

OUTCOME 7: INCREASED PUBLIC USE OF THE ESTUARY AND EXPANDED TOURISM



Public use and enjoyment of the estuary depend upon access to its shore lands, recreational sites, natural areas, cultural resources, and interpretive facilities. Located in a highly populated metropolitan area, the Reserve draws residents and tourists with high demands and expectations for estuary-related experiences. While the supply of land dedicated to public access, recreation, and interpretation is limited, demand for such services is growing. To increase public use and enjoyment of the estuary, and to expand opportunities for visitors, it is necessary to make better use of existing facilities and increase the number of access and recreational sites, and associated amenities at those facilities. To meet the needs of the public, Reserve partners have made significant progress towards advancing these goals of the CMP.

Expansion of Public Access and Recreation Opportunities

To meet growing demand, public access opportunities are being expanded at existing facilities and increased by acquisition of additional sites. Where feasible, linear connectors are being developed to physically link both existing and new sites. Where practical, shoreline barriers are being removed. Reserve partners have completed the following projects to expand public access:

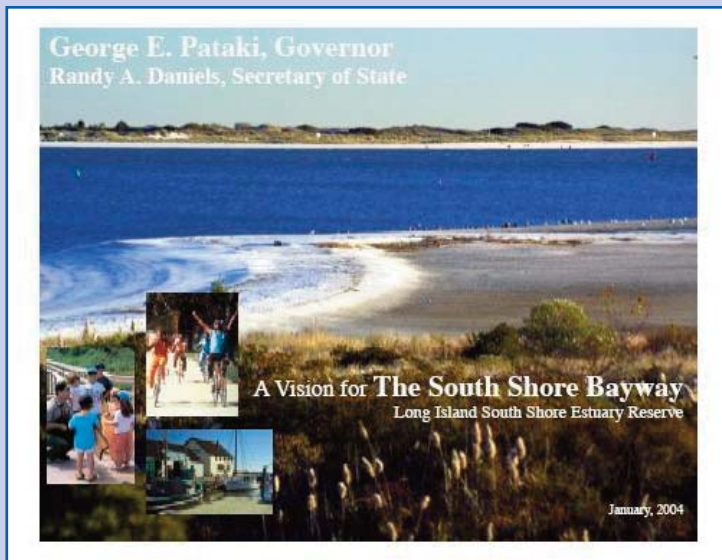
- Fire Island National Seashore (FINS) revitalized bay access to Barrett Beach/Talisman by constructing a universally-accessible dock for private boats and a public ferry, and is making improvements to the site to enhance access and interpretation. A new FINS west entrance station, just east of Robert Moses State Park, has been planned and designed. It will be used as a gateway to welcome visitors to the Seashore and the Fire Island Lighthouse.
- The NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) has upgraded facilities and enhanced access to the estuary, including safety improvements, fishing piers, and shoreline stabilization, in state parks located in the Reserve including Connetquot River State Park, the South Side Sportsmen's Clubhouse, Bayard Cutting Arboretum, the Cutting Family Carriage House, Jones Beach State Park, Heckscher State Park, Belmont Lake State Park, and Captree State Park.
- NYS Department of State (DOS), in conjunction with the Reserve Office, created *A Vision for the South Shore Bayway*, a document outlining the components of the Bayway program.
- NYS DOS and the Reserve Office worked to create a *South Shore Estuary Reserve Scenic Resources Inventory* that identifies the region's scenic resources and recommends specific steps for protecting them. Scenic areas were evaluated based on state-wide criteria and local preferences. The inventory provides a foundation for future efforts to protect and enhance the scenic character of the Reserve.

- Nassau County completed a number of projects to enhance public areas in existing parks in the Reserve. Upgrades to the parks include pedestrian pathways and nature trails, boardwalks, scenic overlooks, seating areas, new fishing piers, and interpretive signage. The facilities where these projects have been completed include Milburn Pond, Loft Pond and Silver Lake in Baldwin, Tanglewood Pond in Lakeview, and Mill Pond in Wantagh.
- Suffolk County has made improvements for public access to parks in the Reserve through overall maintenance of environmental trails (hiking, biking, and interpretation) and improvements to parking lots, roadways, bathrooms, and campgrounds. These improvements were made at the following parks: Southaven County Park, Cathedral Pines County Park, Gardiner County Park, Terrell River County Nature Preserve, Timber Point Golf Course, Smith Point County Park, Green Creek County Park, and Brookside County Park in Sayville, where the County worked with Great South Bay Audubon Society to construct a bridge over a wetland area.

