

# THE LONG ISLAND SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE

The Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve encompasses one of New York State's most diverse estuaries and its 326 square mile watershed in Nassau and Suffolk counties. The Reserve extends from the Queens/Nassau County line eastward about 75 miles to the Village of Southampton in Suffolk County. From south to north, the Reserve extends from the mean high tide line on the ocean side of the barrier island to the inland limits of the estuary's watershed. Home to 1.5 million people, the estuary is the anchor of the region's tourism, seafood and recreation industries, attracting millions of visitors each year to enjoy its beauty and bounty.



## Estuary Characteristics

Protected by barrier islands along the Atlantic Ocean, the estuary's shallow, interconnected bays and tidal tributaries provide highly productive habitats and support the largest concentration of water-dependent businesses in the State. Commercial and recreational fishing and shellfishing depend on the health of the estuary's fish and shellfish species which, in turn, depend on clean water.

Human population growth and burgeoning development in the Reserve continues to have a dramatic effect on the estuary, resulting in habitat loss and diminished public use and enjoyment. Nonpoint source pollution poses potential hazards to human health, causes the periodic closing of bathing beaches, and has forced the closure of approximately 34,500 acres of hard clam beds. The viability of traditional water-dependent businesses are closely tied to the health of the ecosystem.



## The South Shore Estuary Reserve

At the urging of Long Islanders concerned with the future health of the South Shore estuary, the New York State Legislature passed the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Act. The Act created the South Shore Estuary Reserve - Long Island's South Shore bays and the adjacent upland areas draining to them - and called for the Reserve's protection and prudent management. The Act also created the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council, a group of representatives from South Shore towns and villages, Nassau and Suffolk counties and the City of Long Beach, and recreation, business, academic, environmental and citizens interests. The Act designated the New York Secretary of State as the Council chair and charged the Council with the preparation of a comprehensive management plan for the Reserve.

## The South Shore Estuary Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan

The Council adopted the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan on April 12, 2001, marking a major milestone for Reserve communities, water-dependent businesses and residents. The plan, prepared by the NYS Department of State, provides a blueprint for the long-term health of the Reserve's bays and tributaries, its tidal wetlands and wildlife, and its tourism and economy. The plan calls for more than 75 actions to be implemented over the next five years at an estimated cost of \$98 million. This will be met from a variety of funding sources including the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, the Environmental Protection Fund and the Environmental Initiative through the NYS Department of Transportation. Comparable levels of federal and local funding will be sought, as well as smaller amounts from non-profit organizations. The support voiced by local governments, estuary-related businesses and non-profit organizations shows that they are motivated partners committed to taking action to improve and protect the Reserve.

The Department of State has established numerous partnerships to implement the Comprehensive Management Plan. Partnerships are in place with each of the six town situated within the Reserve, with Nassau and Suffolk counties, with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and with several federal agencies. New partnerships are being formed with Reserve villages, the City of Long Beach, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, NYS Department of Transportation and several non-profit organizations.



## The South Shore Estuary Reserve Office

The South Shore Estuary Reserve Office works in partnership with the Department of State and the Council's partners to implement the actions recommended in the Comprehensive Management Plan. Office staff provide administrative and technical support to the Council, its committees and workgroups, and conduct education, outreach and stewardship programs to enhance public awareness and appreciation of the Reserve's many resources.

The Reserve Office helps coordinate and monitor the actions of Comprehensive Management Plan implementation partners including local governments, non-profit organizations, community groups and residents, to restore and protect the Reserve's natural and cultural resources while sustaining its maritime-related economy. Located in the heart of the Village of Freeport's Nautical Mile, the Reserve Office is an important source of information on the progress of Comprehensive Management Plan implementation and effective ways that the interested public can participate in this important effort.

For further information on the South Shore Estuary Reserve  
contact the Reserve Office at (516) 470-BAYS  
or visit the Council's website at [www.estuary.cog.ny.us](http://www.estuary.cog.ny.us)