



TOWN OF RIVERHEAD NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TOWN OF RIVERHEAD ANNOUNCES GRAND OPENING OF WEEPING WILLOW PARK

Riverhead, NY – The Riverhead Town Board has completed Weeping Willow Park and opened it to the public this week. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned for 1 p.m. on Friday, August 16, 2013.

The park, located at 961-973 West Main Street, was funded by a \$500,000 grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to re-establish a new open space on Peconic River and improve habitat for various vegetation, shellfish, wildlife and endangered species at the former site of Weeping Willow Motel.

Supervisor Sean M. Walter said removing the problematic Weeping Willow Motel has benefits of improving safety, environmental conditions and public access to the Peconic River for passive recreational enjoyment from the .51 acre park that will “stimulate revitalization efforts on Main Street. “Importantly, the project has removed a blighting influence in the downtown Riverhead business district and eliminated the significant discharge of wastewater and runoff from the site into the Peconic River.”

Cornell Cooperative Extension provided picnic tables, trash receptacles and signage through its “Creating Healthy Places in Suffolk County” grant awarded by the New York State Department of Health, according to Susan R. Wilk, Creating Healthy Places in Suffolk County Coordinator. “The Town of Riverhead is proud to have rehabilitated this space and open this beautiful park up to our residents to enjoy for years to come,” Walter said.

“Removing the motel is another important step in protecting the Peconic River Estuary system, Community Development Director Chris Kempner said. It is one of only 28 recognized by the federal government as an “Estuary of National Significance.”

The natural features, location, historic sensitivity, ecological significance and ability to augment limited recreational facilities and public access opportunities has made the Peconic River Greenway a priority acquisition on local, county, state and regional acquisition lists, including: the New York State Open Space Conservation Priority Acquisition List (2005 and 2008), the Town of Riverhead Comprehensive Plan (2003), the Town of Riverhead Local Waterfront Revitalization

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Program (2005) the Town of Riverhead Community Preservation Project Plan (1998-2001), the Town of Riverhead Priority Acquisition List (2004) and the Peconic Estuary Program Critical Lands Protection Strategy of the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan.



The former Weeping Willow Motel



The Weeping Willow Park today