

COASTAL FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT FORM

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Name of Area: **Towd Point**  
Designated: **March 15, 1987**  
Date Revised: **May 15, 2002**  
County: **Suffolk**  
Town(s): **Southampton**  
7½' Quadrangle(s): **Southampton, NY**

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**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: Undeveloped barrier beach ecosystem, rare in Peconic Bays area of Long Island; rarity diminished by human disturbance. Calculation:  $\sqrt{(16 \times 9)}$  12

**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 osprey (SC) nesting. Piping plover (E, T-Fed) may also nest here, but not adequately documented.  
Calculation:  $25 + (16/2) =$  33

**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 fish and wildlife species. 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: Uncertain of ability to replace the habitat; cost is probably prohibitive. 1.0

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**Habitat Index = [ER + SV + HU + PL] = 45.0**

**Significance = HI x R = 45.0**

NEW YORK STATE  
SIGNIFICANT COASTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT  
NARRATIVE

**TOWD POINT**

**LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT:**

Towd Point is located east and west of the inlet to North Sea Harbor, on the north shore of Long Island's south fork. This area is located in the Town of Southampton, Suffolk County (7.5' Quadrangle: Southampton, NY). The fish and wildlife habitat consists of sparsely vegetated sand beach and dredged material areas, extending from North Sea Road to the west along Towd Neck eastward to the Wooley Pond Beach, tidal creek (Davis Creek), and adjoining salt marshes. Conscience Point National Wildlife Refuge and the North Sea Harbor island are also included in this area. Conscience Point supports a maritime grassland community. The area to the west of the inlet is a stabilized, forested dune over 60 feet in elevation with a beech tree forest plant community. Towd Point is mostly privately owned, and receives moderate recreational use (pedestrians and off-road vehicles) during the summer. A portion of the area has historically been posted as a bird nesting area. The navigation channel in North Sea Harbor is periodically subject to maintenance dredging.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES:**

Towd Point consists of an undeveloped barrier beach ecosystem and tidal creek. This ecosystem type is generally rare outside of Long Island's south shore. However, disposal of dredged material and uncontrolled recreational use of the area has resulted in some degradation of the habitat.

Towd Point was historically an important nesting site for least terns (T), since at least the mid-1970's, when the concentration of least terns nesting at Towd Point in most years was one of the largest on the south fork of Long Island, of county-level significance. At that time, common tern (T) were also present. Common tern were again observed during the mid-1990s, but the importance of this site for common tern is not adequately documented. In the early 1980s, approximately 30-60 pairs of least terns nested in the area each year. However, in the late 1980s, least tern were documented in lower concentrations, ranging from 5 to 16 pairs. The least tern population appears to be rebounding in the 1990s, with concentrations during this period ranging from 12 to 69 pairs. The annual average number of pairs of least tern breeding at Towd Neck and Wooley Pond for the 1987-1996 period was 25.

Piping plover (E, T-Fed) were also observed sporadically in the early to mid-1980s, but disappeared in between 1986 and 1992. This species subsequently returned to nest consistently between 1992 and 1997. The importance of this area for piping plover nesting needs additional documentation.

Osprey (SC) have nested on an erected platform to the east of Davis Creek for a number of years, and three chicks successfully fledged in 1998. Other birds using the area include semi-palmated plover, sandpiper, and willet.

The adjoining wetlands on Davis Creek serve as a feeding area for terns nesting at Towd Point. Diamondback terrapin nest on the beach bordering the salt marsh. The tidal creek and salt marshes provide feeding areas and cover for the terrapins during this nesting period (April - July).

There are no significant human use activities associated with the wildlife resources of this habitat. Turtle Cove is uncertified for shellfishing year round; Davis Creek is closed to shellfishing between May 1 and November 30.

The New York Natural Heritage Program has documented the occurrence of bushy rockrose (*Helianthemum dumosum*, T) at Towd Point. Other rare planted species at this site are seabeach knotweed (*Polygonum glaucum*) and coast flatsedge (*Cyperus polystachios var texensis*).

#### IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Any activity that would substantially degrade the water quality at Towd Point would adversely affect its biological productivity. All species of fish and wildlife would be affected by water pollution, such as chemical contamination (including food chain effects resulting from bioaccumulation), oil spills, excessive turbidity, and waste disposal (including boat wastes). The Town of Southampton has conducted extensive road drainage improvement projects east of Turtle Cove, and around North Sea Harbor and Fish Cove, to help mitigate problems associated with road runoff.

Unrestricted use of motorized vessels including personal watercraft in the protected, shallow waters of bays, harbors, and tidal creeks can have adverse effects on aquatic vegetation and fish and wildlife populations. Use of motorized vessels should be controlled (*e.g.*, no wake zones, speed zones, zones of exclusion) in and adjacent to shallow waters and vegetated wetlands.

Nesting shorebirds inhabiting Towd Point 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. Use of off-road vehicles should be managed to avoid sensitive areas, including rare plant habitats.

