

# The Long Pond Dredging Project For The Royal Newfoundland Yacht Club

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## ABSTRACT

Conception Bay South (CBS) is the largest and fastest growing town in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador with a population of about 25,000. It is comprised of eight communities which were amalgamated in 1973. However, the population of CBS is not evenly distributed between these eight communities and one of the most densely populated areas is the community of Long Pond.

Long Pond is important to the town of CBS because it is home to the one of the town's main economic bases; the Long Pond port facility. This area attracts economy from industrial, commercial, recreational, and residential developments. One of the key geological features along the coast of Long Pond is the natural barachois that runs adjacent to the coastline.

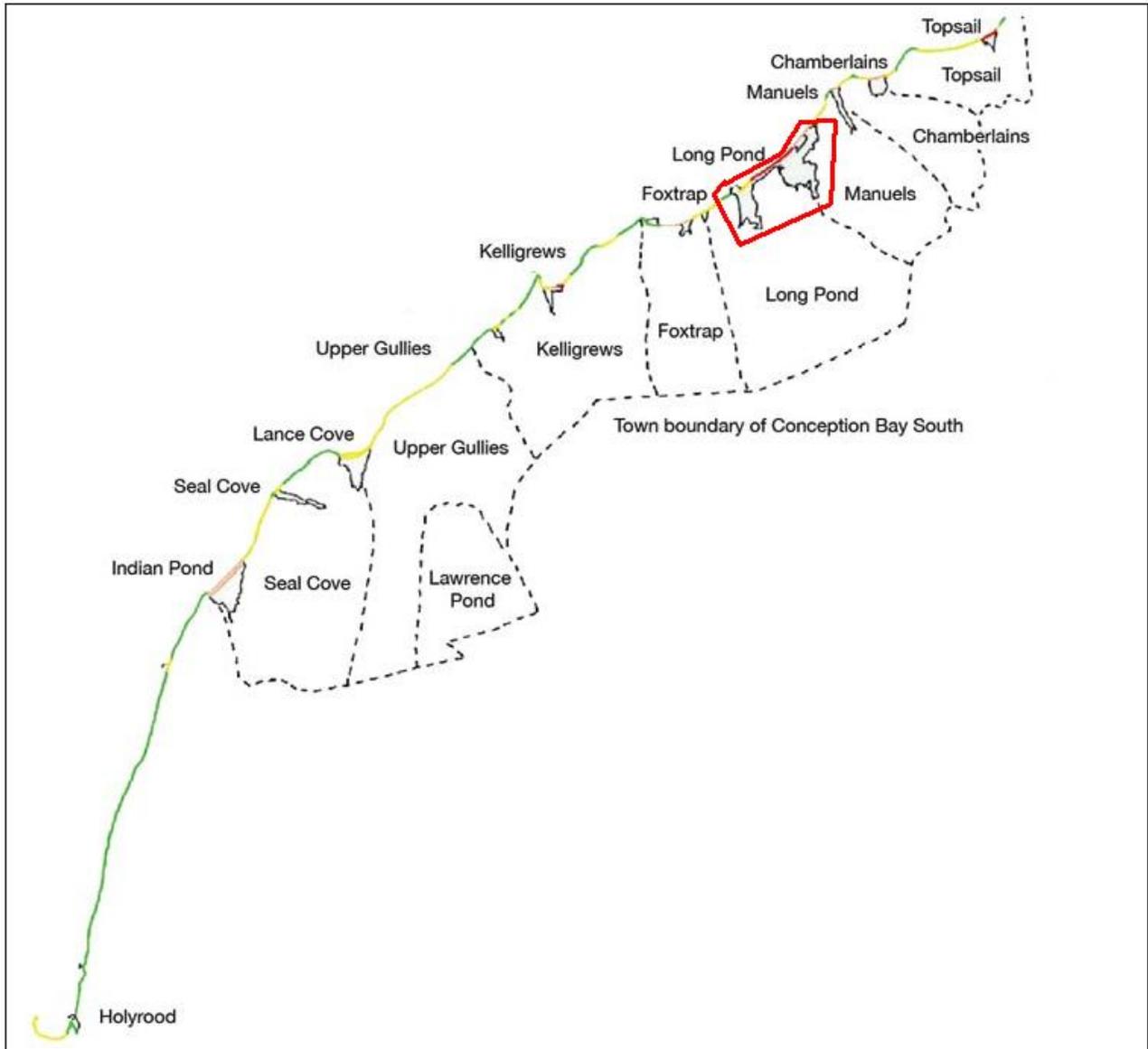
Currently Long Pond is home to the Royal Newfoundland Yacht Club, where many large vessels make port regularly. However, this was not always possible due to the layout of the channel to the lower harbour and the positioning of the natural barachois. Several unsuccessful solutions were implemented to try to solve this problem.

