

COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Area: **Montauk Point Shoals**
Designated: **May 15, 2002**
County: **Suffolk**
Town(s): **East Hampton, NY**
7½' Quadrangle(s): **NOAA NOS Chart #13205 (Block Island Sound and Approaches)**

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: Shallow waters exposed to open ocean conditions, supporting a high diversity of coastal and marine species; rare in the United States. 81

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: Humpback whale (E), northern right whale (E), and finback (E) whale, Atlantic ridley turtle (E), leatherback turtle (E) and loggerhead (T) turtle, peregrine falcon (E), harlequin duck (SC), and common loon (SC).
Calculation: $36 + (36/2) + (36/4) + (36/8) + (36/16) =$ 69.75

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: Commercial and recreational fishery of importance to the Middle Atlantic and New England regions of the United States. 25

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 marine mammals and sea turtles of significance in the Middle Atlantic and New England regions of the United States. Overwintering waterfowl and migratory fish concentrations of state significance. 25

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. 1.2

Habitat Index = [ER + SV + HU + PL] = 200.75 Significance = HI x R = 240.9
NEW YORK STATE

SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT NARRATIVE

MONTAUK POINT SHOALS

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:

The Montauk Point Shoals are located off Montauk Point (NOAA NOS Chart #13205, Block Island Sound and Approaches). This area encompasses the coastal waters within the 60 foot bathymetric contour from west of Shagwong Point on the northern shore of Montauk Point east to the boundary of the territorial sea just north of Endeavor Shoals, waters southwest of Endeavor Shoals within the boundary of the territorial sea, around Montauk Shoals and into shore just east of Ditch Plains on the Atlantic Ocean side of Montauk Point. With the exception of a few deeper pockets within shoal areas, this habitat consists of coastal waters 60 feet in depth or less. The waters off Montauk Point are fully exposed to ocean conditions. Mean tidal range at this location is two feet (0.6 meters).

FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:

The Montauk Point Shoals area is a marine habitat supporting a diverse assemblage of marine and coastal species, rare in the United States. The habitat is within an important migratory corridor for marine mammals and sea turtle species. The area also provides critical overwintering habitat for sea birds and waterfowl significant in the State of New York.

The nearshore waters off Montauk Point are one of the most important areas for sea turtles in the New York Bight region. This area provides developmental habitat for juvenile Atlantic ridley turtles (E), and is an important feeding area for both leatherback turtles (E) and loggerhead turtles (T). Concentrations of marine mammals, including northern right whale (E), finback whale (E), humpback whale (E), minke whale, and pygmy sperm whale migrate through the area and feed nearshore throughout most of the year (January through September, depending upon the species). Sperm whales (E), normally considered a deep water species (>200 meters), have been observed regularly during spring and fall for more than ten years in waters less than 60 feet (18 meters) deep in an area south of Montauk Point. However, the importance of the Montauk Point Shoals area to this species requires additional documentation. Gray seal and harbor seal regularly use rocky areas off Montauk Point for haulout during winter. An inshore population of bottlenosed dolphin feed along the south shore of the Montauk peninsula during summer and early fall.

Wintering waterfowl concentrations in the Montauk Point Shoals area are of statewide significance. Species occurring here include common loon (SC), common eider, king eider, white-winged scoter, surf scoter, black scoter, bufflehead, common goldeneye, great cormorant, and red-breasted merganser. Harlequin duck (SC) are found in the area during winter, representing the southernmost regular wintering population of this species. To the north of the peninsula, large concentrations of wintering American black duck and oldsquaw have been documented. Sea duck concentrations around Montauk Point during winter are the largest in New York State, and spring, summer, and fall

concentrations of pelagic seabirds are also notable.

There is an offshore fishery in this area of commercial and recreational significance in the Middle Atlantic and New England regions of the United States. In the fall, this area is a concentration area for a variety of fish species including striped bass, bluefish, little tunny, weakfish, scup, and black seabass. There are also extensive beds of blue mussel and kelp in the area, of local significance.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Any activity that would degrade water quality in the Montauk Point Shoals would have a significant impact on biological productivity. 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, and waste disposal, including vessel wastes.

Barriers to migration by sea turtles, marine mammals, or fish, whether physical or chemical, would have a significant effect on the biological resources of this area. Removal of any barriers along the migratory route through the Montauk Point Shoals area is critical to ensure preservation of migratory habitat. Increases in vessel traffic within and through this area could adversely affect sea turtles and marine mammals utilizing the area.

Thermal discharges, depending on time of year, may have variable effects on use of the area by marine species and wintering waterfowl. Installation and operation of water intakes could have a significant impact on juvenile (and adult, in some cases) fish concentrations, through impingement or entrainment. The significant human use which this area supports depends upon maintaining recreational and commercial fisheries within the productivity limits of the resource.

