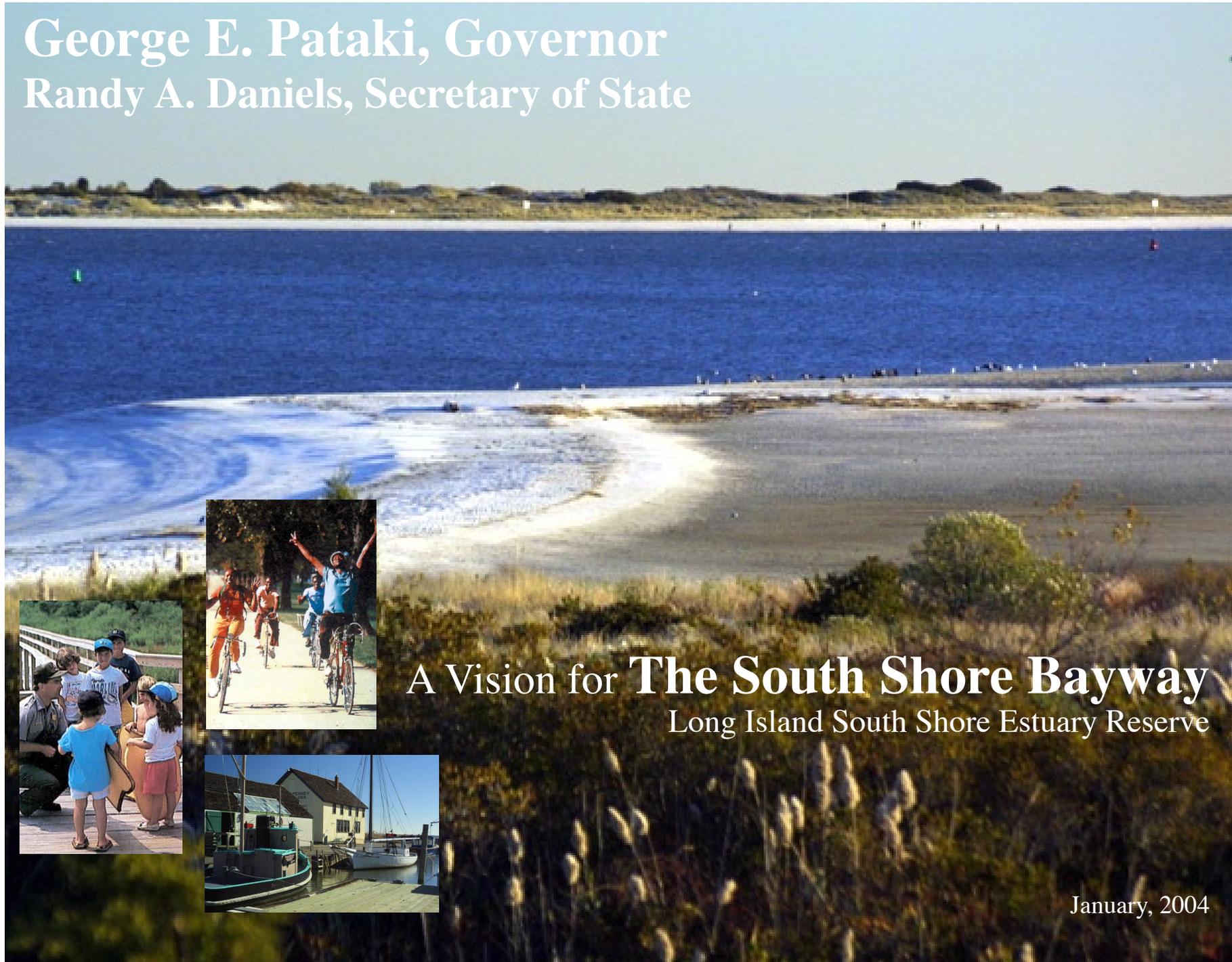


George E. Pataki, Governor  
Randy A. Daniels, Secretary of State



A Vision for **The South Shore Bayway**  
Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve

