COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Area: Long Pond Greenbelt
Designated: March 15, 1987
Date Revised: May 15, 2002
County: Suffolk
Town(s): Southampton
7½' Quadrangle(s): Sag Harbor, 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: Interconnected freshwater coastal plain ponds, red maple swamp and brackish pond bordered by much undeveloped land; significant in New York State.

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: Blue-spotted (SC), marbled (SC) and tiger (E) salamanders, spotted turtle (SC) and eastern hognose snake (SC). Least tern (T) and osprey (SC) feed in the area. Cerulean warbler (SC), painted bluet (T) and pine barrens bluet (T) present.
Calculation: 36 + (25/2) + (25/4) + (25/8) + (16/16) = 64

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 fishery of local importance.

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 wintering Canada geese are unusual in Suffolk County. Forest interior bird populations significant in Suffolk County.

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: Irreplaceable.

Habitat Index = [ER + SV + HU + PL] = 126.88
Significance = HI x R =

NEW YORK STATE
SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
NARRATIVE

LONG POND GREENBELT

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:

The Long Pond Greenbelt is located approximately 4.5 miles west of the Village of East Hampton, from Little Poxabogue Pond south to Sagaponack Beach in the Town of Southampton, Suffolk County, (7.5’ Quadrangle: Sag Harbor, NY). The fish and wildlife habitat is a chain-of-ponds and wetlands ecosystem. From north to south, this system includes Round Pond, Little Round Pond, Lily Pond, Long Pond, Little Long Pond, Crooked Pond, Black Pond, Little Poxabogue Pond, Poxabogue Pond, Sagg Swamp, and Sagaponack Pond. The ponds are freshwater with the exception of Sagaponack Pond, which is a 60-hectare (148-acre) brackish pond. According to the New York Natural Heritage Program, Long Pond and Crooked Pond are two of only five excellent examples of coastal plain ponds in New York State. Draining into Sagaponack Pond from the north is Sagg Swamp, a 53-hectare (131-acre) red maple swamp dominated by red maple and black gum trees, with a shrub layer including sweet pepperbush, swamp azalea, arrowwood, wild raisin, and highbush blueberry, and a herbaceous layer dominated by ferns. There is some residential development along the edges of this system but much of the land remains undisturbed. The Suffolk County Planning Commission and the Town of Southampton have appropriated funds to purchase various parcels of this greenbelt. The preservation of land in the Greenbelt area has been a goal in the master plan for the town of Southampton since 1970 and the Town, Suffolk County, and the Nature Conservancy together have preserved ~162 hectares (400 acres) to date. Poxabogue County Park is adjacent to Poxabogue Pond. Several parcels of the Long Pond Greenbelt Preserve and the Sagg Swamp Preserve are owned and managed by the Nature Conservancy.

FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:

The Long Pond Greenbelt is an interconnected pond/wetland ecosystem with undeveloped border areas. This ecosystem type is rare in Suffolk County and provides important habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife species. The Long Pond Greenbelt site is included in the “Southampton Green Belt” Important Bird Area (one of 127 such areas), which extends from Tuckahoe in the west to the Sag Harbor area in the east. A draft management plan for the Greenbelt has been prepared by a committee of representatives from governmental, public, and private organizations. The Long Pond Greenbelt is recognized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a priority wetland complex under the federal Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986. Sagaponack Pond has been designated and mapped as an undeveloped beach unit pursuant to the federal Coastal Barrier Resources Act, prohibiting federal financial assistance or flood insurance within the unit. The New York Natural Heritage Program, in conjunction with the
Nature Conservancy, recognizes the greater Long Pond Greenbelt complex, including Long Pond Greenbelt, Slate Pond, Black Pond Bridgehampton, and Little Poxabogue Pond, as a Priority Site for Biodiversity.

Least tern (T), osprey (SC), double-crested cormorant, great blue heron, little blue heron, black-crowned night heron, gadwall, and blue-winged teal are known to feed in the area. The populations of wintering Canada geese on Sagaponack Pond are unusual in Suffolk County. Atlantic white cedar trees within Sagg Swamp supported the regionally rare Hessel's hairstreak butterfly (*Mitoura hesseli*, E) in the mid-1980s. A variety of dragon and damsel flies have been documented in the area, including lateral bluet (*Enallagma laterale*), barrens bluet (*Enallagma recurvatum*, T), painted bluet (*Enallagma pictum*, T), and lilypad forktail (*Ischnura kellicotti*). Spotted turtle (SC) and spotted salamander are found throughout the Greenbelt, along with stinkpot, painted, and snapping turtles, northern water snake, red-spotted newt, pickerel frog, wood frog, bull frog, green frog, marbled salamander (SC), blue-spotted salamander (SC), and tiger salamander (E). Adjacent woodland areas support ribbon, black racer, eastern hognose (SC), ringneck, and milk snakes, Fowler’s toad, spring peeper, grey tree frog, and red-backed salamander.