A successful solution came in 1956 when the St. John's harbour was becoming too congested and it was decided to make a secondary harbour in upper Long Pond. This area was dredged out and at the same time, the members of the Yacht Club petitioned to have the channel to lower Long Pond dredged as well. This enabled larger boats to sail down the channel into the location of the Yacht Club.

This paper will discuss the unsuccessful solutions as well as describe the characteristics that made the dredging a successful alternative. Also discussed is the effect these solutions had on the natural barachois and on the community of CBS.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Long Pond is one of the most densely-populated of the eight communities that compose the town of Conception Bay South (CBS), which is located about 25 km west of the city of St. John's. CBS is the fastest growing town in the province of Newfoundland and currently has a population of about 25,000. The town follows the shoreline of Conception Bay and the location of Long Pond, as well as the other seven communities, along the shoreline can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 - Location of Long Pond**

The first settlers of Long Pond were John Kennedy and Barney Janes in 1803. The community was named after a large salt-water double-basined lagoon which is separated from Conception Bay by a natural barachois. This lagoon is shown circled in red on Figure 1. For the purposes of this paper, the northeast basin is referred to as “upper Long Pond”, while the southwest basin is “lower Long Pond.”

In the first recorded census of Conception Bay in 1845, Long Pond was the largest community with 135 residents. The population quickly doubled by the 1860’s when a road was built to connect CBS to St. John’s. Between 1882 and 1884, a railway was constructed between CBS and St. John’s, further developing economy in the area.

### 1.1 Economy

The original settlers of Long Pond were attracted to the area for the fishing potential. However, as the population increased and new methods of transportation were introduced, other economic sources were quickly discovered.

### 1.1.1 Pyrophyllite Mining

Deposits of pyrophyllite, a mineral which closely resembles talc, were found in Long Pond in 1898. Five years following this discovery the pyrophyllite quarry opened and provided employment for residents of the town. A tramway was built to connect the mine, named “Talcville”, to the railway line. In 1937 a shipping facility for the mine was developed in the industrial zone of lower Long Pond.

### 1.1.2 Farming

Farming replaced fishing as the dominant economic source in CBS after the railway between the town and St. John’s was completed in 1884. At this time, the produce grown in CBS could be marketed in the capital city and this led to a great increase in agricultural development in the fertile soils of Long Pond.

### 1.1.3 Boating

In 1936, the idea to develop a boating club was discussed by locals Arthur Johnson, Max Barbour, and Dr. Will Roberts. They purchased a small piece of land on the shores of upper Long Pond and constructed a small 20 by 40 foot building to house the club. A wharf was erected along with a small boathouse and the “Avalon Yacht Club” was formed.

This club quickly gained popularity as a place where avid boaters could come and socialize with others of similar interests. Friendly races were held on Wednesday afternoons and Sundays around upper Long Pond. The club increased in size as more St. John’s residents began to build summer homes in Long Pond to sail their small recreational boats. This brought a new source of revenue to CBS in the form of tourism and real estate sales.

