

COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Area: **Conkling Point**
Designated: **March 15, 1987**
Date Revised: **May 15, 2002**
County: **Suffolk**
Town(s): **Southold**
7½' Quadrangle(s): **Greenport, NY; Southold, NY**

Assessment Criteria

Ecosystem Rarity (ER)--the uniqueness of the plant and animal community in the area and the physical, structural, and chemical features supporting this community.

ER assessment: Relatively small, undeveloped sand spit and marsh, rare on north fork of Long Island.

0

Species Vulnerability (SV)--the degree of vulnerability throughout its range in New York State of a species residing in the ecosystem or utilizing the ecosystem for its survival.

SV assessment: Least tern (T) and piping plover (E, T-Fed) nesting. Common tern (T) nesting has occurred, but additional documentation for this species is required.

Calculation: $36 + (25/2) =$

48.5

Human Use (HU)-- the conduct of significant, demonstrable commercial, recreational, or educational wildlife-related human uses, either consumptive or non-consumptive, in the area or directly dependent upon the area.

HU assessment: No significant fish or wildlife related human uses of the area.

0

Population Level (PL)--the concentration of a species in the area during its normal, recurring period of occurrence, regardless of the length of that period of occurrence.

PL assessment: No unusual concentrations of fish and wildlife species occur in the area.

0

Replaceability (R)--ability to replace the area, either on or off site, with an equivalent replacement for the same fish and wildlife and uses of those same fish and wildlife, for the same users of those fish and wildlife.

R assessment: Uncertain of ability to replace.

1.0

Habitat Index = [ER + SV + HU + PL] = 48.5

Significance = HI x R = 48.5

NEW YORK STATE
SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
NARRATIVE

CONKLING POINT

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:

Conkling Point is located approximately two miles southwest of the Village of Greenport, on Shelter Island Sound, in the Town of Southold, Suffolk County (7.5' Quadrangles: Greenport, NY; and Southold, NY). The fish and wildlife habitat is approximately 25 acres in size, consisting of a narrow, sparsely vegetated, sand island, a small protected bay, salt marsh, and tidal flats. Conkling Point is generally undeveloped and privately owned. However, the area is bordered by high density residential development to the north, resulting in some recreational disturbance of the habitat.

FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:

Conkling Point is a relatively small coastal wetland area, similar in nature to many other points around the Peconic Bays shoreline, but important as a habitat for wildlife.

This area has served for many years as a nesting site for least tern (T) and piping plover (E, T-Fed). Approximately 1 pair of piping plover annually nested at Conkling Point during the 1987-1996 period. These numbers have decreased slightly since the early 1980s, when around 3 pairs of plover nested at this site annually.

The concentrations of terns nesting at Conkling Point were the second largest and largest on the north fork of Long Island in 1983 and 1984, respectively. During these years concentrations reached 45 and 100 nesting pairs. Least tern nested at Conkling Point consistently during the 1987-1996 period, with annual number of pairs ranging from 0-42, and the annual average at 19 pairs. The peak of 42 pairs occurred in 1988, with numbers declining to zero in 1996. This species reappeared in abundance in 1997 (68 pairs), but did not nest in 1998.

Around 11 nesting pairs of common tern (T) were documented annually at Conkling Point during the early 1990s, but this species has not been observed since 1993. Historically, the population levels of least terns and piping plovers were unusual in Suffolk County.

The tidal wetlands at Conkling Point serve as feeding areas for the terns and many other wildlife species. The recreational soft-shell clam and hard clam shellfisheries, as well as a finfishery, at this location are of local importance.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

The fish and wildlife resources of this area could be affected by modification of public access to and/or use of the area. Habitat modifications which substantially change the natural character of the area, such as residential, commercial, or industrial developments would have a significant impact on many wildlife species in the area. Undeveloped areas in and nearby Conkling Point that are currently privately owned have been identified as acquisition priorities by the Town of Southold.

Nesting shorebirds inhabiting Conkling Point are highly vulnerable to disturbance by humans, especially during the nesting and fledging period (March 15 through August 15). Significant pedestrian traffic or recreational vehicle use of the beach could easily eliminate the use of this site as a breeding area and should be minimized during this period. Recreational activities (*e.g.*, boat and personal watercraft landing, off-road vehicle use, picnicking) in the vicinity of bird nesting areas should be minimized during this period. Predation of chicks and destruction of eggs or nests by unleashed pets (*e.g.*, dogs, cats) and natural predators may also occur, and predator control should be implemented where feasible. Fencing and/or continued annual posting of shorebird nesting areas should be provided to help protect these species. Control of vegetative succession, through beneficial use of dredged material or other means may improve the availability of nesting habitat in this area.

