \$15 entrance fee into the park for non-residents during the beach season and launching is from a gravel and mud beach entry area. This exposed launch area is the best point of entry to get to the islands quickly and safely.

2. Grassy Island – The coastline of this 7.3-acre island is composed of smaller gravel, sand and silts. The northwest, west and southwest coast are nice, sheltered areas to rest. Camping is permitted at four sites and permits can be obtained from the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department

3. Chimon Island – This 59-acre island is part of the SBMNWR. The north and west coasts are gravelly; the south and east coast are strewn with boulders. Access is restricted from April 1st to August 15th during bird-nesting season. There is a 3-acre beach on the northwest shore providing a boat landing area that is open during the day, all year round. No overnight camping or use of the islands interior is allowed. For more information, visit the SBMNWR website at <http://northeast.fws.gov/>.

4. Shea Island – The entire shoreline of this 45-acre island is strewn with rocks and boulders. Many bird species are found on the island. Two solar powered restrooms are available seasonally along with 16 camping sites. Camping permits can be obtained from the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department.

5. Sheffield Island – This 51-acre island is located 1.5 miles off the coast of Norwalk and is part of the SBMNWR. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service controls the island except for the 3.5-acre parcel occupied by the Sheffield Island Lighthouse and grounds owned by the Norwalk Seaport Association. This is the largest island, and the entire shoreline is strewn with rocks and boulders. Sheffield Island supports a variety of bird species and has considerable nesting potential for osprey, herons and other migratory birds. To protect these birds, Sheffield Island is seasonally closed to public access each year. The refuge also provides important resting, feeding, and nesting habitat for many species of wading birds, shorebirds, songbirds and terns, including the endangered roseate tern. Adjacent waters serve as wintering habitat for brant, scoters, black duck and other waterfowl.

6. Sheffield Lighthouse - The Sheffield Island Lighthouse was built in 1868 and provided navigational aid to mariners until about 1900, when it was deactivated. The old lighthouse is now maintained and operated as a museum by the Norwalk Seaport Association. The pier at the lighthouse on the west end of the island is open seasonally. Tours and use of the picnic area and grounds are available daily during the summer for a nominal charge. A 2,000-foot inland trail is part of a joint venture between the Seaport Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the natural resources of the island while allowing the public a controlled means of public access. Visit the Norwalk Seaport Association website for information on events, island cruises and membership at www.seaport.org.

