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Jeep buried for 40 years is unearthed from Cape Cod sand dune



DAVID G. CURRAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

This aged Jeep Wagoneer was plucked from its unintended burial plot along Ballston Beach, in Truro.

By Steve Annear | GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 24, 2017

For decades, nature took its course. As the Cape Cod sand dune continued to shift with the rolling ocean tides and high winds, it overwhelmed the wooden shed where the white Jeep Wagoneer had been parked, all but burying it.

And there it stayed for roughly 40 years — until Friday.

Comments

The aged vehicle was plucked this week from its unintended burial plot along Ballston Beach in Truro using a front-end loader and a chain.

The Jeep, believed to be a model from the 1960s, was removed so the town can begin work ripping up a portion of an adjacent public parking lot at the popular beach, where the dune has started to encroach.

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Rather than fight back to preserve parking, the town is going to allow the dune to “continue to move the way it wants to,” said Emily Beebe, Truro’s assistant health and conservation agent.

“It became important to get rid of this Jeep,” she said. “The town is going to be moving sand off of the east side of the Ballston Beach parking lot and, once the pavement is uncovered, removing pavement and restoring the sand.”

The town and homeowner had talked about how to best remove the vehicle over the years, officials said. But because a coastal dune is a natural resource area under the Wetlands Protection Act, difficulty kept mounting.

With the town ready to move ahead as soon as Monday with its project, removing the Jeep took on a new sense of urgency.

“It’s not an easy process. But we walked them through it,” Beebe said. Comments
“[A Jeep] is not something you want to have in an area where you’re going to have the ocean at some point washing in.”

Witnessing the Jeep’s removal may seem uninteresting, but it somehow captivated a national audience. This week, calls came in to Town Hall about the vehicle from as far away as Oregon, said Town Manager Rae Ann Palmer.

Palmer was intrigued herself. She remembers seeing similar Jeeps cruising the streets as a kid.

On Friday, as crews from Greg Morris Landscaping arrived at the private property and prepared to unearth it, Palmer stood nearby.

Workers first peeled away the sunken shed’s front doors, revealing the front-facing Jeep’s smiling grille. A chain was attached to the loader and then wrapped around the vehicle’s axle. With a groan and a crunch, the old vehicle was wrestled out of the garage. In the end, it arrived in two pieces.

“It was fascinating,” said Palmer. “They opened the garage, and it was like watching a time capsule being opened.”

She added, “as they started pulling it, you just see this rising of this Jeep, kind of coming up and out, and [the contractor] pulled it out and dropped it and it was this bucket of rust.”

Among the heaps of metal, however, were relics of a bygone era still in decent condition. The steering wheel was intact, the pale-green dashboard was visible, and the hubcaps were still relatively shiny.

Morris, the contractor hired to move the Jeep, said the homeowner's family made off with a few trinkets.

"It was a piece of history," he said. "It's all taken away now."

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