KNOWLEDGEABLE CONTACTS:

Habitat Unit
NYS Department of State
Division of Coastal Resources
41 State Street
Albany, NY 12231
Phone: (518) 474-6000

NYSDEC—Region 1
State University of New York, Building 40
Stony Brook, NY 11790-2356
Phone: (631) 444-0354

Wildlife Manager
NYSDEC—Region 1
State University of New York, Building 40
Stony Brook, NY 11790
Phone: (631) 444-0310

Bureau of Marine Resources
NYSDEC
205 N. Belle Meade Road, Suite 1
East Setauket, NY 11733
Phone: (631) 444-0430

Finfish and Crustaceans
NYSDEC
205 N. Belle Meade Road, Suite 1
East Setauket, NY 11733
Phone: (631) 444-0436

East Hampton Dept. of Natural Resources
Town of East Hampton
300 Pantigo Place, Suite 105
East Hampton, NY 11937-2684
Phone: (631) 324-0496

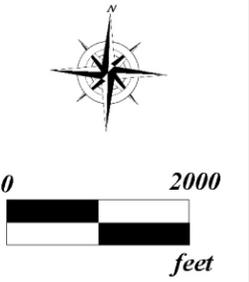
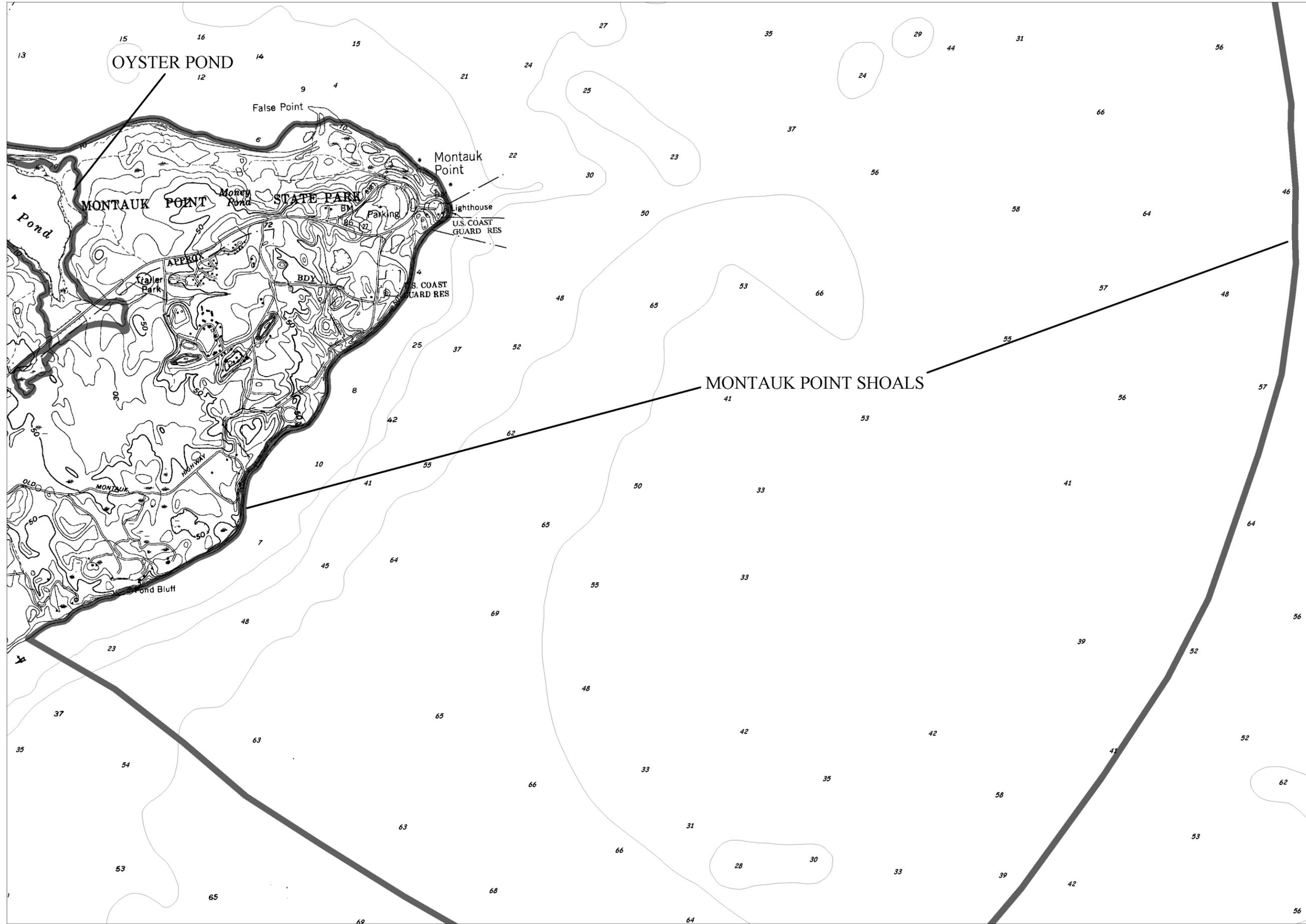
Office of Ecology
Suffolk County Dept. of Health Services
Bureau of Environmental Management
County Center
Riverhead, NY 11901
Phone: (631) 852-2077

Office of Protected Resources (F/PR)
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
FAX: (301) 713-0376

Northeast Regional Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298
Phone: (978) 281-9300