## **2 PROBLEM BACKGROUND**

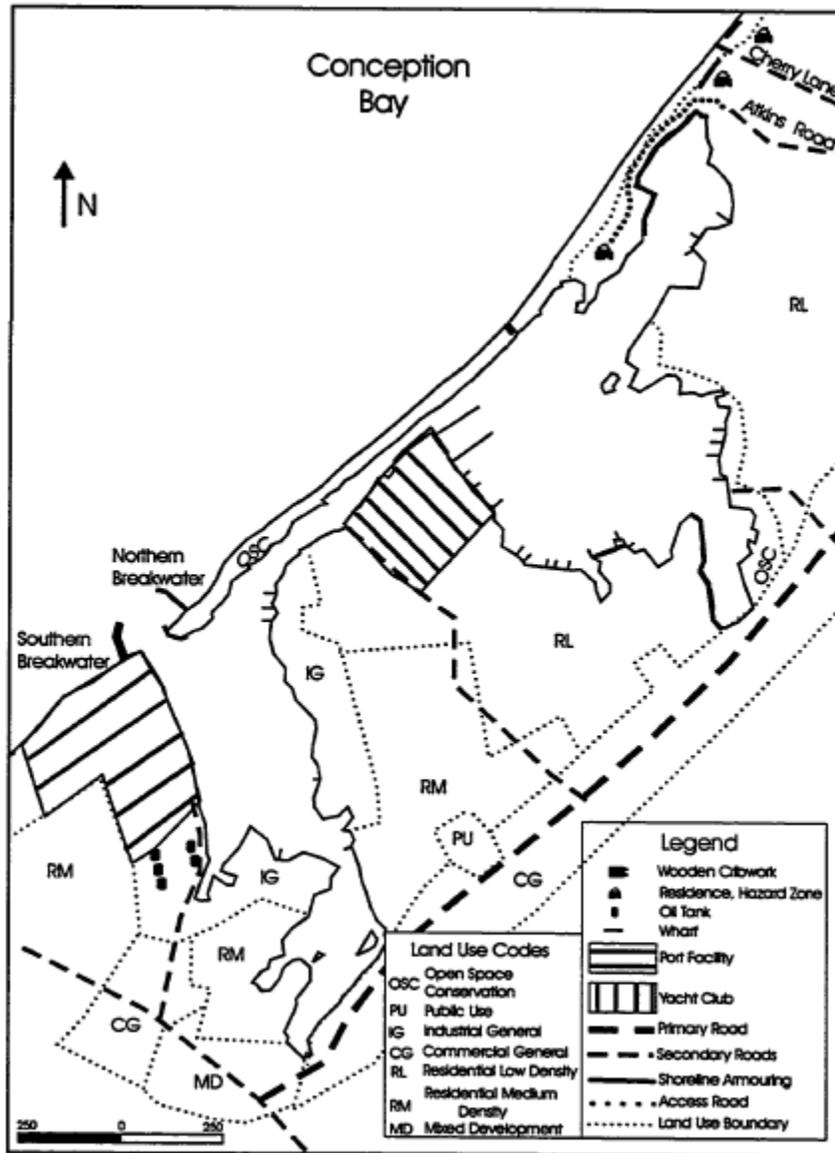
### **2.1 Yacht Club Early Years**

After its inception in 1936, the Avalon Yacht Club was approached by the Topsail Beach Dance Pavilion owner Harold Oxley who proposed that the two clubs merge into one facility at the upper Long Pond location. In this new facility, the Avalon Yacht Club prospered until 1942 when the building was taken over by the federal government as an emergency hospital in the case of an air raid on St. John’s during the war. On April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943 a fire started in the kitchen and since fuel was stored in the building, the entire facility was completely destroyed. The members of the Yacht Club pooled together their money to build a new, smaller facility at the same location on upper Long Pond.

In the late 1940’s, the Avalon Yacht Club members grew tired of sailing their boats around upper Long Pond. They wanted access to Conception Bay, but this was prevented by the natural barachois that runs parallel to the shoreline along Long Pond.

