

Grant will improve access to river

By David Connolly
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RAYNHAM — Town officials have a \$15,000 state grant in hand to begin working on a small park with a canoe and kayak launch along the Taunton River at South Street East.

Plans call for adding gravel for a parking lot to property near the sewer pumping station, redirecting the path that leads to the river and making the river more accessible along its banks.

"This is part of the Taunton River Heritage legislation state Sen. Marc Pacheco passed," said Raynham Town Planner Richard McCarthy.

The town received the state money last month and must spend it by June, said McCarthy.

The town is finalizing details on a 1.5-acre land donation which is part of the park project, said McCarthy.

Already, the town owns more than 7 acres of conservation land which surrounds the 1.5-acre parcel. That land was donated to the town several years ago by the Boyar family, developers of Riverbend Condominium, according to Judith Christine, the town's conservation agent.

"It's already a very popular, well-used put-in and take-out area for people who like to paddle their canoes and kayaks up and down the Taunton River," said Christine.

Waterway enthusiasts park in a dirt lot owned by George Bumilla — with his permission — and walk down a path to the river, she said.

But the path is a straight shot to the river, and people launch their boats along banks that are steep and can be slippery with wet mud, she said.

"We need to make it so people in wheelchairs can get down there," she said.

The path is slated to be redirected through a series of S-curves, and modifications of one area along the river banks is in the works, said Christine. Depending on what various parts of the project cost, there could be money left over to install park benches and picnic tables.

"We'll begin work shortly after the first of the year and be all done by this summer," she said.

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