

COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Area: **Oyster 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: Relatively large, undeveloped, brackish pond, rare on Long Island. 25

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 salamander (SC), southern leopard frog (SC), Northern harrier (T), and common loon (SC). Calculation: $25 + (16/2) + (16/4) + (16/8) =$ 39

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 human uses of the area's fish and wildlife resources. 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 southern leopard frog and blue-spotted salamander are unusual 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: Irreplaceable. 1.2

Habitat Index = [ER + SV + HU + PL] = 73

Significance = HI x R = 87.6

NEW YORK STATE
SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
NARRATIVE

OYSTER POND

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:

Oyster Pond is located approximately one mile east of Montauk Harbor, on the south fork of Long Island, in the Town of East Hampton, Suffolk County (7.5' Quadrangle: Montauk Point, NY). The fish and wildlife habitat is approximately 275 acres in size, including all of Oyster Pond, its headwaters, and adjacent lands up to the approximate 10 foot contour. Oyster Pond is a relatively large brackish pond, bordered by salt marsh, freshwater wetlands, maritime forest, and small tributaries and drainage swales. The New York Natural Heritage Program identifies Oyster Pond as the largest, highest quality example of the coastal salt pond community in New York State. The pond is periodically opened to Block Island Sound by natural processes. Most of the habitat is located within Montauk Point State Park.

FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:

Oyster Pond is a relatively large, brackish pond, located within a completely undeveloped watershed. It is the largest, highest quality example of the coastal salt pond community in New York State. This area supports several rare species, comprising an ecological community that is unique on Long Island.

Blue-spotted salamanders (SC) inhabit several wooded swales which drain into Oyster Pond. The populations of this species in Montauk are unique because they are comprised of non-hybridized, sexually-reproducing animals. Most mainland populations of blue-spotted salamander have hybridized with Jefferson salamander. A population of southern leopard frog (SC) exists in a wetland area bordering Oyster Pond. This is one of the few locations on Long Island where this species is known to occur. Spotted turtles (SC) may also occur in the area but this has not been adequately documented. Spotted turtle are common in the watershed. The Pond is also one of the few locations on the South Fork where mink are found.

Oyster Pond is a productive nesting and feeding area for a great variety of birds including herons, egrets, waterfowl, Northern harrier (T), common loon (SC), flycatchers, swallows, thrushes, warblers, blackbirds, and sparrows. The pond serves as an important overwintering area for a number of species of waterfowl, including mallard, American black duck, merganser, bufflehead, and Canada geese. Christmas counts in the Oyster Pond vicinity have observed large concentrations (several thousand) of common eider, black scoter, surf scoter, white-winged scoter, and several hundred individuals of herring gull and great black-backed gull. Several tern species feed in Oyster Pond. Piping plover (E, T-Fed) have been observed on the beach to the north of Oyster Pond, but the importance of this area for this species has not been determined.

The area provides bird-watching opportunities of local significance.

A variety of estuarine fish and shellfish species occur in Oyster Pond, including white perch, striped killifish, Atlantic silversides, horseshoe crab, American oyster, softshell clam, and barnacles. The pond is uncertified for shellfishing year-round. Both oysters and clams have been transplanted out of Oyster Pond in the past, including programs involving the State of New York, Town of East Hampton, and Town of Southampton.

The Oyster Pond shoreline is used on a regular basis for horseback riding.

Several rare plant species have been documented by the New York Natural Heritage Program in the Oyster Pond area, including Mitchell sedge (*Carex mitchelliana*, E), seabeach knotweed (*Polygonum glaucum*), sea purslane (*Sesuvium maritimum*, E), and southern arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*).

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Any activity that would degrade water quality, increase turbidity, change water depths, or alter salinity patterns in Oyster Pond would have a significant impact on fish, wildlife, and botanical resources. Former Camp Hero to the south drains into Oyster Pond, and has contributed contamination and a serious oil spill in the past. All species of fish and wildlife may be affected by pollution from chemical contamination (including food chain effects resulting from bioaccumulation), pesticides, oil spills, waste disposal, or stormwater runoff. Wildlife species would be most sensitive during the breeding season, which generally extends from April through August.

Any substantial disturbance of the upland and wetland vegetative communities within or adjacent to Oyster Pond may adversely affect wildlife populations in the area. 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. Collection of native flora and fauna from this area or adjacent areas, especially important amphibian or reptile species, would have a significant impact on the survival of several species of special concern in New York State. The level of human use of the area should be carefully managed to balance access and recreation with protection of habitat values.