### **2.2 Long Pond Barachois**

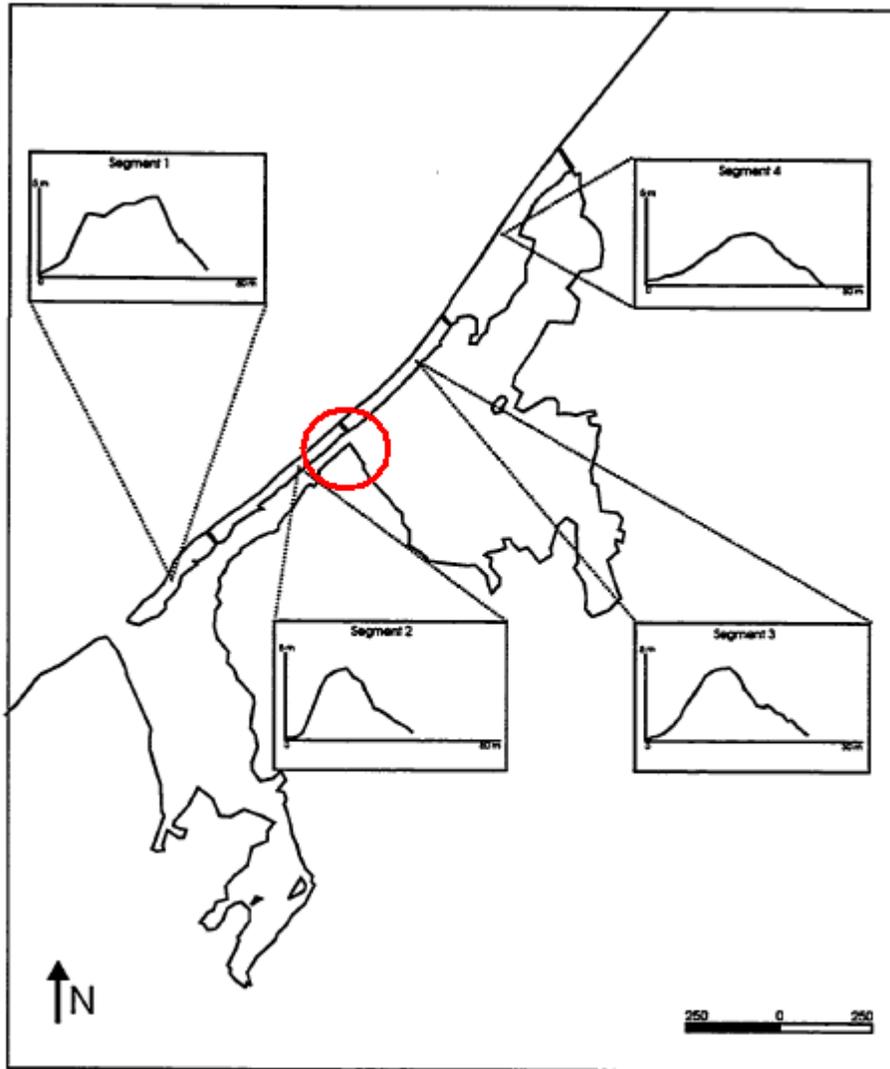
The Long Pond Barachois is a coarse gravel barrier beach that runs parallel to the shoreline of CBS and separates the double-basined lagoon of Long Pond from Conception Bay. It is about 1.75 km in length and varies in places from 20-40 m in width. The extents of the barachois, as well as the land use of the area surrounding it, are shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 – Location of Natural Barchois and Land Uses**

In the 1940's, when the members of the Avalon Yacht Club desired to sail from upper Long Pond out into Conception Bay, the geology of the natural barchois and the channel connecting lower and upper Long Pond was much different. With the exception of times at high tide, there existed only a few inches of water along the channel between the two ponds; not nearly enough to sail boats from the Avalon Yacht Club down to the inlet to Conception Bay. There also existed a low, heavy wooden bridge between the shore and the barchois close to the location of the modern Yacht Club that was used by local farmers to travel to the beach to catch caplin. This bridge effectively blocked transport between the two ponds.

Figure 3 shows the four major segments of the barchois, as well as the profiles of each section. Circled in red on this figure is the area where the wooden bridge was located in the 1940's.



**Figure 3 – Barachois Profiles and Location of Bridge**

### **3 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

#### **3.1 Access Through Barachois**

When the members of the Avalon Yacht Club gathered to discuss means of accessing Conception Bay from upper Long Pond, they first decided that the most logical solution would be to cut a hole directly through the barachois out to the Bay. At the point where they hoped to put their access point, the barachois was about 45 metres wide and about 5.5 metres high in the center. They approached an engineer with the idea of removing this rock and he advised that it was a practical solution that could be accomplished for \$3000.