January, 2004



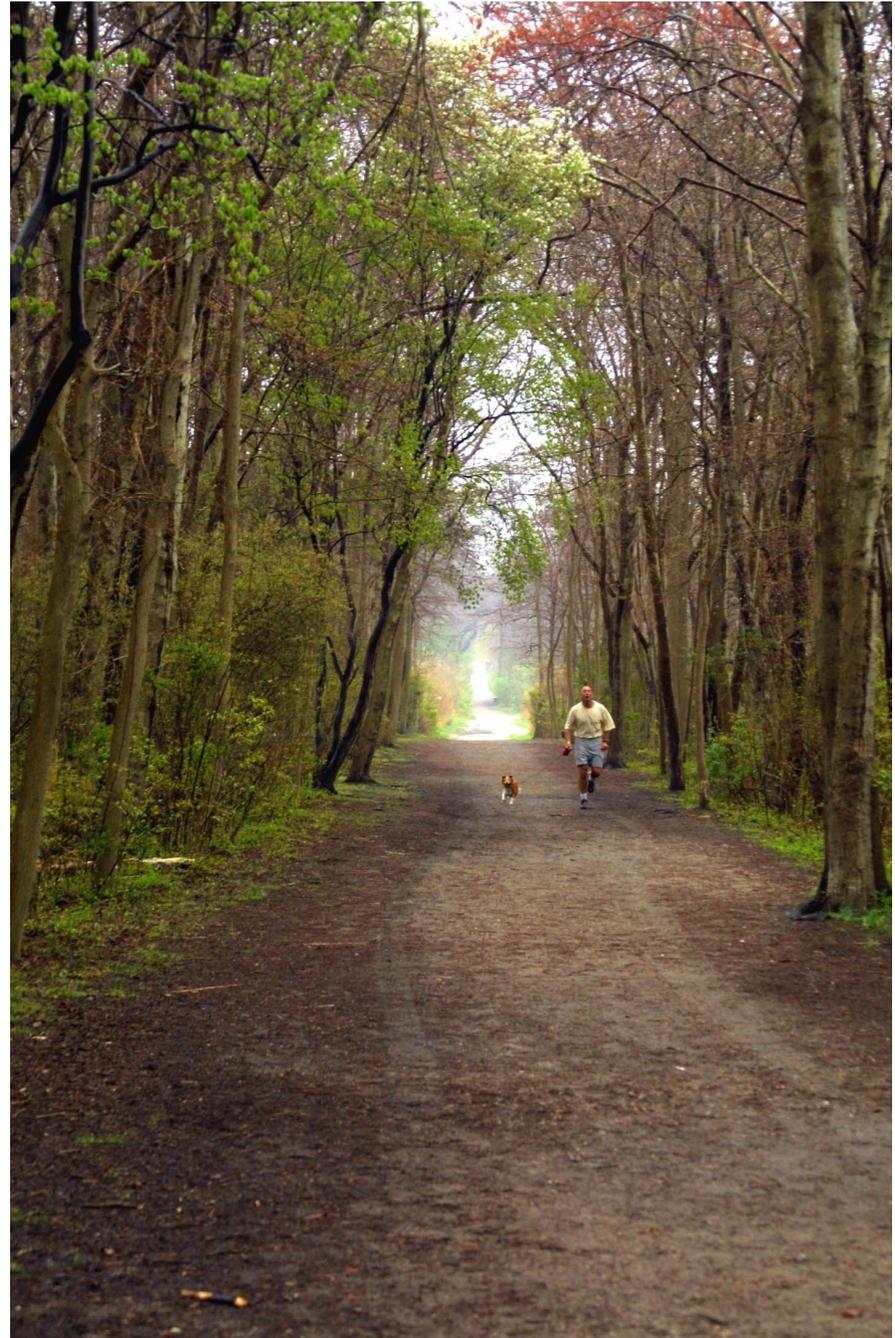
This report was prepared with financial assistance from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.



