

SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE: IMPLEMENTATION

Protecting and Managing a Significant Estuary



South Shore Estuary Act

The South Shore Estuary Reserve Act was enacted by the NYS Legislature to protect and manage the SSER as a single integrated estuary and a maritime region of statewide importance. The Act created the SSER Council and charged it with preparing a SSER Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) as well as advising on its implementation and effectiveness. The SSER CMP recommends implementation actions for State, federal, and local governments; non-profit organizations, businesses, and academic institutions to:

- Improve and maintain water quality;
- Protect and restore living resources;
- Expand public use and enjoyment;
- Sustain and expand the estuary economy, and;
- Increase education, outreach, and stewardship.

Since 2001, the Department of State's Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure (OPDCI) has monitored progress in advancing the SSER CMP's implementation actions and prepared periodic Implementation Status Reports. The OPDCI supports SSER CMP implementation projects through the Environmental Protection Fund Open Space Account (EPF OSA) and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP). Other NYS agencies and local governments also contribute to SSER implementation. Examples of projects that have received State funding are detailed below.

Improve and Maintain Water Quality

The SSER has more impaired surface waters due to nitrogen loading than any other region of New York State, making nitrogen pollution a priority concern. Degraded water quality has a negative effect on the health of the estuary ecosystem which negatively impacts the SSER's shellfish, finfish, and estuary-related industries. Several State, federal, academic, nonprofit, and local government partners monitor water quality in the SSER. For more than a decade, the OPDCI has been the lead provider of millions of dollars in State funding that supports water quality monitoring initiatives, research, and improvements through the Environmental Protection Fund SSER Open Space Account (EPF OSA). Recent State funded water quality projects include:

- SSER Coordinated Water Resources Monitoring Strategy;
- SSER Eastern Bays Water Quality Analysis;
- Tide Gauge Upgrade and Data Distribution Program in the Town of Hempstead;
- Deployment of Continuous Water Quality Sampling Devices in the Town of Hempstead;
- Hog Island Channel Water Quality Data Collection;
- Historical Water Quality Data Analysis in the Town of Hempstead; and
- SSER Western Bays Water Quality Analysis.

Protect and Restore Living Resources

The SSER's extensive beaches, tidal wetlands, salt marshes, submerged seagrass beds, and open waters provide critical foraging, nursery, and nesting habitat for hundreds of species of wildlife; thereby supporting recreation, fishing, shellfishing, and tourism. Tidal wetlands play a critical role in buffering communities from storm surge and flooding. More designated Significant Coastal Fish & Wildlife Habitats are found in the SSER than any other region of the State.

Since the adoption of the SSER CMP, OPDCI and its partners have worked diligently to implement programs to conserve and protect living resources within the SSER. Recent living resources projects include:

- Hempstead Middle Bay Oyster Seeding and Reef Development Program
- Salt Marsh Erosion Trends Analysis in the Town Hempstead;
- Great South Bay Ecosystem-Based Management Plan;
- Hard Clam Population Study, South Oyster Bay; and
- Eelgrass and Bay Scallop Restoration Project in theTown of Southampton.



Expand Public Use and Enjoyment

The SSER is a recreational paradise. Miles of sandy beaches, extensive shallow bays, numerous marinas, trails; and State, local, and federal parks provide residents and visitors abundant opportunities for fishing, hiking, swimming, boating, or just enjoying the coast. Public access to these resources is critical to the success of the SSER tourism economy. OPDCI and its partners continue to work to improve and expand public access to the SSER.

- South Shore Blueway Trail Plan;
- Town of Oyster Bay Open Space Preservation Plan;
- Estuary Public Use and Tourism Study for the Town of Oyster Bay;
- Long Island South Shore Bayway Strategic Implementation and Marketing Plan; and
- South Shore Bayway Vision Report.

Sustain and Expand the Estuary Economy

The largest concentration of water-dependent businesses in New York State is found in the SSER. Tourism, fishing, shellfishing, and related maritime businesses depend on clean water and healthy living resources to thrive. Today, degraded water quality and environmental impacts are affecting fish and shellfish populations and extreme weather events have affected local economies.

In addition to projects that bolster public enjoyment of the estuary and support tourism, OPDCI is working with SSER partners to strengthen the estuary economy. Examples of projects to sustain and expand the estuary economy include:

- Town of Oyster Bay Waterfront Development Plan; and
- Planning for a Dredged Materials Management Plan in the South Shore Estuary Reserve.

Increase Education, Outreach, and Stewardship

The need to protect the SSER's living resources, increase acres of open space, and reverse a long-term decline in water quality while creating a more resilient natural and built environment for the benefit of the community and the economy has never been greater. In order to achieve these goals, residents and visitors must become stewards of the SSER and take active participation in its future. Local governments, schools, and non-governmental organizations hold beach clean-ups, household hazardous waste clean-up days, and environmental awareness events to increase public knowledge about issues affecting the SSER. Interpretive signage is also used to make people more aware of the benefits of proper management of the estuary.

Additional Information

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