The Yacht Club members fashioned a crude apparatus using a raft, double drum lobster winch, an old Buick car engine, some cables, and a large drab bucket, which they borrowed from the Iron Ore Company operating off of Bell Island, to haul beachrock from the barachois into Long Pond. However, the beach rock rolled back into place with the tide before they managed to create a wide enough access path. This problem was solved by borrowing a piledriver from the government and driving piles around the access point to stop the beachrocks from rolling back in. This solution worked well and the boaters

managed to create an access path in the barachois that was about 6 metres wide and had just over a metre depth of water at low tide.

The Avalon Yacht Club members could now sail their boats out to Conception Bay and back into Long Pond without any issues. Two weeks later, thanks to a heavy Northeasterly wind, as is common to the area, the beachrock was transported back into its original place on the barachois and all that remained of the access path were the tops of the piles that stuck up through the rock. Being \$10,000 in debt, the boaters abandoned their hopes of a path through the barachois.

### **3.2 Alteration of Bridge**

The second attempted solution was to alter the wooden bridge that spanned the channel between upper and lower Long Pond. The purpose of this wooden bridge was to allow local farmers to access the barachois with their horses and carts to gather caplin for use as both fertilizer and cattle feed. The members of the Yacht Club held meetings with the local farmers to propose the demolition of the bridge. They suggested that there was no need to spread caplin over their land and that the bridge was unnecessary. These meetings were not received well by the local people.

The next course of action taken was to convert this bridge into a drawbridge so that the Yacht Club members could raise the bridge and travel down the channel at high tides. The bridge was cut in half, hinges were added and two block-and-tackle systems were constructed. Theoretically this design worked well, but in practice it took the strength of six men on the block and tackles to raise the bridge each time a sailor wanted to go out into the Bay. This became too cumbersome and eventually the bridge was completely demolished and rebuilt at a height where small boats could pass under.

### **3.3 Continuous Removal of Beachrock**

Sailing small boats under the new, higher bridge worked well for a while but continuous storms and Northeasterly winds caused more beachrock to roll into the channel and the inlet to the Bay. Eventually the smallest of boats began to have difficulty passing through even at high tide. Several men took turns throughout the summers dragging beachrock out of the channel using the same winch and bucket apparatus that was used to try to create a path through the barachois. Though a time-consuming and monotonous process, this worked for several years and allowed small boats to pass through the channel at high tides only.

### **3.4 Dredging**

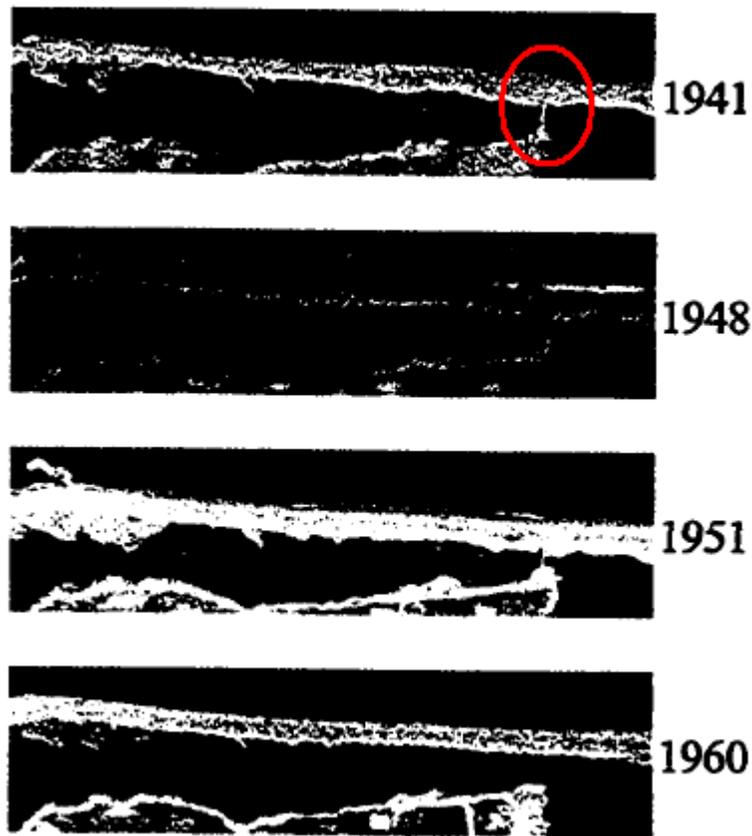
In 1950, the St. John's harbour was becoming too congested and the Federal government decided to make a second harbour facility at lower Long Pond. They brought dredging boats down to deepen this pond and its access inlet. This allowed several members of the Avalon Yacht Club to sail larger boats out into Conception Bay from the lower pond, but they still could not travel up the channel to the location of the Yacht Club facility. For this reason, about a dozen members separated from the Yacht Club and opted to sail out of the lower pond with their larger crafts instead.