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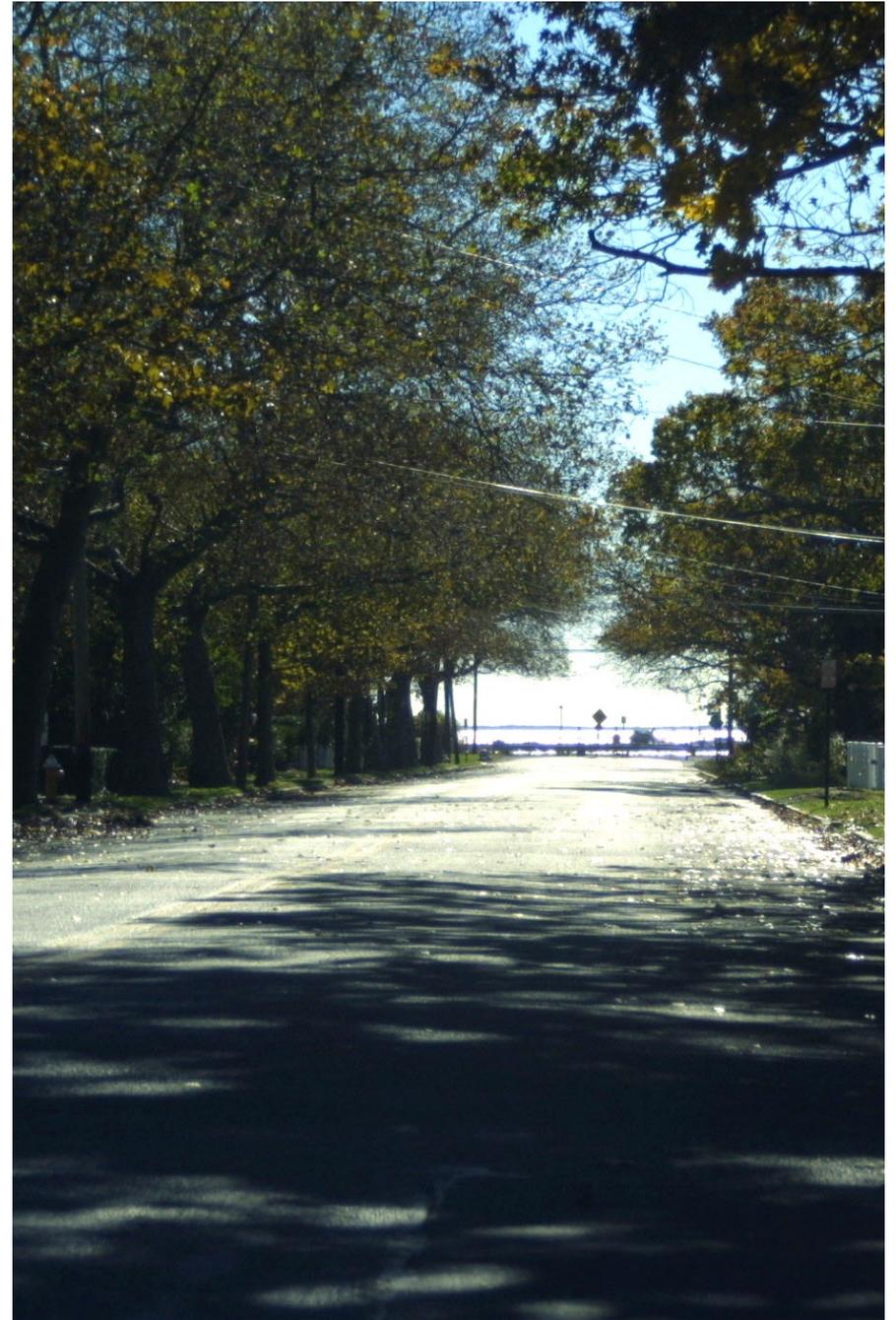
Prepared for the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council with assistance from  
the South Shore Estuary Reserve Office and the  
New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources

*Picture a network  
of trails, scenic roads  
and bike lanes leading  
to the beautiful waters  
of Long Island's south  
shore bays....*



*Gardiner County Park, West Bay Shore*

*Imagine a coordinated system of signs, exhibits and street improvements leading the way to the shoreline....*



