

Pine Creek Watershed and Estuary

Pine Creek winds for over two miles from the Post Road to Long Island Sound. The estuary, sheltered from the Sound by the Pine Creek barrier beach (Fairfield Beach), is characterized by extensive wetlands and occupies much of the central part of Fairfield's coastal area.

Historically, many of the wetlands adjoining this creek were filled in to develop Town facilities or residential subdivisions, or they were isolated from tidal exchange by the construction of flood control dikes. The resulting ecological damage created fire hazards and breeding grounds for mosquitoes to such an extent that the Town initiated a program in 1971 to restore the degraded tidal wetlands and their ecological values.

The *marsh restoration program* is described in the Conservation Commission's 1996 "Research Report Concerning the Multiple Use Management Plan for Coastal Open Space" and 1997 pamphlet "Marsh Restoration: Opportunities and Benefits from a Logical Perspective."

The Pine Creek estuary is also characterized by the Town's Public Works Service Yard, which adjoins the estuary and includes such municipal facilities as the wastewater treatment plant, Public Works garage, recycling station, and the closed Town landfill.

Eight open spaces generally conforming to the boundaries of distinct tidal wetland cells separated by roads, dikes, and other barriers have been designated by the Conservation Commission in the estuary. The trail that winds through these areas provides an opportunity for viewing the creek and the vibrant ecosystem of the restored marshes. You can also see the self-regulating tidegates used by the Conservation Commission to help restore the marshes.