In 1956, the government decided to make their harbour facility at Long Pond larger to accommodate growing industry in the province. The large boats of the separated Yacht Club members were in the way of this expansion and as a compromise, the government agreed to dredge the channel between lower and upper Long Pond so that the boaters could operate out of the upper pond again while still being able to access Conception Bay. This was implemented in 1957 and for the first time boaters could travel large powerboats from upper Long Pond out into the Bay via the channel. These boaters bought a piece of land at the site of the modern Yacht Club and built a new facility, creating the

Newfoundland Yacht Club. For three years the Newfoundland Yacht Club and the Avalon Yacht Club both operated out of upper Long Pond. In 1960, the Avalon Yacht Club, with its smaller boats, opted to join the Newfoundland Yacht Club at its new location and they merged into one large club. The club was given the title of “Royal” in 1964.

#### 4 BRIDGE DEMOLITION CONTROVERSY

When the dredging solution was implemented, the wooden bridge spanning the channel was demolished. This caused a large controversy between the Yacht Club members and the local people of Long Pond. The local farmers were under the impression when the bridge was demolished that it would be reconstructed after the dredging was complete. This never happened and caused tension between the local people and the Yacht Club. The aerial photographs in Figure 4 show the bridge as it was prior to its demolition in the 1950s, as well as the channel with easy access in 1960.



**Figure 4 – Aerial Photographs Depicting the Removal of the Bridge**

In 1957 numerous letters were sent to the Federal government from both the local people of Long Pond and the Yacht Club members. The local people urged the government to aid in the restoration of the bridge as it was paramount to the gathering of caplin and thus the continued prosperity of agriculture in the community. A large petition, signed by over a hundred local people, was sent to the Federal government for recognition on this issue.

On the opposing side were the Yacht Club members, who also sent in multiple letters stating that making this channel accessible was in fact benefitting the local people. The economy was growing due

to increased tourism in the area and the first-class harbour facility at the lower pond was also bringing great economic benefit to the people of the community.

On the evening of July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1957 a public meeting was held in Long Pond with Federal government representatives present, as well as many local people and Yacht Club members, to discuss the benefits and pitfalls of reconstructing the bridge. Ultimately it was decided that the bridge would hinder economic development in Long Pond due to its negative impacts on both the industrial port and the Yacht Club.

## **5 CURRENT STATE**

The Royal Newfoundland Yacht Club began with less than a dozen members and only four small speedboats with 32 horsepower outboard motors. Today it is recognized as a world-class facility with 350 memberships and over 120 large yachts. It is a tourist attraction and point of interest for the town of CBS. The Yacht Club as it exists today in upper Long Pond, as well as the natural barachois, can be seen in Figure 5.



**Figure 5 – The Royal Newfoundland Yacht Club**

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

It can be seen from the success of the Royal Newfoundland Yacht Club that dredging the channel between upper and lower Long Pond was an appropriate solution. This dredging had the negative impact of making it difficult for local farmers to gather caplin for their land; however it created new economic growth opportunities for the town. Since the initial dredging in 1957, it has been necessary to sporadically dredge the channel as beachrock is occasionally brought in by large storms. It has also been necessary to construct breakwaters at the inlet between Conception Bay and lower Long Pond since this time.

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