SOUTH SHORE BAYWAY

The South Shore Bayway is a network of maritime centers, parks, historic and cultural sites, community centers, waterfronts, and routes used by pedestrians, bicyclists, boaters, and motorists located throughout the Reserve and recognized as Bayway Destinations and Connectors. The Reserve Council established the Bayway in 2003 to promote exploration and interpretation of the Reserve, increase public enjoyment and exploration, and enhance understanding and stewardship of the Reserve’s natural, historic, recreational and cultural resources. Local governments, non-profit organizations, and community groups are working cooperatively to develop and expand the Bayway. A variety of Bayway Destinations and Connectors have been nominated by Reserve partners. After review by the Reserve Office, nominations are forwarded to the Council for consideration of inclusion in the Bayway. By 2005, 38 Destinations and two Connectors were recognized by the Reserve Council.

Bayway sites provide opportunities to interpret key historical, cultural and natural features within the Reserve through interpretive signage and exhibits. Interpretive signage, currently being developed for a variety of Bayway Destinations, will help residents and visitors understand and appreciate all the estuary has to offer and identifies the Reserve as a distinct maritime region. The Reserve Council website currently highlights information about the program, its vision, and identifies locations of recognized Destinations and Connectors. As the Bayway continues to grow, more Reserve Partners become involved, greater opportunities will be created for people to experience, enjoy, and appreciate the Reserve’s valuable resources.



The vision document for the South Shore Bayway



The first Bayway interpretive kiosk on the Nautical Mile in Freeport

- The Town of Hempstead stabilized 2000 feet of shoreline at the Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area, Guy Lombardo Marina in Freeport, and West Marina in Point Lookout. At Guy Lombardo, West, Inwood, and Woodmere Marinas, the Town installed 2000 feet of floating docks.



Reserve partners are working to improve public recreational opportunities.

- Town of Hempstead initiated a project to improve public access to the estuary by revitalizing a 40-acre parcel of property, creating the Lido Beach Passive Nature Area. The Town created additional access sites to the estuary by adding boat launching ramps in Woodmere and Inwood. In addition, the Town is renovating the south end of Guy Lombardo Marina to expand fishing opportunities as part of a project to enhance public waterfront access and enjoyment.
- The Town of Babylon has undertaken several initiatives at Town parks to improve public access to the estuary. These include refurbishment of existing docks and fishing piers, expansion of trails, and creation of additional parking at Venetian Shores Spray Water Park and restaurant on the Great South Bay at Lindenhurst.

- The Town of Babylon completed a special area management plan for Oak Beach Park. The plan identified major site amenities and infrastructure improvements as components of the planned park that will enhance public access and benefits. The Town of Babylon completed the first steps for redevelopment of Oak Beach Park as a recreational facility and public resource, including site preparation, installation of new shoreline stabilization structures, and demolition of abandoned structures.
- The Town of Islip increased public access to the waterfront by repairing existing bulkheads and adding new piers, boardwalks, and amenities. Locations where these upgrades took place were Homan Avenue, the entrance to Watchogue Creek, and the East Islip Marina.



Reserve partners are working to improve public access to unique environments, such as the barrier island.

- The Town of Brookhaven has improved facilities to access water and enjoyment of the bays. At Sandspit Park a dilapidated jetty was transformed into a handicapped accessible fishing pier. Davis Park Marina was upgraded to increase ferry access, and the existing comfort stations and fishing pier were upgraded to make them handicapped accessible.
- The Town of Southampton revitalized public boat ramps to improve recreational opportunities at Speonk Shore Canal along Moriches Bay in Remsenburg and at Tiana Beach facilities on Shinnecock Bay.
- The Village of East Rockaway is undertaking a waterfront rehabilitation project along the shorelines of Mill River, East Rockaway Channel, and Talfor Basin to improve public access along the waterfront. The project entails development of a new waterfront park, reconstruction of the existing Village marina including the addition of a new fishing pier, and shoreline stabilization. The Village reconstructed approximately 1800 linear feet of bulkheading and completed maintenance dredging of areas up to ten feet seaward. Parking facilities near the waterfront have been regraded and expanded.