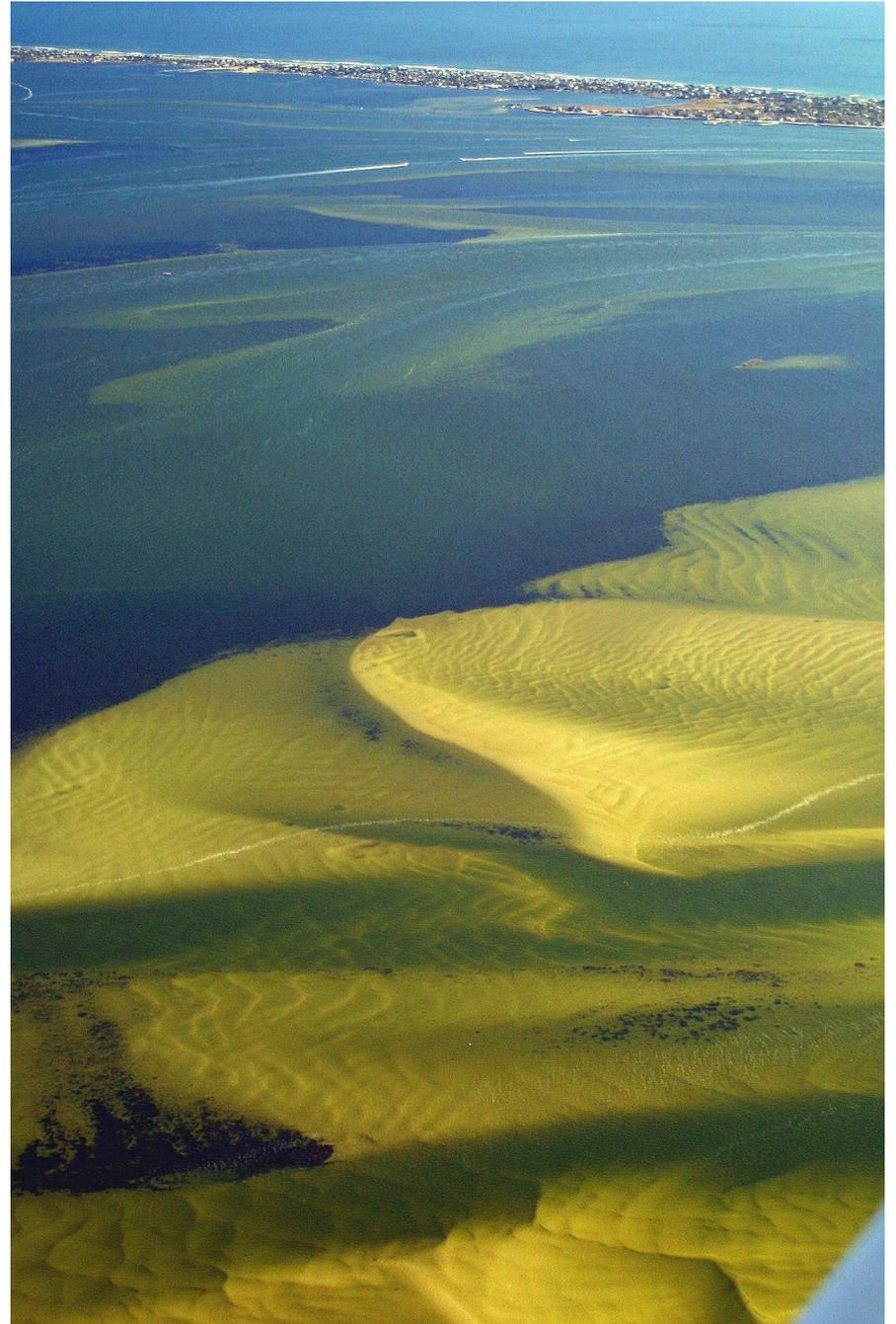
*Waterfront Access, Patchogue*

*Envision exploring the bays, barrier beaches and tributaries alone in a kayak or with friends on a sunset cruise....*



*Santopogue Creek, Lindenhurst*

*Picture Long Islanders  
and visitors better  
connected with the  
beauty, history and  
natural splendor  
of the South Shore  
Estuary....*



*View across Bay to Fire Island*

*You are experiencing the new Long Island  
South Shore Bayway!*



# The Vision

*The South Shore Estuary Reserve Bayway will be an interwoven network of existing maritime centers, parks, historic and cultural sites, community centers, and waterfronts used by pedestrians, bicyclists, boaters and motorists. Coordinated and cohesive signs will interpret key estuary features, offer self-guided tours and orient Bayway residents and visitors to appreciate the many resources the Reserve offers. Trails, sidewalks, local streets and highways will be safe. Community character will be enhanced. Scenic roads and areas will be recognized, and the region's identity is unified. Shoreline access will exist throughout the Bayway with adequate parking, pedestrian amenities and boating facilities to meet the needs of many user groups from the young to the elderly and from waders to divers. The estuary's health will be protected through on-going preservation, enhancement and monitoring for future generations to enjoy. The vision is elaborated in further detail in the italicized paragraphs below.*