Unrestricted use of motorized vessels including personal watercraft in the protected, shallow waters of bays, harbors, and tidal creeks can have adverse effects on aquatic vegetation and fish and wildlife populations. Use of motorized vessels should be controlled (*e.g.*, no wake zones, speed zones, zones of exclusion) in and adjacent to shallow waters and vegetated wetlands.

Loss of the salt marsh habitat, through elimination of tidal connection, ditching, excavation, or filling, would result in a direct loss of valuable habitat and value as a food resource for many wildlife species. Construction of shoreline structures, such as docks, piers, bulkheads, or revetments, in areas not previously disturbed by development, may result in the loss of productive areas which support the fish and wildlife resources of Conkling Point. Alternative strategies for the protection of shoreline property should be examined, including innovative, vegetation-based approaches. Control of invasive nuisance plant species, through a variety of means, may improve fish and wildlife species use of the area and enhance overall wetland values.

KNOWLEDGEABLE CONTACTS:

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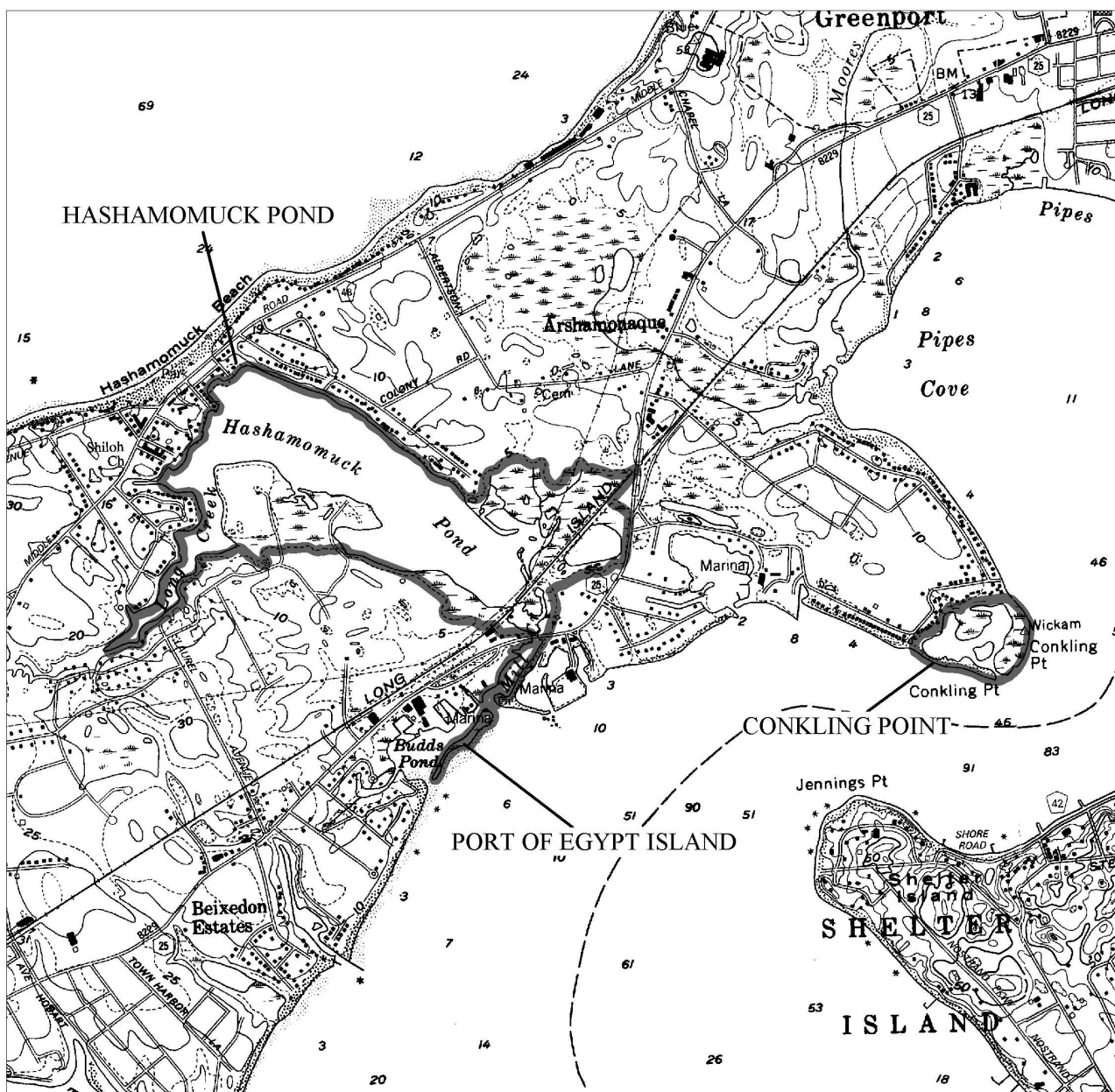
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Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats



Conkling Point
Hashamomuck Pond
Port of Egypt Island

