

COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Area: **Fort Pond**
Designated: **March 15, 1987**
Date Revised: **May 15, 2002**
County: **Suffolk**
Town(s): **East Hampton**
7½' Quadrangle(s): **Montauk Point, 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: Second-largest freshwater pond on Long Island, and largest coastal freshwater pond. Rarity diminished by surrounding land development.
Calculation: $\sqrt{(25 \times 16)} =$ 20

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: Spotted turtle (SC) and least bittern (SC) breeding and feeding. Osprey (SC) feeding. Calculation: $16 + (16/2) + (16/4) =$ 28

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: Recreational freshwater fishing use by residents from throughout Long Island. 9

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: One of only 3 significant small-mouth bass populations on Long Island. 9

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: Cost of replacement prohibitive. 1.0

Habitat Index = [ER + SV + HU + PL] = 66

Significance = HI x R = 66

NEW YORK STATE
SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
NARRATIVE

FORT POND

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:

Fort Pond is located on the south fork of Long Island, north of the hamlet of Montauk, in the Town of East Hampton, Suffolk County (7.5' Quadrangle: Montauk Point, NY). This freshwater pond is approximately 160 acres in size and has a maximum depth of approximately 26 feet. Fort Pond is bordered by residential, commercial, and industrial development, with only a few areas of undeveloped shoreline remaining. A public boat launch is located on the southern end of the pond.

FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:

Fort Pond is the second largest freshwater pond on Long Island (after Lake Ronkonkoma) and the largest coastal freshwater pond. However, extensive land development has reduced its quality and importance to fish and wildlife from that of an undisturbed freshwater ecosystem. Signs of increased disturbance in recent years include loss of water clarity, sporadic algal blooms, invasion of nuisance vegetation, stunted fish populations, and loss of submerged aquatic vegetation.

Spotted turtle (SC) and least bittern (SC) live and breed at the pond margins and adjacent wetlands. Osprey (SC) feed regularly in the pond. There is a relatively large population of freshwater mussels in the pond. Fort Pond supports a relatively productive warmwater fishery, including largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. This is one of only three significant smallmouth bass populations on Long Island. Fort Pond has also been stocked with walleye since 1997. Residents from throughout Long Island are attracted to the freshwater fishing opportunities at Fort Pond.

Fort Pond is an important waterfowl wintering area (November-March) in Suffolk County. During the 1970s and early 1980s, average concentrations of nearly 300 birds were documented in the pond each winter (1,140 in peak year), including scaup, red-breasted merganser, common merganser, Canada goose, and American black duck. The area was used sporadically during the 1990s, with observed numbers ranging from 35 to 488 individuals per year. Species included Canada geese, merganser, scoter, American black duck, redhead, and mallard. Waterfowl use of the pond during winter is determined largely by the extent of ice cover each year. Concentrations of waterfowl also occur in the area during spring and fall migrations (March-April and October-November, respectively). In addition to waterfowl, Fort Pond is a gathering place for a variety of gull species, including Bonaparte's gull, herring gull, great black-backed gull, and ring billed gull.

The New York Natural Heritage Program has documented several listed and rare plant species at Fort Pond, including: golden dock (*Rumex maritimus* var *fueginus*, T), water penny-wort (*Hydrocotyle verticillata*, E), salt marsh spikerush, and southern arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum* var *venosum*).

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Any activities that would degrade water quality, increase temperature or turbidity, or alter water depths would impact on the fish and wildlife species utilizing Fort Pond. All may be affected by water pollution, such as chemical contamination (including food chain effects resulting from bioaccumulation), oil spills, excessive turbidity, waste disposal (including boat wastes), and stormwater runoff. The watershed of Fort Pond has been degraded by point source discharges, road runoff and other non-point pollution, and clearing of vegetation. The extensive populations of waterfowl and gulls using the pond contribute a substantial level of nutrients.

The wetlands adjacent to Fort Pond are being encroached by *Phragmites australis* and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). 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.

Construction activities along the shoreline or in productive underwater areas (e.g., spawning areas) may have a significant impact on the fisheries resources of Fort Pond, through sedimentation or direct loss of habitat. Warmwater fish species in the pond are most sensitive to disturbance during spawning and incubation, which generally extends from April 1 through July 30. Acquisition of the few remaining vacant parcels on the shoreline should be considered. The Town of East Hampton has identified restoration opportunities associated with fringing freshwater wetlands and submerged aquatic vegetation of Fort Pond.