Terrill River, East Moriches

The Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan establishes a number of recommendations for the future preservation and enjoyment of the Reserve. The implementation section

of the plan identifies increased public use of the estuary and expanded tourism as an important outcome. The South Shore Estuary Reserve Bayway provides opportunities for all people to experience the estuarine setting through shoreline recreation facilities, open space resources and the Reserve's rich maritime heritage and culture. Access to the water, in a variety of forms, and the development of a cohesive interpretive and signage program, are integral to the Bayway system. The Bayway provides a regional framework for the overall



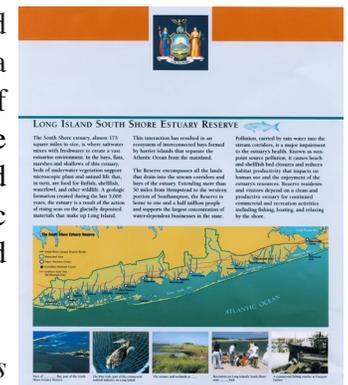
Captree Island, Robert Moses Causeway

interpretation of and access to the significant natural, cultural and recreational resources within the Reserve.

**Virtual Bayway:** *The Bayway web site will provide the public with a comprehensive overview of the Bayway's environment, its natural and cultural resources, and promotes stewardship of the estuary. The site will list facilities and events sponsored by the many partners providing recreational experiences and educational opportunities. The site will also contain specific up-to-date information: attractions, programs, interactive maps, guides, tours, transportation information, ferry schedules, festivals and locations of visitors centers throughout the Bayway.*

Communication is a key component of the Bayway. One of the best ways to communicate effectively and quickly with large numbers of people is the Internet. Many Bayway features and attractions already exist and need to be presented and described in a coordinated fashion to become part of the Bayway. The web site will feature maps, locations of interpretive sites and kiosks, location of visitor centers, public transportation links and other detailed information.

**Signage & Interpretation:** *The Bayway's image will be easily recognized through its coordinated interpretive signs, exhibits, logo and guide books. The signage system*



NYS Coastal Resources Interpretive Program Estuary Reserve Signage

will publicize, explain and guide the public to cultural sites, access points, natural features and recreation areas. Interpretation will be centered around four central themes: living on the waterfront, working on the waterfront, enjoying the coast, and protecting the waterfront and its maritime heritage.



Bay Shore Maritime Center

The Bayway is as much an idea as it is a physical network of roads and waterways. Roadside way finding signs, safety signs, logo signs and identification signs for trail destinations will also provide an identity for the Bayway and guide visitors safely and efficiently to points of interest.

Interpretive exhibits are located at points along the Bayway such as overlooks, rest areas, historical sites, waterfront areas and recreational sites. These wayside exhibits graphically tell the story of the site and its history. Topics include maritime history, environmental education, cultural sites, South Shore estates, Native American sites, bay houses, ecology of the estuary, fishing and shell fishing, whaling, boat building and other relevant topics. Self-guided tours by car, boat, bike or on foot lead visitors through the Bayway with booklets and numbered signs locating key features.

**Roadway Corridors:** *Montauk Highway/Merrick Road will be the Bayway's major east-west roadway corridor, serving as the primary transportation artery from which spokes diverge to access a variety of natural, cultural and recreational attractions and sites. Residents and visitors will travel through the Bayway on this primary route via many forms of transportation.*

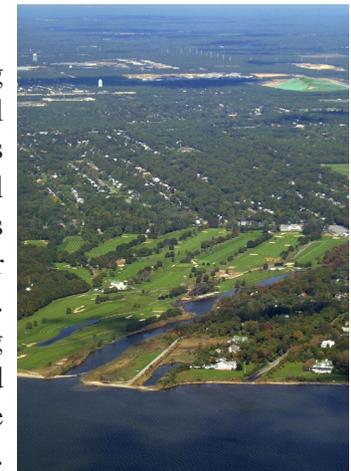


Wantagh Bikeway

Pedestrian and bicycle improvements along Montauk Highway and Merrick Road allow this important road to serve as an east-west spine for the Bayway, providing access to the various north-south routes that lead to tributary streams and the waterfront. The region's public transit system, including busses and trains, becomes part of the Bayway through a public education program, maps and information in compartments and stations and the enhancement of existing service to include facilities for bicycles and strollers. Some modification or expansion of bus routes provides direct access to shoreline access sites and other Bayway destinations.

