Attachment B:

COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Area:	**Sagaponack Inlet**
Designated:	**March 15, 1987**
Date Revised:	**December 15, 2008**
County:	**Suffolk**
Town(s):	**Southampton**
7½' Quadrangle(s):	**Sag Harbor, NY**

Assessment Criteria		**Score**
Ecosystem Rarity (ER)–the uniqueness of the plant and animal community in the area and the physical, structural, and chemical feature supporting this community.		
ER assessment:	Undeveloped barrier beach inlet, rare in Suffolk County.	**9**
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. (E = Endangered, T = Threatened, SC = Special concern)		
SV assessment:	Piping plover (E, T-Fed) and least tern (T) and nesting. Additive division: 36 + 25/2 = 48.5.	**48.5**
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:	No unusual concentrations of any fish or wildlife species occur in the area.	**0**
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) = 57.5 **Significance: (HI x R) = 69**

NEW YORK STATE
SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
NARRATIVE

SAGAPONACK INLET

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:

Sagaponack Inlet is located approximately three miles west of the Village of East Hampton, on the south shore of Long Island. The inlet is located at the south end of Sagaponack Lake, in the Town of Southampton, Suffolk County (7.5' Quadrangle: Sag Harbor, N.Y.). The fish and wildlife habitat consists of approximately 25 acres of maritime dunes fronted by maritime beach, with small scattered inland interdunal swales. Maritime beach is a sparsely vegetated community dominated by beach grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*). Maritime beach occurs on unstable sand, gravel, or cobble ocean shores above mean high tide, where the shore is modified by storm waves and wind erosion. The community is an important nesting ground for beach nesting shorebirds. The maritime dune community is comprised of grasses and low shrubs in a mosaic of vegetated patches dominated by beach grass and seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*). Sagaponack inlet is an intermittent channel connecting Sagaponack Lake to the ocean. The beach area receives moderate recreational use during the summer. Bird nesting areas are posted.

Seabeach knotweed (T) (*Polygonum glaucum*) has been observed at this site and is rare in New York State with fewer than 35 occurrences. Globally, seabeach knotweed (T) is rare and restricted throughout its range with between 21 and 100 occurrences.

FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:

The Sagaponack Inlet fish and wildlife habitat consists of a relatively small, undeveloped, inlet through the ocean side barrier beach. This represents an ecosystem type that is generally rare in Suffolk County, being found at only a limited number of locations along the south shore and in the eastern forks of Long Island. Sagaponack Inlet serves as a nesting site for least tern (T) and piping plover (E, T-Fed). One breeding pair of piping plover (E, T-Fed) was present in 1993, 1995, 1997, and 2004, and 3 pairs were present in 2005. Shorebird surveys estimate for the 13 year period from 1993 to 2005, an annual average of 7 least tern (T) breeding pairs (28 in peak year). Sagaponack Inlet has a propensity to flood, which may be a limiting factor to nesting shorebird populations. The least tern (T) populations at this site in recent years were relatively small in comparison to other areas in Suffolk County. There are no significant human use activities associated with the wildlife resources at Sagaponack Inlet.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Nesting shorebird species inhabiting the barrier beaches of Long Island are highly vulnerable to disturbance by humans from March 15 through August 15. Significant pedestrian traffic or recreational use of the upper beach, dunes, and adjacent areas (e.g., boat and personal watercraft landing, off-road vehicle use, picnicking) could easily eliminate the use of this site as a nesting area and should be minimized during this period. Reduction, or loss of the area presently utilized by nesting colonies could significantly affect the bird populations in this vicinity. Introduction or attraction of mammalian predators to the area would be detrimental to the populations of nesting birds. 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 annual posting of the bird nesting area should be provided to help protect the nesting bird species. Unregulated dredged material placement in this area would be detrimental to the habitat area, but such activities may be designed to maintain or improve the habitat, by setting back vegetative succession. Habitat management activities, such as creation of less flood-prone nesting habitat, may be used to increase the number of least terns at Sagaponack Inlet. Any inlet management activities should be carefully planned to avoid any adverse impact on the nesting bird habitat.

Construction of adjacent recreational facilities should be designed to minimize impacts to the nesting areas. Construction of new or maintenance of existing erosion control structures which interfere with natural coastal process should be carefully evaluated for need and where possible, non-structural solutions should be utilized.

HABITAT IMPAIRMENT TEST:

A **habitat impairment test** must be applied to any activity that is subject to consistency review under federal and State laws, or under applicable local laws contained in an approved local waterfront revitalization program. If the proposed action is subject to consistency review, then the habitat protection policy applies, whether the proposed action is to occur within or outside the designated area.

The specific **habitat impairment test** is as follows.

> In order to protect and preserve a significant habitat, land and water uses or development shall not be undertaken if such actions would:
>
> - destroy the habitat; or,
>
> - significantly impair the viability of a habitat.

Habitat destruction is defined as the loss of fish or wildlife use through direct physical alteration, disturbance, or pollution of a designated area or through the indirect effects of these actions on a designated area. Habitat destruction may be indicated by changes in vegetation, substrate, or hydrology, or increases in runoff, erosion, sedimentation, or pollutants.

Significant impairment is defined as reduction in vital resources (e.g., food, shelter, living space) or change in environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, substrate, salinity) beyond the tolerance range of an organism. Indicators of a significantly impaired habitat focus on ecological alterations and may include but are not limited to reduced carrying capacity, changes in community structure (food chain relationships, species diversity), reduced productivity and/or increased incidence of disease and mortality.