Elimination of public access areas could significantly reduce recreational fishing opportunities in Fort Pond. Recreational activities should be timed appropriately to minimize disturbance of sensitive habitat attributes relying on the Fort Pond habitat.

KNOWLEDGEABLE CONTACTS:

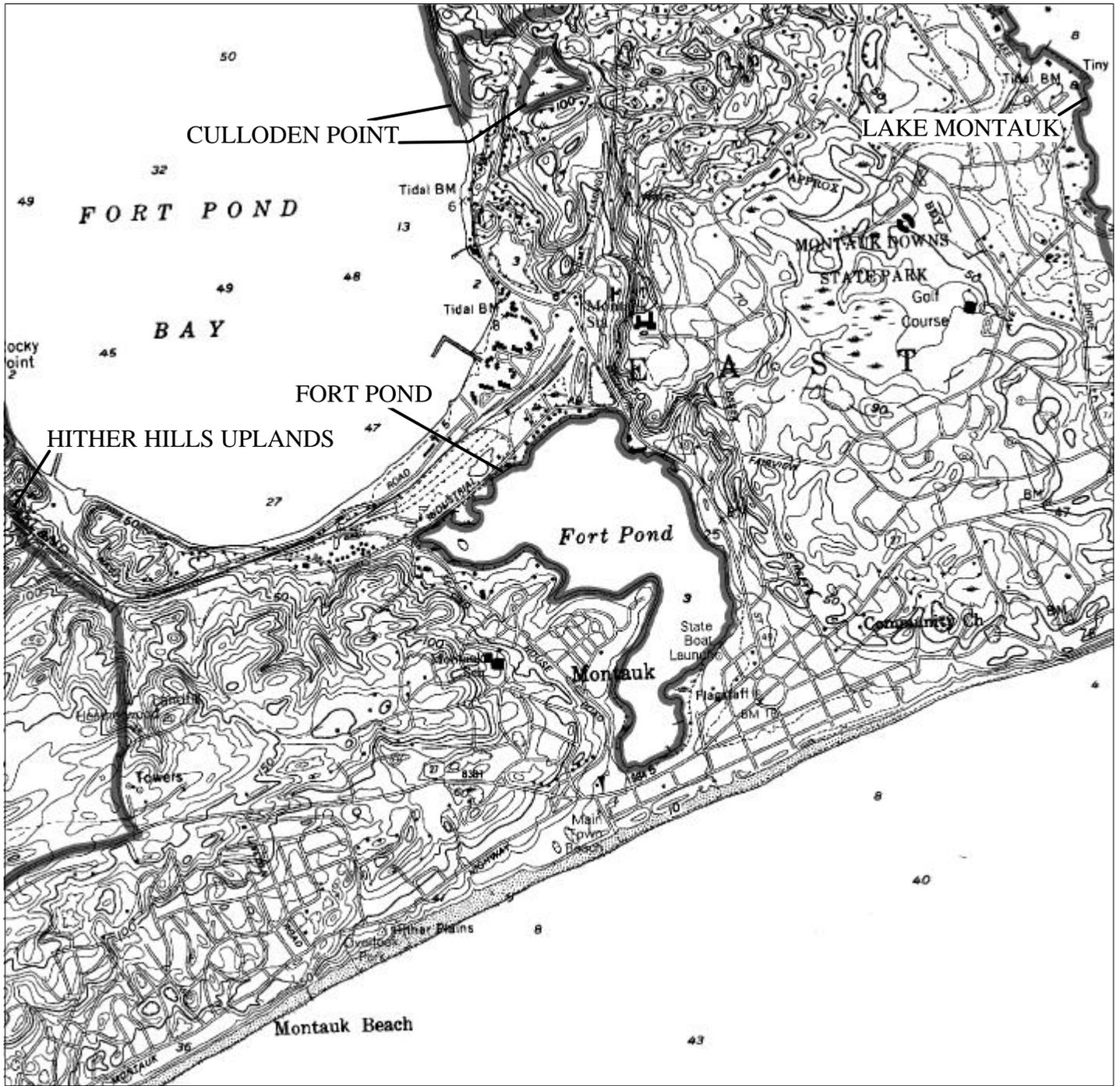
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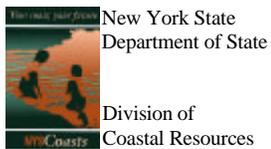
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Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats



Fort Pond
Culloden Point (In part)
Hither Hills Uplands (In part)
Lake Montauk (In part)