**Maritime Centers:** *The Bayway will feature existing maritime centers with their mix of restaurants, shops, cultural & recreational activities and waterfront businesses. This will enhance the vitality of the centers and takes advantage of the transportation, shopping and entertainment resources these areas offer. Existing centers will be hubs from which radiate the spokes of the Bayway leading to the shore, parks and cultural sites.*

Maritime centers feature working waterfront uses such as commercial fishing, boat building and ferries, access to the waterfront and residential neighborhoods that make these areas unique. They serve as hubs for water-based activities and attractions. Strengthening and enhancing existing centers also promotes transit-oriented development and the use of alternative modes of transportation to the automobile. This helps reduce highway congestion.



Howell's Creek, Bellport

**Recreation and Linkages:** *The Bayway system will incorporate existing recreation areas such as parks, beaches, hiking trails, bicycle paths, golf courses, marinas, charter boats and watersports centers. Recreation sites will become destination points, and linkages will be developed to connect these various recreational activities.*



*Pedestrian Bridge, Carman's River* Many of the region's historic village and town centers have pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks, plazas and parks that extend into surrounding neighborhoods and trail systems. These will offer a unique resource that can be linked together and enhanced throughout the Bayway.

Most of the trails are located in parks such as Heckscher State Park, Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge and Connetquot River State Park. Public beaches, boardwalks and waterfront roads provide access for the public to many of the region's waterfronts. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements to existing roads and trails and the construction of new trail links such as the new blueway and underwater trail concepts create a comprehensive trail system from existing resources.

Many plans are currently underway to build new bicycle and pedestrian trails, improve public access to the water and to promote the region. The Bayway coordinates with these plans in order to

Alternative modes of access and improved access to existing recreational areas enhance water-based sports and activities. Non-water dependent activities such as golf, sunbathing, scenic viewing, birding, wildlife observation, hiking and hunting are also a key part of Bayway related recreation.

**Existing and Proposed Trails:** *A number of existing trails, public access points and bikeways will form a central element of the Bayway.*



*Boat Launch Access*

Trails in the Long Island Pine Barrens have been proposed in Southampton and adjacent communities to improve hiking and bicycle access to this unique ecosystem. These trails create an important regional link for the Bayway to the South Fork where trails such as the Paumanok have already been developed and provide a valuable recreational resource. Also, the Long Island Rail Road allows bicycles on the trains during off-peak hours. This could be coordinated with buses equipped with racks that leave from key stations.

**Water Trail:** *The Bayway's water trail will create a boating network connecting waterfront access sites, maritime centers, recreation areas and cultural sites along the Long Island and barrier island shorelines. Visitors and residents will be able to find a range of boating options from self-guided tours for private motorized and non-motorized boaters to charters and scheduled boat trips featuring varying themes and destinations.*



*Canoeing on Yaphank Creek*

The Bayways water trail connects the region's public access points as well as the existing ferry system and a range of natural, cultural and recreational destinations. Small non-motorized boats explore the narrow tributaries, salt marshes and tidal channels. The existing ferry system linking Long Island mainland with Fire Island across Great South Bay is one example of the best ways for residents and visitors to experience the water, marshes and beaches of the south shore. Visitors find their way by car, bicycle, shuttle system, train or foot to a variety of waterfront access sites with the help of the Bayway's signs and exhibits. Parking and access at sites will be attractive, convenient and well marked.



*Historic Boat Building Enterprise*

Native Americans fished, hunted and gathered shellfish in the south bays and their tributary streams and hunted whales offshore. Early European settlers continued these traditions and introduced shipbuilding, offshore fishing, ice harvesting, shipping and recreational boating. Later generations introduced duck hunting and rum running, and

built bay houses. Wealthy families of the Gilded Era including the Belmonts, Phelpses, Floyds, Heckschers, Vanderbilts, Cuttings, and Bournes built large estates on the south shore, many of which remain as parks and historic sites.

