

Treasure Island Vision Statement

The extensive waterfront of Treasure Island should be made available for varied year-round recreational uses by the residents of Thetford and surrounding communities at a reasonable cost. Its inherent natural qualities should be protected and integrated with the unique wildlife habitat of adjoining wetlands on this end of Lake Fairlee. While owned and maintained by the Town of Thetford, Treasure Island should aspire to greater public use and broader financial support from all constituencies. Organizations such as the LFA and the Aloha Camps as well as the surrounding towns should be engaged to take part in its management and long-term welfare.

What Do We Want from a Treasure Island Master Plan?

A master plan for Treasure Island should serve as a touchstone as both short-term and long-term changes maintain and improve this regional asset. The master plan should begin with a graphic representation of natural and built features, frontage on the water and along the roadway, key access points, terrain, and its location on the lake relative to other sites of interest. Potential projects should each be enumerated by purpose, constituency, priority, likely cost, and funding sources. Plans should cite similar enterprises that may serve as instructive models. As proposed below, the master plan should be implemented in phases that build on existing strengths while exploring new options to extend the variety and seasons for a wider range of public activities and community interests.

PHASE ONE — “the same, only better”

Treasure Island serves first and foremost as a summer swimming and picnicking resource for Thetford and surrounding towns that abut Lake Fairlee. It should immediately restore and build on those assets and public expectations with: solid management and hiring of qualified personnel; maintenance and improvements to beach facilities and equipment; and core services such as swim lessons and boat rentals. Based on survey results where residents indicated they want Treasure Island to be “the same, only better,” the town should add to its solid reputation as a community-centered summer destination with new ventures such as: food concessions; improved bath and shower facilities; more beach options such as deep-water floats for swimming in lanes; expanded playground and sports resources; more outdoor programming such as hosting musical groups and educational speakers; and improved parking areas and a lightning shelter. This must be done while protecting and restoring the inherent natural assets of the waterfront and woodland following LakeWise guidelines specifically noted on the master planning site map. Only by maximizing its recognized value as a public summertime venue can it begin to address questions of cost.

PHASE TWO — “more than just a beach”

While shoring up its core value as a swimming and picnicking destination, Treasure Island should simultaneously begin to explore other ways to share its extensive waterfront with the public. It has considerable value as a nature area for visitor enjoyment and as a site for addressing the health of Lake Fairlee. There should be a plan for restoration and protection of the woodland and rustic

waterfront at its northern end. This should include: a modest trail system; viewing spots with benches and a birdwatching platform in the northern marshland; restoration of the “Art Shack” for nature study; and a simple fishing dock for launching canoe/kayak tours of this “quiet end” of the lake. Along the southern end, the shoreline facing the cove offers another natural retreat that should be part of the trails network. Recreational uses of the open field on this end, accessible by an existing gated drive, might be used for a playing field, events parking, or tenting.

PHASE THREE — “four seasons, three towns”

Multi-season uses for Treasure Island should be investigated and encouraged as part of a long-range plan for expanding the public value and constituency of the site. Surveys indicate interest in activities such as ice skating, ice fishing, winter programs, and beach parties. As the public begins to recognize the greater potential for Treasure Island, efforts should be made to involve the towns of West Fairlee and Fairlee in its financial support and governance. This might take the form of a multi-town advisory committee coupled with annual contributions toward its upkeep. This could be modeled on the way the Cross-Rivendell Trail is supported by annual appropriations from the towns, coupled with individual donations through Rivendell Trail Association membership and fundraisers.

PHASE FOUR — “open to everyone at reasonable hours and times of the year”

With broader financing, residents of the participating towns and visitors with annual memberships could be offered significantly reduced admission to the beach in summer. Refurbishing the existing house for a resident caretaker could make possible free off-season daytime access through a designated area for “at your own risk” swimming and boating. Improvements to the house could also include a year-round meeting facility for educational programming on conservation and the health of the Lake Fairlee watershed as well as private functions, similar to the multiple uses of the Hulbert Center on Lake Morey.