

COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Area: **Jockey Creek Sandspit**
Designated: **March 15, 1987**
Date Revised: **May 15, 2002**
County: **Suffolk**
Town(s): **Southold**
7½' Quadrangle(s): **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: Small dredged material island and a sand peninsula in a heavily developed tidal creek mouth; not a rare ecosystem type. 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), piping plover (E, T-Fed), common tern (T), and osprey (SC) nesting. Calculation: $36 + (25/2) + (25/4) + (16/8) =$ 56.75

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: Concentrations of least tern and common tern significant in Suffolk County. 4

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: Habitat easily replaced by well understood means, although few potential replacement sites exist in the vicinity. 0.6

Habitat Index = [ER + SV + HU + PL] = 60.75

Significance = HI x R = 36.5

NEW YORK STATE
SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
NARRATIVE

JOCKEY CREEK SANDSPIT

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:

The Jockey Creek Sandspit is located at the mouth of Jockey Creek just north of the Great Hog Neck on Shelter Island Sound in the Town of Southold, Suffolk County (7.5' Quadrangle: Southold NY). The fish and wildlife habitat is an approximately 10 acre sand spit and dredged material island in the mouth of a tidal creek. There is heavy residential and marina development in the creek and consequent pollution, mostly from runoff.

FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:

The sand spit and dredged material island is not a rare ecosystem type but the area serves as a nesting site for least tern (T) and common tern (T). Piping plover (E, T-Fed) nested at this site in the mid-1980s, but have not been documented since then. Least tern were absent during the late 1980s through 1992, since then a population of 12-26 pairs have been documented annually. Common tern have been using this site since 1989, and in the mid-1990s annual nesting populations have increased to 14-19 pairs. Osprey (SC) also nest at this site. This area may provide important breeding habitat for horseshoe crab, but additional documentation is required.

There are no significant human use activities associated with the fish and wildlife resources at the Jockey Creek Sandspit. The majority of Jockey Creek waters are uncertified for shellfishing between April 15 and December 31. The back end of the creek is closed to shellfishing year-round.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Nesting shorebirds inhabiting the Jockey Creek Sandspit are highly vulnerable to disturbance by humans, especially during the nesting and fledging period (March 15 through August 15). 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.

Pollution in the area, from road runoff into Town Creek and boat waste discharges into Jockey Creek, should be minimized or eliminated to improve water quality and enhance habitat value for local fish and wildlife species. Innovative shore stabilization approaches using vegetation and/or

other “soft” technologies, and restoration of fringing salt marshes should be considered to improve water quality and enhance fish and wildlife habitat value.

KNOWLEDGEABLE CONTACTS:

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