

University of New Hampshire

## University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository

---

Media Relations

UNH Publications and Documents

---

10-7-2003

### UNH Modifies Plans for Marine Research Facility in New Castle

Kim Billings

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/news>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Billings, Kim, "UNH Modifies Plans for Marine Research Facility in New Castle" (2003). *UNH Today*. 2049.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/2049>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the UNH Publications and Documents at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Media Relations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact [Scholarly.Communication@unh.edu](mailto:Scholarly.Communication@unh.edu).



## Related Links

[UNH Marine Program](#)

# UNH Modifies Plans for Marine Research Facility in New Castle; Begins Discussions with Local and State Officials about Alternative Site for Laboratory

Contact: [Kim Billings](#)  
603-862-1558  
UNH Media Relations

Oct. 7, 2003

---

DURHAM, N.H. – University of New Hampshire officials said today they will modify plans for building a marine research facility on UNH property at Fort Point in New Castle. Plans now call for a shorter pier and a small support facility at the New Castle site and the consideration of alternative sites, including Odiorne Point State Park in nearby Rye, for the marine research laboratory.

For the past year, UNH faculty and administrators have worked with town and state officials to develop a plan for the proposed research facility on the Fort Point property. However, a decision made last May by the N.H. Division of Historical Resources that removal of on-site coast defense structures will not be approved under any condition makes it impossible for UNH to meet its programmatic needs for the laboratory portion of the project at the Fort Point site.

“Despite an intensive planning process that included New Castle citizens and other interest groups, we can no longer consider the Fort Point property for the marine research laboratory even after exploring several options on the five-acre site,” stated Jonathan Pennock, director of the UNH Marine Program. “However, after extensive research, it is clear the New Castle site is the only suitable location for the pier needed to support our coastal and ocean research programs.”

According to Pennock, the revised proposal will require that the research laboratory and pier components of the project be split.

“Our efforts for the New Castle property will focus on developing a pier design that will extend only 325 feet beyond the existing approach trestle, rather than the existing 500 foot pier length. The shorter pier will be able to accommodate the smaller UNH research vessels, a new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) ocean mapping ‘SWATH’ vessel, and under-pier fish pens that are critical to the University’s open ocean aquaculture program. Larger vessels not compatible with the pier will need to dock at the state pier on the Piscataqua River. Since the marine lab will be located elsewhere, a small building to provide pier support will be needed on the Fort Point property. We will continue to work collaboratively with town residents and other appropriate local officials as our planning goes forward,” said Pennock.

“We want to thank State Representative Dan Hughes and Executive Councilor Ruth Griffin for meeting with us and working on a compromise to our original plan,” said J. Gregg Sanborn,

executive assistant to the president. “Their input and guidance have been critical to our efforts to move this important project ahead.”

Griffin stated, "I'm pleased that this compromise resolution preserves the historic sites on Fort Point and, at the same time, will allow UNH marine research, and it's partnership with NOAA, to advance."

Hughes said, “This compromise appears to be a good fix that will preserve a historic monument as well as relieve the growing traffic problem on Route 1B. The University went the extra yard to try to accommodate the local needs.”

### **Marine Research Facility Alternatives**

UNH officials have also been working with others to evaluate alternative locations on the Seacoast for the marine research laboratory. The primary – and most limiting – needs are for clean, high-salinity seawater and easy access to the pier facility. Pennock said a location at Odiorne Point State Park near the Seacoast Science Center has emerged as the best alternative to meet the needs for the laboratory. The university will now begin formal consultation with the N.H. Division of Parks and Recreation, the Town of Rye and the Seacoast Science Center to see if this location will work.

“The Odiorne site would provide exciting new opportunities for UNH to expand its interactions with the Seacoast Science Center and the residents of our coastal communities,” Pennock explained.

Hughes said that, from preliminary discussions with the town manager in Rye, “I believe that the two facilities would compliment each other and be a benefit to the town of Rye.”

Seacoast Science Center President Wendy Lull agrees. “The university’s Marine Program was an active partner in marine education at Odiorne before the Center opened in 1992. Today, UNH Marine Docents continue to be among our most active volunteer educators. We work side-by-side with faculty to develop exhibits that interpret the university’s marine research for all of our visitors. Bringing the marine laboratory here will greatly enhance our work together. What that means for our community is that we will be able to infuse the university’s cutting edge research results into our programs and exhibits. Visiting school children and families will discover nature through the most current science of the sea.”

Even though UNH is not subject to zoning and building ordinances, Pennock said that it is the intent of the university to use local codes as guidelines in the planning process. To be most effective in these efforts, the university will schedule meetings for information exchange between the university and any town being considered.

“We learned from our recent experience in New Castle that when we have an open dialog, answer questions when they arise, and work to incorporate thoughtful ideas and input into the planning process, everyone benefits,” Pennock explained. “It’s all part of being a good neighbor.”

The proposed marine research facility will provide a new home for UNH’s marine research programs and help further position the university as a regional and national resource for excellence in research, teaching, technology transfer and marine policy.

Over the past decade, marine-related education and research at UNH have developed to the point that they are now a major center of excellence for the university, explained Pennock.

“Many of these new activities have been in areas of marine aquaculture and fisheries management, coastal ocean mapping and marine ecosystem health,” he said, noting that UNH research has stimulated numerous cooperative programs with NOAA. “The proposed marine research laboratory and pier will support these university programs and our partnership with NOAA, and address critical research space and vessel support needs.”

In addition to its primary focus on research, the proposed lab will support marine education, including instruction of laboratory components of marine science courses that can make use of the unique facilities at the coastal laboratory, and provide a facility where graduate and undergraduate research projects will take place. It will also be a venue for outreach to the general public as well as primary and secondary schools, through programming and tours.

The proposed marine research facility will be funded through a \$14 million grant from NOAA, which was secured in 2001 with the help of U.S. Senator Judd Gregg.