

Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) - June Monthly Newsletter: South Shore Estuary Reserve Update

In this month's issue we highlight the ongoing nitrogen related efforts in the South Shore Estuary Reserve (SSER).

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 - **Department of State (DOS) Geographic Information Gateway Story**
 - **Completed SSER Local Assistance Grant Program Projects**
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Nitrogen Reduction Efforts in the SSER

The reduction of nitrogen pollution in the South Shore Estuary Reserve (SSER) is a significant focus of the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) and the objective of the LINAP Initiative. Both Nassau and Suffolk Counties are addressing the impacts that wastewater from inadequate on-site wastewater disposal systems, cesspools and wastewater treatment plants are having on the South Shore Estuary and Long Island as a whole. Actions taken by both Nassau and Suffolk County continue to advance the CMP and LINAP priorities and are critical to reducing nitrogen pollution and improving overall water quality in the South Shore Estuary. Many of the on-going projects in Suffolk and Nassau Counties will help the South Shore Estuary Reserve Program meet its goal to Improve and Maintain Water Quality.

- [Nassau County Western Bays Reconstruction and Resiliency Initiative](#)
 - [Nassau County Nine Element Watershed Plan](#)
 - [Suffolk County's Subwatersheds Wastewater Plan](#)
 - [Suffolk County Wastewater Management District Feasibility Study](#)
 - [Suffolk County Septic Improvement Program](#)
 - [Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative](#)
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DOS Geographic Information Gateway Story

The New York Department of State (DOS) has a new interactive story on its [Geographic Information Gateway](#) page focusing on eelgrass, or *Zostera marina*, in the SSER. The story, which discusses the benefits of eelgrass, serves as an informational and educational tool for local partner organizations and the public featuring different multimedia components including video and interactive mapping tools. Through the story, users will learn why eelgrass is important to our coastal waters, what has led to a decline in the prevalence of eelgrass meadows in the SSER, and how local organizations, including DOS, are working to assess the status of eelgrass, protect meadows that exist in the SSER, and strengthen local populations through restoration.

Eelgrass in the SSER has seen more than a 50 percent decline from roughly 20,000 acres in 2002 to about 10,000 acres in 2018. Several factors have led to this decline including increasing water temperatures, declining water quality, coastal development, recreational activities and disease. Excess nitrogen in coastal waters causes harmful algal blooms that blocks sunlight needed by eelgrass to survive. Through LINAP, efforts to reduce nitrogen entering the SSER will improve conditions for eelgrass survival helping with future management, protection, and restoration of eelgrass in the SSER.

Included in the story is data from DOS's 2018 Aerial Benthic Habitat Mapping Survey, which was completed in partnership with the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery, Department of Environmental Conservation, DOS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office for Coastal Management, and others. This mapping data illustrates and characterizes changes in benthic habitat, such as eelgrass, macroalgae, and emergent tidal wetlands within the SSER since the last survey was completed in 2002. The characterization of benthic habitat type and analysis of changes in habitat is important information that can be used to understand the state of marine resources within the Reserve and to inform the future management and conservation of important submerged aquatic vegetation such as eelgrass.

To access the new Geographic Information Gateway story, visit: <http://opdgig.dos.ny.gov/#/storyTemplate/28/1/1>

Completed SSER Local Assistance Grant Program Projects

The SSER Local Assistance Grant Program provides funding to municipalities for projects helping to implement the SSER CMP. Funding for this grant program is made available from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund.

In fall 2020, the Town of Brookhaven and the Village of Patchogue completed projects to improve water quality in the SSER with grants from the program. The Village of Patchogue installed silt sifters in two locations, at the end of Laurel Street and on Campbell Street, to remove sediment and pollutants from stormwater prior to entering the Patchogue River and Great South Bay. The project captures rainfall and funnels it to the silt sifter. Pollutants in the stormwater are removed as the water flows through the filters. Also, the filter slows the flow of the water which reduces erosion in the area.

The Town of Brookhaven was also awarded a grant for the Maple Avenue Boat Ramp Stormwater Mitigation Project. Parts of the Maple Avenue Boat Ramp were susceptible to flooding in extreme high storm surges and sections of the shoreline had eroded overtime from past storm events and coastal flooding. This grant allowed for the road end of the boat ramp to be redesigned to direct stormwater into a roadside swale, to install new drainage structures, and road profiles were modified to minimize runoff and coastal erosion. A new bioretention area was constructed and planted with salt tolerant species to mitigate pollution while also improving the scenic vista and increasing resiliency.



Photo Credit: Town of Brookhaven.

South Shore Blueway Trail

With summer quickly approaching it is a great time to take advantage of the many outdoor recreational opportunities offered in the SSER, one being the South Shore Blueway Trail. DOS, Nassau County, and local community leaders celebrated the completion of the Nassau County South Shore Blueway Trail. A partnership between Nassau County, Town of Hempstead, Village of Freeport, and many others including local stakeholder groups. The Nassau County Blueway Trail includes construction of accessibility improvements to existing boat ramps and kayak launches at seven locations and was funded in part by the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) that contributed \$240,000 to Nassau County for the \$480,000 project.

The South Shore Blueway Trail is a safe, legal network of water access points for human-powered boats and beachable sail craft. The trail provides the public with the opportunity to experience the natural, scenic, and cultural wonders of Long Island's South Shore, while protecting wildlife and habitat and the safety of trail users and all mariners. The trail provides continuous kayak access along an 18-mile stretch of the South Shore Estuary Reserve, from the

western border of the Town of Hempstead to the Nassau/Suffolk County line. For more information on the South Shore Blueway Trail, visit: <https://www.southshoreblueway.com/>



Photo Credit: Nassau County

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