The *tolerance range* of an organism is not defined as the physiological range of conditions beyond which a species will not survive at all, but as the ecological range of conditions that supports the species population or has the potential to support a restored population, where practical. Either the loss of individuals through an increase in emigration or an increase in death rate indicates that the tolerance range of an organism has been exceeded. An abrupt increase in death rate may occur as an environmental factor falls beyond a tolerance limit (a range has both upper and lower limits). Many environmental factors, however, do not have a sharply defined tolerance limit, but produce increasing

emigration or death rates with increasing departure from conditions that are optimal for the species.

The range of parameters which should be considered in applying the habitat impairment test include but are not limited to the following:

1. physical parameters such as living space, circulation, flushing rates, tidal amplitude, turbidity, water temperature, depth (including loss of littoral zone), morphology, substrate type, vegetation, structure, erosion and sedimentation rates;

2. biological parameters such as community structure, food chain relationships, species diversity, predator/prey relationships, population size, mortality rates, reproductive rates, meristic features, behavioral patterns and migratory patterns; and,

3. chemical parameters such as dissolved oxygen, carbon dioxide, acidity, dissolved solids, nutrients, organics, salinity, and pollutants (heavy metals, toxics and hazardous materials).

Although not comprehensive, examples of generic activities and impacts which could destroy or significantly impair the habitat are listed in the Impact Assessment section to assist in applying the habitat impairment test to a proposed activity.

KNOWLEDGEABLE CONTACTS:

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Department of Land Management
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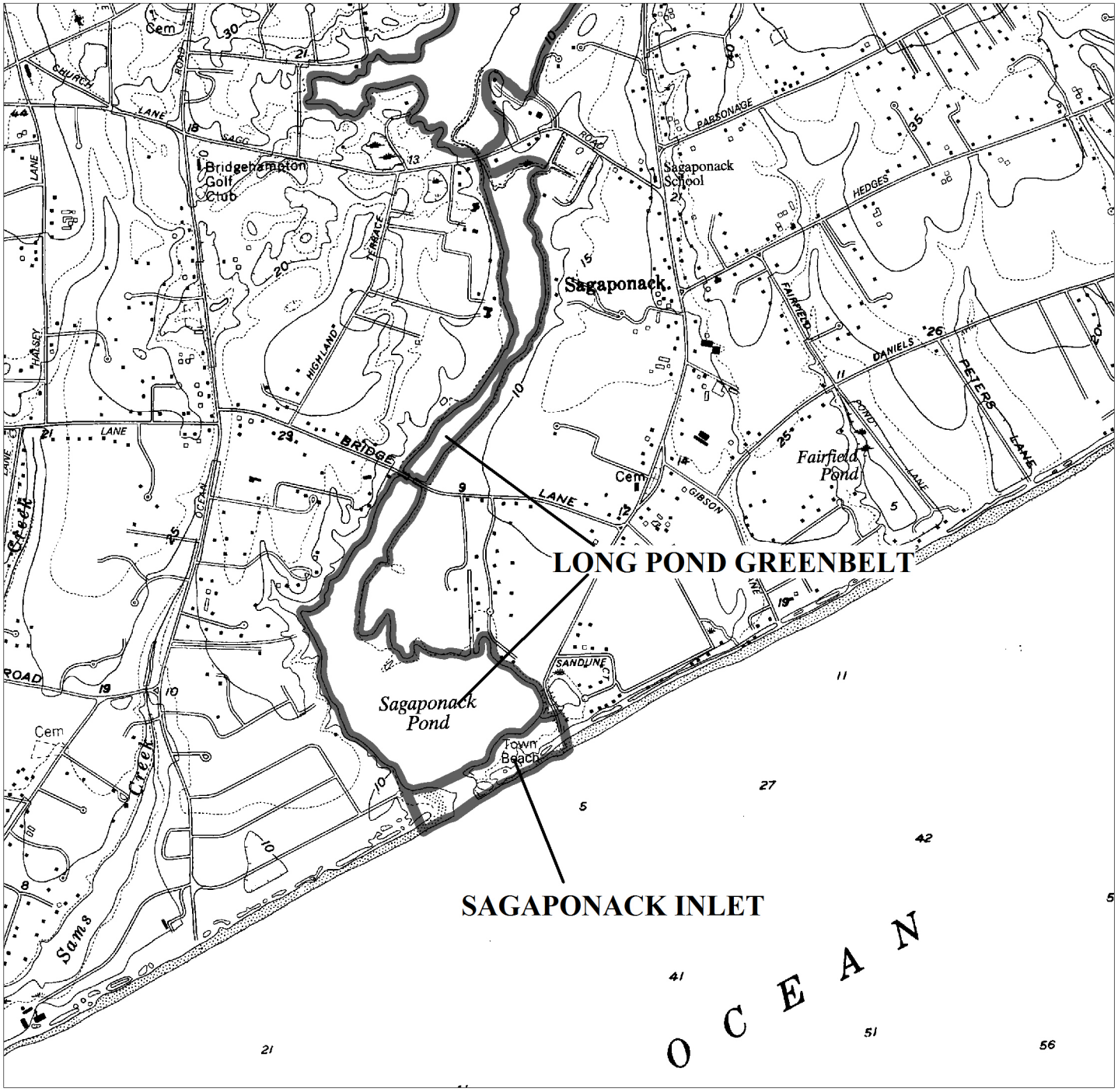

Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats

New York State
Department of State

Division of
Coastal Resources

Sagaponack Inlet
Long Pond Greenbelt (In Part)

N

0 2000

feet