The adjacent deciduous and mixed woods, among the few remaining large patches on Long Island, provide critical habitat for breeding birds such as the cerulean warbler (SC), black-throated green warbler, black-and-white warbler, blue-winged warbler, yellow warbler, Acadian flycatcher, scarlet tanager, wood thrush, hairy woodpecker, white-eyed vireo, red-eyed vireo, and others. A total of 84 bird species has been recorded in Sagg Swamp, including 44 known nesters. Large contiguous areas of forested wetlands and upland areas are rare along the Long Island and New York Bight coastline. The larger Long Pond/Southampton Greenbelt is an undeveloped corridor across the South Fork between the Atlantic Ocean and the Peconic Bays, serving as an important migratory stopover for birds and insects. Mammals residing in the Greenbelt included white-tailed deer, red fox, flying squirrel, opossum, mink, and several species of bats.

The freshwater streams and ponds of the site provide important habitat to various species of fish including: alewife and catadromous American eel, and numerous resident freshwater species such as chain pickerel, banded killifish, pumpkinseed, yellow perch, nine-spine stickleback, and eastern mud minnow. Long Pond supports an important recreational fishery for species including largemouth bass, chain pickerel, yellow perch, and sunfish. Sagaponack Pond is closed to shellfishing year-round, and concentrations of shellfish are extrememly low.

The Nature Conservancy has identified a rare natural habitat association—coastal plain pond shore—within the greenbelt, as well as numerous listed and rare plant species. These include: knotted spikerush (*Eleocharis equisitoides*, T), Carolina redroot (*Lachnanthes caroliana*, T), water pennywort (*Hydrocotyle verticillata*, E), long-tubercled spikerush (*Eleocharis tuberculosa*, T), creeping St. John’s-wort (*Hypericum adpressum*, E), clustered bluets (*Hedyotis uniflora*, T), stargrass (*Aletris farinosa*), peanut grass (*Amphicarpum purshii*), small white snakeroot (*Eupatorium aromaticum*), white boneset (*Eupatorium leucopappus var. leucopappus*), false foxglove (*Agalinis fasciculata*), rose coreopsis (*Coreopsis rosea*), long-beaked bald rush (*Rhynchospora scirpoides*), short-beaked bald rush (*Rhynchospora nitens*), globe-fruited ludwigia (*Ludwigia*).
*spaerocarpa*, velvety lespedeze (*Lespedeza stuevei*), and opelousa smartweed (*Polygonum hydropiperoides var opelousanum*).

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

Any activity that would substantially degrade the water quality in the ponds, streams and wetlands of Long Pond Greenbelt would have significant impacts on the biological productivity of this area. All species of fish and wildlife would be adversely affected by water pollution, such as chemical contamination (including food chain effects resulting from bioaccumulation), oil spills, excessive turbidity or sedimentation, waste disposal (including vessel wastes), and airborne pollution. Significant changes in the water quality or hydrologic regime of the coastal plain ponds in the Long Pond Greenbelt would result in the loss of rare species and degradation of the ecological character and value of pond and pondshore communities. Nutrient enrichment from various sources such as lawn and farm fertilizers, road runoff, and poorly maintained or malfunctioning septic systems could result in the loss of native coastal pondshore plants to other non-native and nuisance species. 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. The development of outreach programs designed to persuade landowners to voluntarily establish natural vegetative buffers, maintain or improve septic systems, reduce lawn fertilizer and pesticide use, and refrain from disturbing the ponds could add to the ecosystem health of the Long Pond Greenbelt. Stormwater runoff into wetlands, including runoff from roads and lawns, could be reduced or eliminated by maximizing vegetative buffers around ponds and wetlands.

Elimination of open water or wetland areas, through excavation or filling, would result in a direct loss of valuable habitat area. Barriers to fish migration, whether physical or chemical would adversely affect the fisheries resources of the greenbelt. Any inlet management activities at Sagaponack Lake should be carefully planned to avoid adverse impacts on the fish resources of the chain-of-ponds system. The existing hydrology in the Long Pond Greenbelt wetlands should not be disturbed. Permanent drawdown of the water table would result in the invasion of woody species into the coastal pondshore zones, while prolonged flooding would inhibit the germination and growth of pondshore plants. The Town of Southampton cites excessive groundwater withdrawal, development, and human disturbance as significant threats to the integrity of this habitat area. Monitoring the hydrology of coastal plain pondshore communities should be implemented.

The woodlands bordering the chain-of-ponds and wetlands should be preserved as a buffer zone since the habitat value of this ecosystem depends in part on the undeveloped nature of the watersheds. Some indigenous woodland species depend on large contiguous blocks of such habitat to maintain their populations. These forest areas are highly vulnerable to fragmentation by large residential development projects. Maintenance of large contiguous habitat areas also assists in preserving the unique coastal plain pond hydrology. Encroaching development threatens uplands and wetlands that are not currently protected. Human disturbance of wetlands includes illegal dumping of household and commercial waste, the use of all-terrain vehicles on trails and shorelines, disruption of pond shores (including pond shore raking, mowing, trampling, or clearing of native vegetation), and removal or destruction of plants. The Town of
Southampton has recognized the importance of the Greenbelt through adoption of the Long Pond Greenbelt Action Plan and lists the area as a high priority for acquisition in the Comprehensive Plan and Open Space Acquisition Program.

Swans and geese feeding in the coastal plain ponds may destroy native plant populations, especially spikerushes. Stocking of ponds with game fish may displace native fish and amphibian species.

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