KNOWLEDGEABLE CONTACTS:

Habitat Unit
NYS Department of State
Division of Coastal Resources
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Bureau of Marine Resources
NYSDEC
205 N. Belle Meade Road, Suite 1
East Setauket, NY 11733
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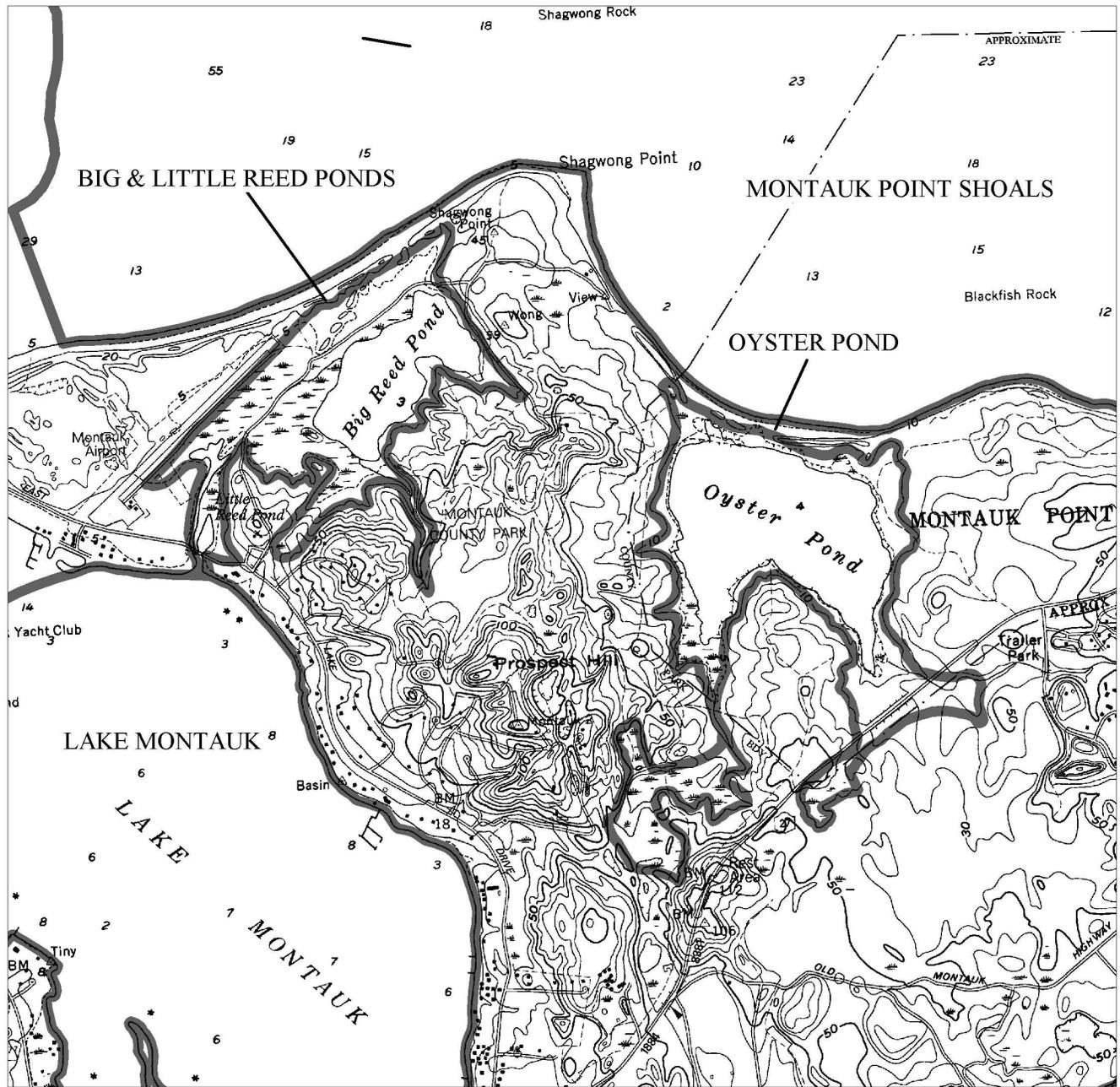
New York Natural Heritage Program
Wildlife Resources Center
700 Troy-Schenectady Road
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Phone: (518) 783-3932

Group for the South Fork
P.O. Box 569
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East Hampton Dept. of Natural Resources
Town of East Hampton
300 Pantigo Place, Suite 105
East Hampton, NY 11937-2684
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East Hampton Baymen's Association
P.O. Box 498
Amagansett, NY 11930
Phone: not available

Office of Ecology
Suffolk County Dept. of Health Services
Bureau of Environmental Management
County Center
Riverhead, NY 11901
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Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats



New York State
Department of State
Division of
Coastal Resources

Big and Little Reed Ponds
Oyster Pond
Lake Montauk (In part)
Montauk Point Shoals (In part)