- The Village of Freeport completed design work for a new waterfront park at the foot of the Nautical Mile on Woodcleft Avenue. The new Seabreeze Park will include new boat docking facilities and public waterfront access to Hempstead Bay.
- The Long Island Railroad partnered with South Bay Cruises, the Long Island Maritime Museum, and NYS OPRHP to offer a tour in which visitors can take the railroad to Bay Shore for a lunch cruise aboard the historic vessel the *Lauren Kristy*, then visit the museum and Bayard Cutting Arboretum State Park on the Connetquot River before returning to the railroad station.

Expansion of Existing and Creation of New Interpretive Centers

Museums and education centers in the Reserve need increased levels of support so they can play a leading role in interpreting, celebrating, and promoting the present culture and maritime heritage of the Reserve. Reserve partners are working to develop the following interpretive centers:

- The Town of Islip partnered with the Reserve Office and NYS DOS to complete design of an interpretive kiosk to be placed at the Town's Bay Shore Marina.
- The Town of Southampton was awarded a grant from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and has partnered with local community organizations to design and construct a center for maritime interpretation and a waterfront park at the Shinnecock Canal Maritime Center.
- The Village of Freeport was awarded a grant from NYS EPF to expand the Long Island Marine Education Center on the Nautical Mile to include a visitor center. The center will provide additional interpretive opportunities for the Freeport Maritime Center including the history and function of traditional bayhouses.
- The Village of Freeport installed an interpretive kiosk on the Nautical Mile Esplanade describing New York State's Coastal Resources, the Reserve, and the cultural heritage of the Freeport Maritime Center.
- The Post-Morrow Foundation established a Carmans River Maritime Center in the tidal portion of the river as an interpretive location focused on the traditional craft of wooden boat building. The Foundation has also partnered with the Yaphank Civic Association to create an educational and interpretative center for the freshwater portion of the Carmans River at the Mary Booth House in Yaphank.



Reserve partners are revitalizing waterfronts and providing improved public access through new walkways, transient mooring, and additional parking.

NEXT STEPS TO INCREASE PUBLIC USE AND EXPAND TOURISM

The Reserve Council and partners will plan, design and install kiosks and low profile interpretive exhibits for recognized Bayway Destinations and Connectors throughout the Reserve, including the primary and secondary maritime centers.

Reserve partners will participate in development of a dedicated South Shore Bayway website to provide interpretive information and promote exploration of the Reserve's cultural, historical, recreational, and natural resources.

Reserve partners will develop Bayway promotional materials that can be distributed on the internet, at interpretive centers, events, festivals, educational outreach activities, and in conjunction with Bayway Destinations and Connectors.

Reserve partners will establish new blueway canoe and kayak trails, where applicable recognize trails as Bayway Connectors, and identify appropriate locations for in launching non-motorized vessels.

Reserve partners will develop theme-based tours that connect cultural and natural resources, and interpretive centers, and promote them throughout the Reserve.

Reserve partners will examine and establish bikeways as alternative opportunities for transportation routes to navigate through the Reserve. These bikeways will target opportunities to explore the estuary and the upland watershed.

The Reserve Council and partners will participate in the development of a five-year strategic Bayway implementation plan to provide direction for expanding the existing Bayway, to create the framework for Bayway interpretation and promotion of its recognized Destinations and Connectors, and establish a cohesive strategy linking existing Bayway Destinations and Connectors with new locations, programs and projects.

Reserve partners will complete a cultural resources survey and report with recommendations for the unsurveyed portions of the Reserve area, using the completed Oakdale to Brookhaven resources survey as a guide. The survey will include historic sites, maritime traditions, cultural resources, and water related economic activities associated with the Reserve.

