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East Lyme's Overlook Park Progress Report #54

Robert S. De Santo, PhD., East Lyme Public Trust Foundation

The Niantic Bay Boardwalk was initially opened to the public in the summer of 2005. Within a year, its western half was storm damaged and then its eastern half followed to be coincidentally dismantled by AMTRAK in order for its reconstruction of the Niantic River railroad bridge.

Superimposed on those two events within two years of its creation, the Boardwalk grew in its popular use by thousands of visitors and well-wishers. As such, this public park and its associated newly created beach is permanently protected by federal law. This fact is a direct consequence of the Federal Environmental Policy Act coupled with the watchful eye of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Ownership and management of the Park is the responsibility of the Town of East Lyme that follows from the millions of dollars in federal funds granted to East Lyme because of fund raising by the East Lyme Public Trust Foundation, Inc.

Reconstruction of the eastern half of the Boardwalk and creation of its associated beach was required of AMTRK by federal law and the storm damaged western half of the park was redesigned and reconstructed by the Town of East Lyme.

A public rededication ceremony was held on the Boardwalk on May 28, 2016 and, the last step toward the rededication and opening of the Boardwalk to the public is shown in part in the photograph above which was taken November 5, 2016, and shows the new entry sign at the Park's eastern entrance that leads from the parking lot at Cini Park.

In the photograph, State Senator Paul Formica is shown. Paul served as East Lyme's First Selectman during virtually all of the critical reconstruction years during which East Lyme benefited by his leadership in guiding the complex efforts to protect and help insure the success of this remarkable multiyear and multifaceted "public works/public trust" project.

The importance of this major project cannot be easily quantified as its full blown community and economic benefit to the town and the region is yet to be fully realized and recognized.

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