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 Eye Street, NW
6th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 289-6400

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Coastal Ecosystems Program
P.O. Box 307
Charlestown, RI 02813
Phone: (401) 364-9124

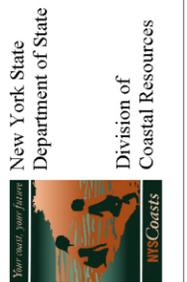


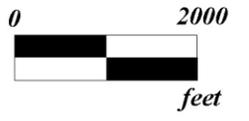
Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats
 Montauk Point Shoals (In part)
 Oyster Pond (In part)
 Part 3 of 4



Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats

Montauk Point Shoals (In part)
Part 2 of 4



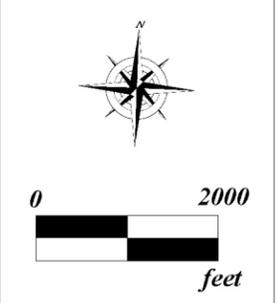
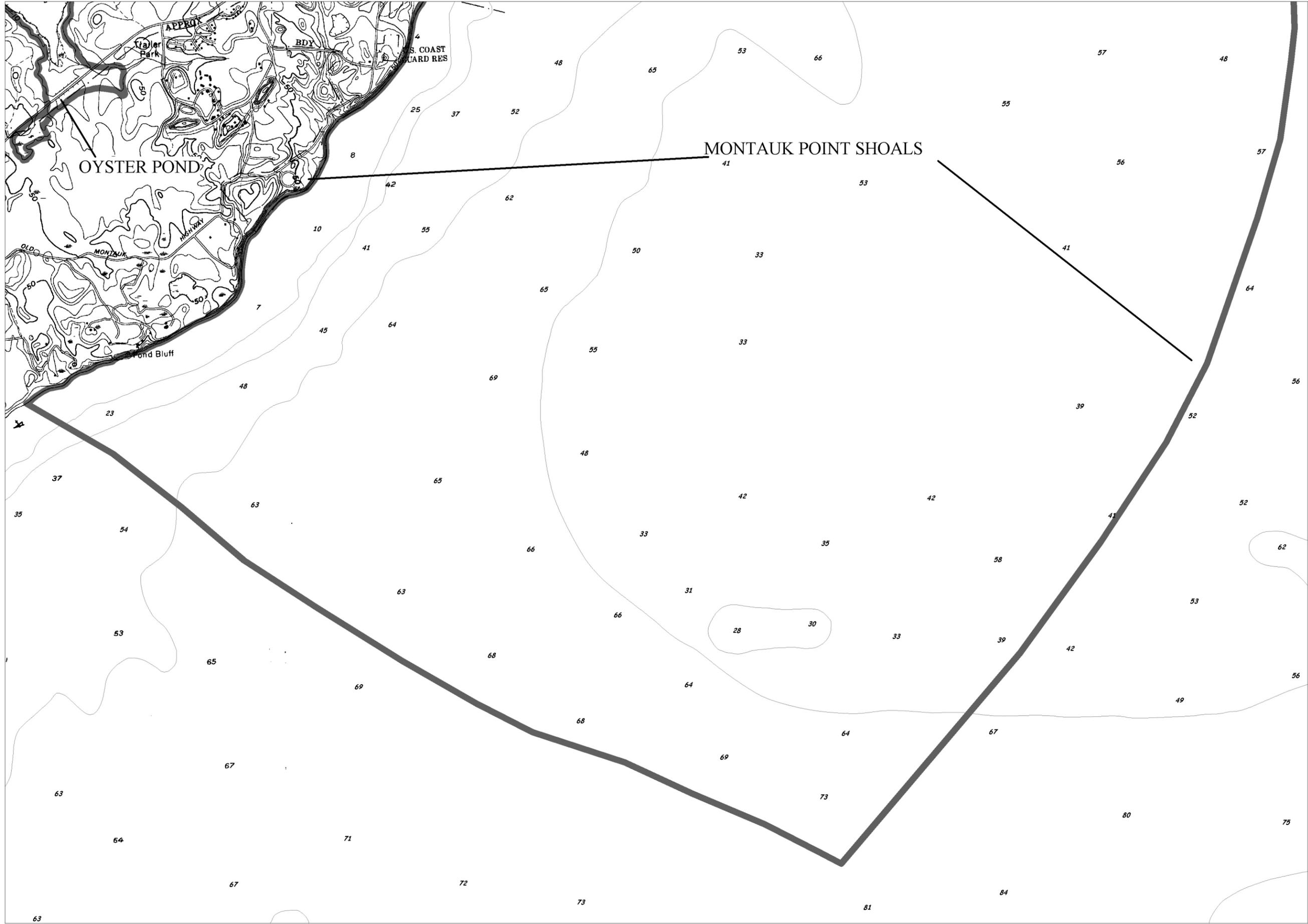


Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats
 Montauk Point Shoals (In part) Big and Little Reed Ponds (In part)

Part 1 of 4

New York State
 Department of State





Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats
 Montauk Point Shoals (In part)
 Oyster Pond (In part)

Part 4 of 4