Due to the decline of traditional water-based activities and the development of the shoreline after World War II, the natural access to the beauty of the shoreline was dramatically altered. Large sections of the coastline have been privatized and the few remaining ports and public access points are overcrowded. The Bayway system renews accessibility to the water and to the significant historical and cultural features that inspired the original inhabitants of the region.

**Natural Resources and Stewardship:**

*The preservation, enhancement and public stewardship of the region's natural resources is critical to the success of the Bayway. Environmental education will be incorporated into Bayway signage, exhibits, tours and brochures to explain the unique ecology of the bays and the steps that need to be taken to protect and improve their health.*



*South Oyster Bay ,  
Town of Oyster Bay*



*Historic Bay Houses*

With the help of guidebooks, boat trips feature nature study, birding, marine life, clamming and fishing. Other excursions visit the region's cultural sites, historic waterfront mansions, outdoor theatres, maritime museums

and boat building centers. The more adventurous can find boats to visit beaches, go water-skiing, scuba diving or parasailing. The Bayway's boating network encourages a range of boat types, creative interpretation and an environmental sensitivity on the part of the boat operators. It also becomes an integral component of a State-wide Blueway Trail being initiated by the New York State Department of State.

**History and Culture:** *The Bayway will make the water the focal point for the quality of life on Long Island for residents and visitors. For centuries, Long Islanders have been closely connected with the water. The rich historical and cultural resources still in existence will provide a significant portion of the Bayway's interpretive program.*

Environmental preservation elements of the Bayway include open space corridors and greenways that extend on either side of trails, streams and rivers. These greenways also serve as wildlife corridors and natural areas. Wildlife habitats are a key focus of the Bayway, both for their preservation and for their interpretive value and appeal for visitors. Parks are created and expanded at key sites to provide waterfront access, protect unique resources and to link existing open spaces. Salt marsh preservation efforts are reinforced, and environmental education on the role of salt marshes and the estuarine ecosystem are highlighted.

Coastal ecology and the relationship of the estuary to marine and upland environments are incorporated into the Bayway program. The connection between urban stormwater runoff, tributaries, rivers and bays is explored, and the use of new techniques such as low impact development and best management practices is interpreted. Educating the public regarding “ecologically correct” boating is vital to the preservation of the unique natural resources of the estuary.



*Distinctive Natural Character*

**Scenery and Landscape:** *The natural beauty of the South Shore Estuary Reserve is a major resource and one of the primary reasons people will visit and use the Bayway. The vast salt marshes, endless dunes, wide sandy beaches and winding tributary streams create a unique visual setting that contrasts with the congested suburban streets of the interior. Protecting, interpreting and accessing this scenic resource will be a central feature in the overall mission of the Bayway.*

A thorough analysis of the region’s scenic resources is currently underway. The project identifies the elements that create the estuary’s unique scenery, locates areas

with varying degrees of scenic character and identifies strategies for protecting scenic resources. Key elements include protecting undeveloped lands, continuing the cleanup of the bays and the environmental remediation of contaminated sites, removing eyesores and preventing inappropriate development, especially in sensitive waterfront areas.



*Boardwalk at Fire Island National Seashore*

The Bayway both protects and promotes scenic resources. Increasing access to scenic vistas allows people to experience the beauty of the South Shore Estuary at various times of the day and at various seasons. The Bayway brings visitors to places previously only accessible to private boat owners. Parks and conservation areas along major tributaries are increasingly accessible through the Bayway and other access programs. Protecting the scenery of these areas by increasing the size of parks and controlling neighboring development enhances the scenic character of the Bayway.

**Transportation:** *The Bayway will use the region’s existing transportation system while creating new linkages and promoting transportation improvements that enhance safety and ease of use for pedestrians, bicyclists, boaters and users of mass transit. In addition to improving safety and transportation efficiency, these improvements will also enhance the character, scenery and quality of life along the Bayway.*

New bicycle lanes, sidewalk improvements, safer pedestrian crossings, street tree plantings, handicapped improvements and traffic calming measures ensure that both cars and pedestrians and bicyclists coexist on the region’s streets. The new and enhanced

trails and linkages for bikes and pedestrians lead to water access points. Improved parking areas that blend in with the character of the neighborhoods facilitate access for drivers. While most of the Bayway is accessible by car, improved facilities for bicycles and pedestrians promote other modes of transportation.