Disturbance or elimination of the wetlands bordering Davis Creek, including excavation or filling, would also adversely affect the nesting bird populations at Towd Point and would result in the direct loss of valuable feeding area for the birds and terrapin. 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.

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

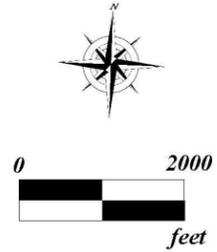
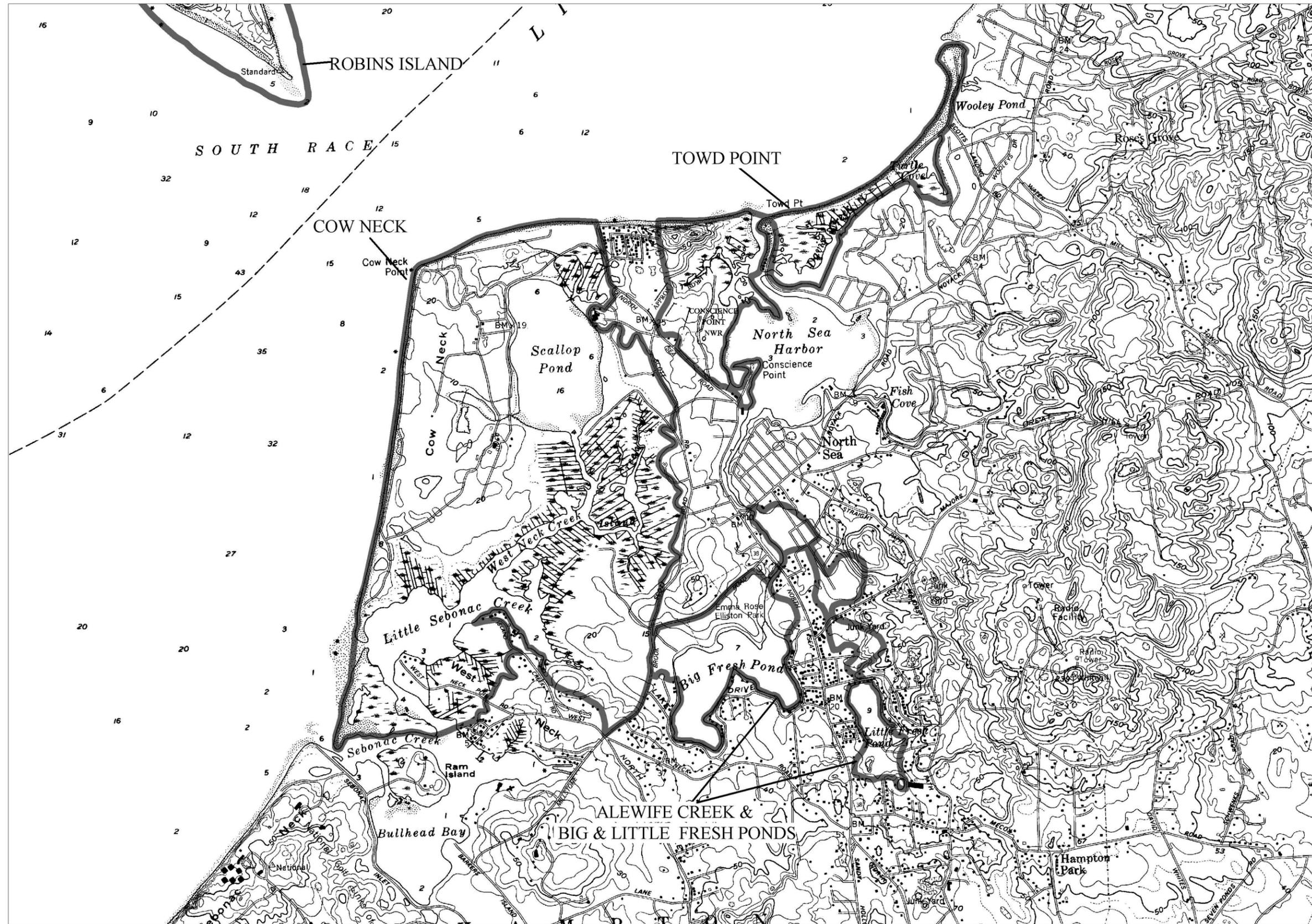
New York Natural Heritage Program  
Wildlife Resources Center  
700 Troy-Schenectady Road  
Latham, NY 12110  
Phone: (518) 783-3932

Environment Division  
Department of Land Management  
Town of Southampton  
116 Hampton Road  
Southampton, NY 11968  
Phone: (631) 287-5710

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

Group for the South Fork  
P.O. Box 569  
Bridgehampton, NY 11932  
Phone: (631) 537-1400

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**

- Alewife Creek and Big & Little Fresh Ponds
- Cow Neck
- Towd Point
- Robins Island (In part)

