

# INTRODUCTION

*Partners for Progress: Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan Accomplishments 2003-2005* documents the achievements of diverse estuary stakeholders working to implement actions identified in the 2001 South Shore Estuary Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP). This is the second biannual implementation status report prepared by the Reserve Council as required by law.

The Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve (Reserve) and its council of stakeholders (Reserve Council) were created by Article 46 of the State Executive Law titled the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Act. The Act declared it to be in the public interest to protect and manage the estuary as a single integrated system, and in furtherance of that goal directed the Reserve Council to prepare a management plan for the estuary identifying actions to protect and enhance the region's natural, cultural, and recreational resources and water-based economy.

The Reserve Council is chaired by the New York Secretary of State and represents the interests of multiple state agencies with estuary management responsibilities, Nassau and Suffolk counties, south shore municipal governments, and recreation, business, academic, conservation and citizens groups. With technical support from the New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, the Reserve Council prepared and adopted a CMP in 2001. Subsequent to CMP adoption, the Reserve Council has operated as an information sharing platform among key estuary managers and stakeholders, investigated emerging management issues, and facilitated new partnerships to advance CMP implementation.

*Partners for Progress* illustrates significant achievements over the two-year period toward advancing the Reserve Council's goals to improve and maintain water quality, protect and restore living resources, improve scientific knowledge of the Reserve's complex ecosystem, expand public use and enjoyment, sustain the water-based economy and related maritime tradition, and increase education and stewardship of the Reserve's resources.

In addition to documenting the accomplishments of individual Reserve stakeholders, *Partners for Progress* spotlights a variety of key partnership-based projects throughout the Reserve, which clearly illustrate the value of stakeholders working together to advance the Council's priorities. Finally, *Partners for Progress* identifies future directions, challenges and steps which should be considered by the Reserve Council and its partners to continue and build on the significant progress achieved to date.

The continued success of this effort is based on collaboration and active participation of numerous stakeholder partners including state, federal, municipal and county governments, non-profit organizations, community groups, local businesses, research and educational institutions, and individual citizens who use the estuary and appreciate its diverse resources.

To facilitate CMP implementation among estuary stakeholders, a South Shore Estuary Reserve Office was established in 2002. The Reserve Office monitors and documents CMP implementation progress, coordinates interaction and administration of the Council, its committees and workgroups, and provides technical



assistance to estuary stakeholders on a variety of local, state and federally-initiated programs that advance CMP actions and Reserve Council priorities.

The Reserve Office also acts as a repository for estuary-related research and technical information; conducts and facilitates educational outreach and stewardship programs; and assists with implementation of New York State Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act grant projects that advance Reserve Council implementation priorities.

## Overview of the South Shore Estuary Reserve

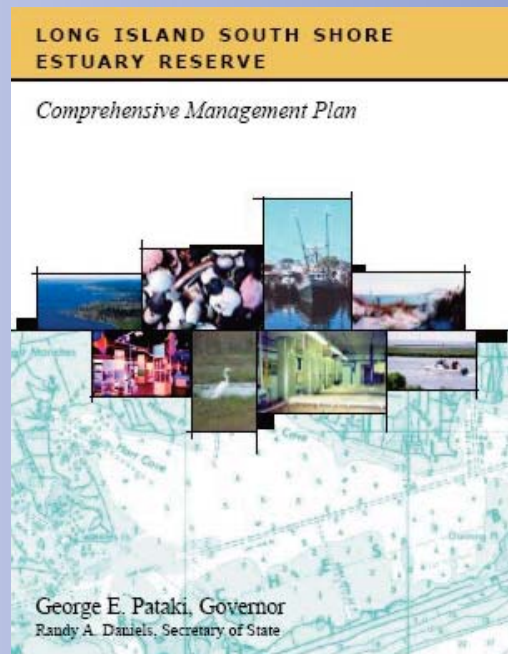
Estuaries are transition zones between the world's freshwater and marine ecosystems where freshwater mixes with salt water. Long Island's South Shore Estuary is a dynamic ecosystem, formed during the past 5,000 years by the interaction of a rising sea level with the glacially-deposited material that makes up Long Island. The entire natural system, including the barrier islands and the 173 square miles of shallow bays behind them, is still changing and evolving in response to wave action, tides, coastal storms, and the continuing rise of sea level.

Salt water from the Atlantic Ocean enters the bays through five major inlets in the barrier island system, and freshwater from the mainland enters through groundwater discharge, surface runoff, and the 107 tributaries which drain into the bays. The shallow nature of the bays and the mixing of salt and freshwater creates a highly productive ecosystem that supports microscopic plants and animals, which in turn support the finfish, shellfish and other diverse plant and animal species which typify the south shore bays' natural environment.

The South Shore Estuary Reserve encompasses major embayments including the Hempstead Bays, South Oyster Bay, Great South Bay, Moriches Bay, Quantuck Bay and Shinnecock Bay and their 326 square miles of watershed in Nassau and Suffolk counties. The Reserve extends approximately 75 miles from the Nassau/Queens county border at East Rockaway inlet to the eastern shoreline of Shinnecock Bay at Heady Creek in the Village of Southampton in Suffolk County. The Reserve is bounded by the barrier islands to the south and the upland limits of the Reserve's watershed to the north.

The Reserve is home to approximately 1.5 million residents and is a major center of tourism, commercial and

recreational fishing, and other water-related economic activities dependent on a healthy estuarine environment. The Reserve hosts the largest concentration of commercial and recreational vessels, marinas and other water-dependent businesses in New York State. The maritime character and heritage of the region evolved out of subsistence farming, shellfish and finfish harvesting, boat building, near-shore whaling, water-borne transportation and commerce, and establishment of seasonal resorts for visitors and tourists. Today, the region's character is typified by recreational boating and fishing, waterfront parks, beaches and recreation areas, marine trades businesses, ferry transportation to the barrier islands, and the growing reuse and revitalization of waterfronts.



## Comprehensive Management Plan Implementation Progress

*Partners for Progress* is organized to identify stakeholder and partnership accomplishments from 2003-2005 in the context of outcomes and implementation actions described in Chapter 7 (Implementation) of the Reserve CMP. Each outcome is related topically to the major CMP goals of improving and maintaining water quality; protecting and restoring living resources; improving scientific knowledge of the estuary ecosystem; expanding public use and enjoyment; sustaining the estuary-related economy; and increasing educational outreach and stewardship.