Village Center with Sidewalk: Bellport

improve pedestrian and bike amenities, plant trees, provide signage and exhibits and manage visual corridors along roads.

Existing and proposed waterfront access sites and maritime centers need to be easily accessible by all modes of transportation with ample and well-

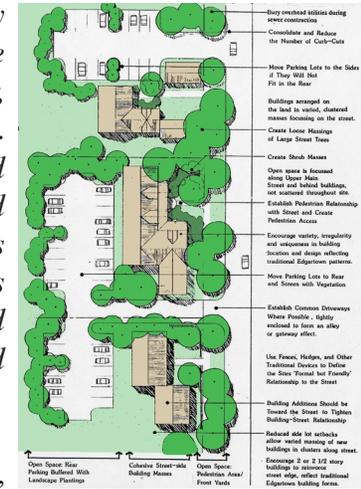
designed parking that doesn't detract from the character of the waterfront and surrounding neighborhoods. Attractive plantings, trees, islands and walkways enhance safety while improving the aesthetics of the area. These



Walkable Communities

improvements create an attractive and efficient environment for access to the resources of the Bayway.

**Parking:** *The Bayway will carefully and creatively address parking while enhancing the pedestrian character, beauty and diversity of the region. Creative parking lot siting and design respects existing cultural and environmental features, addresses access and safety concerns, respects neighbors and community context and incorporates extensive plantings and pedestrian features.*



Schematic Parking Design

Lack of adequate parking is problematic, but poorly planned parking and excessive reliance on the automobile ruins the character of the destination points that are key to the success of the Bayway. Opportunities exist to use the extensive Long Island Rail Road parking lot during off-peak hours on the weekends. Providing attractive and accessible parking is a key element in getting people to the water and increasing their enjoyment of the experience.

# Implementing the Bayway Vision

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## **Nominations by Community Groups and Municipalities**

Implementing the Bayway vision will involve all those who will benefit from it. Neighborhood associations, cycling and paddling clubs, community service organizations, and others are encouraged by the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council to nominate areas suitable for inclusion in the Bayway (streets, trails, bikeways, parks, visitors centers and other sites) for recognition by the Council. Municipal projects that establish or improve Council-recognized elements of the Bayway will be eligible for financial assistance through the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Environmental Protection Fund (LWRP EPF) administered by the Department of State.

## **Consensus on a South Shore Bayway strategy.**

Ensuring communities along the Bayway are able to make the most of what the Bayway has to offer requires consensus on the Bayway's development and promotion. A strategy will be completed to: identify opportunities to expand existing programs and increase interpretation of the South Shore Estuary Reserve; develop themes for interpretation of the natural and cultural resources of the Reserve; identify locations along the Bayway that function as major destinations; recommend partnered capital improvements that implement the Bayway; and solicit financial support from the private and public sectors.

## **A virtual Bayway.**

Built on the South Shore Estuary Reserve's existing web site ([www.estuary.cog.ny.us](http://www.estuary.cog.ny.us)), a virtual Bayway will parallel and track development of the physical Bayway. The virtual Bayway will present on the Internet the many trails, cultural and historic sites, maritime centers, museums, visitors centers and other noteworthy destinations that have been recognized as part of the South Shore Bayway.

## **The installation of kiosks and wayside interpretive exhibits.**

The Bayway will have increased visibility with the installation of kiosks and wayside interpretive exhibits at strategic locations throughout the Reserve. Communities will be encouraged to install kiosks and wayside exhibits consistent with the New York State Coastal Resources Interpretive Program signage design guidelines. Such kiosks and exhibits will also be eligible for LWRP EPF financial assistance.

An initial set of kiosks is currently being installed in the maritime centers of Freeport, Bayshore, Patchogue and at the Shinnecock Canal. Initial wayside interpretive exhibits are planned for highly visible parks and natural areas within the towns of Hempstead, Oyster Bay, Babylon and Brookhaven.

## **What You Can Do**

Familiarize yourself with the trails, parks, visitors centers and other destinations in your community that have potential for inclusion in the Bayway. Work with your municipality to nominate these areas to the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council.

Browse the South Shore Estuary Reserve's comprehensive management plan, especially the sections on public use and enjoyment of the estuary and the estuary-related economy.

Enjoy the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve, home to some of the finest recreational activities in the Northeast!