

COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Area: **Shell Beach**
Designated: **March 15, 1987**
Date Revised: **May 15, 2002**
County: **Suffolk**
Town(s): **Shelter Island**
7½' Quadrangle(s): **Greenport, 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 segment of sand and pebble beach, subject to human disturbance; not rare in Suffolk County. 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) and piping plover (E, T-Fed) nesting.
Calculation: $36 + (25/2) =$ 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: Concentrations of piping plover 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 may be replaced through independent processes within two years. 0.4

Habitat Index = [ER + SV + HU + PL] = 52.5

Significance = HI x R = 21.0

NEW YORK STATE
SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
NARRATIVE

SHELL BEACH

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:

Shell Beach is located in West Neck Harbor, in the southwest portion of the Town of Shelter Island, Suffolk County (7.5' Quadrangle: Greenport, NY). The fish and wildlife habitat is an approximate 8 acre area of sparsely vegetated sand and pebble beach, located at the eastern end of the Shell Beach peninsula. This area has been used for disposal of dredged material, and is subject to human disturbances, such as off-road vehicle use and pedestrian traffic.

FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:

Shell Beach is a relatively small segment of unvegetated, and heavily disturbed, sand and pebble beach. Areas such as this are not rare in Suffolk County. However, Shell Beach is an important nesting site for least terns (T) and piping plovers (E, T-Fed), with both species present since at least 1983. The tern population attained peak concentrations of 119 and 248 pairs in 1986 and 1987, respectively; however, since that time the population has been documented only sporadically and in concentrations ranging from 9 to 42 pairs. Concentrations of piping plover increased during the 1986-1996 period; peak concentrations of 5-7 pairs nested at Shell Beach between 1994-1996. There are no significant human use activities associated with the wildlife resources at Shell Beach.

The New York Natural Heritage Program has documented seabeach knotweed (*Polygonum glaucum*) at Shell Beach.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Nesting shorebirds inhabiting Shell Beach are highly vulnerable to disturbance by humans, especially during the nesting and fledging period (March 15 through August 15). Significant pedestrian traffic or recreational vehicle use of the beach could easily eliminate the use of this site as a breeding area and should be minimized during this period. 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.

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

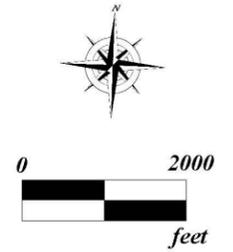
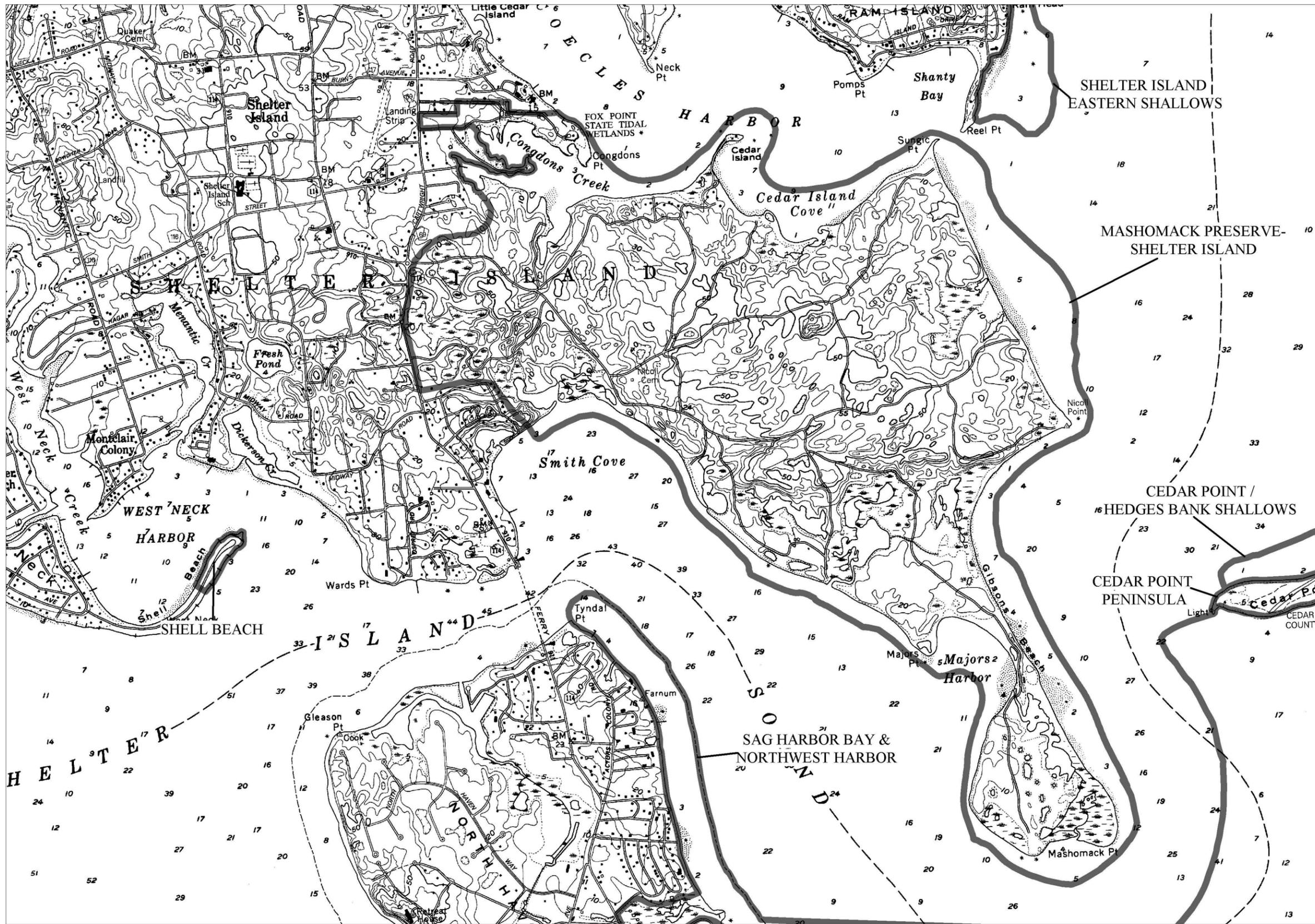
Bureau of Marine Resources
NYSDEC
205 N. Belle Meade Road, Suite 1
East Setauket, NY 11733
Phone: (631) 444-0430

New York Natural Heritage Program
Wildlife Resources Center
700 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110
Phone: 518-783-3932

South Fork - Shelter Island Chapter
The Nature Conservancy
P.O. Box 5125
East Hampton, NY 11937
Phone: (631) 329-7689

Seatuck Research Program
Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology
P.O. Box 31
Islip, NY 11751
Phone: (631) 581-6908

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



Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats

- Cedar Point/ Hedges Bank Shallows (In part)
- Cedar Point Peninsula (In part)
- Sag Harbor Bay & Northwest Harbor (In part)
- Shelter Island Eastern Shallows (In part)

- Mashomack Preserve-Shelter Island
- Shell Beach

New York State
Department of State
Division of
Coastal Resources

