

# TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROJECT PLAN

## Part II. COMMUNITY PRESERVATION TARGET AREAS, PROJECTS, PARCELS AND PRIORITIES

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Community Preservation Project Plan presented here is one that is consistent with Southampton's own conservation ventures, which have been in effect for over thirty years. Beginning with the Town's 1970 Master Plan, Southampton has identified areas of critical preservation concern Townwide. From 1970 to 2001, a desire to protect open space, farmland and recreational opportunities prompted a whole range of further conservative initiatives, including the Eastern and Western GEIS open space plans, the Town's 1986 – 87 and 1995 – 96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Programs, Southampton's 1993 Clean Water Bond Act, the 1996 Draft Comprehensive Plan Update and the Southampton's 1996 \$5 Million Open Space and Farmland Preservation Bond. Other preservation tools are also being used to improve the environment, including the Town's Dedicated Capital Reserve Fund, Environmental Savings Fund and Capital Improvement Program financing. Every opportunity is likewise being made to leverage town dollars through public and private partnerships, including arrangements with Suffolk County, New York State and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In November of 2000, for example, the Town of Southampton applied for and received a \$30 million interest-free short term loan from the Environmental Facilities Corporation, an agency created under the New York State Clean Air/Clean Water Bond Act for land preservation purposes.

These actions represent a substantial investment by the Town in open space protection. A total of over **\$161** million in Town dollars have thus far been spent on conservation, **\$152** million of which were Community Preservation Funds. The protection of open space will remain a top priority to Southampton, as its residents have time and time again voiced their desire that agricultural lands, natural resources, and historic sites be safeguarded for generations to come.

The Town's updated Community Preservation Project Plan builds upon these past initiatives, as its principal goal is precisely the same as that of previous Town conservation endeavors: to protect and preserve the Town's unique open space, natural areas, farmland and historic places, and to provide park and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Southampton is therefore deeply committed to accomplishing all of the community preservation objectives, to maintain and enhance its status as one of the healthiest and most beautiful places to live.

The lands recommended for protection in this Project Plan are referred to as Community Preservation Target Areas, Projects, Parcels and Priorities and are displayed on maps and listed in Appendices A and B of this Project Plan. Community Preservation Target Areas, Projects, Parcels and Priorities depict parcels whose protection is needed to meet minimum conservation goals pursuant to Section 64-e.4 of the enabling legislation authorizing the

establishment of the Peconic Region Community Preservation Fund and the imposition of a 2% Real Estate Transfer Tax. These goals, as mentioned earlier, include the following:

- (a) establishment of parks, nature preserves, or recreation areas;
- (b) preservation of open space, including agricultural lands;
- (c) preservation of lands of exceptional scenic value;
- (d) preservation of fresh and saltwater marshes or other wetlands;
- (e) preservation of aquifer recharge areas;
- (f) preservation of undeveloped beachlands or shoreline;
- (g) establishment of wildlife refuges for the purpose of maintaining native animal species diversity, including the protection of habitat essential to the recovery of rare, threatened or endangered species;
- (h) preservation of pine barrens consisting of such biota as pitch pine and scrub oak;
- (i) preservation of unique or threatened ecological areas;
- (j) preservation of rivers and river areas in a natural, free-flowing condition;
- (k) preservation of forested land;
- (l) preservation of public access to lands for public use including stream rights and waterways;
- (m) preservation of historic places and properties listed on the New York State Register of Historic Places and/or protected under a municipal historic preservation ordinance or law; and
- (n) undertaking any of the aforementioned in furtherance of the establishment of a greenbelt.”

All told, the updated Community Preservation Project Plan identifies **30,061.53<sup>2</sup>** acres as the highest priorities for preservation through the appropriate land-use alternatives noted. Following is a breakdown of that total by project area:

<u>No.</u>	<u>Target Area</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
1	Agricultural Lands.....	4,252.69
2	Open Space/Greenbelt Areas.....	6,446.35
3	Central Pine Barrens Plan – Core Preservation Area.....	12,461.22
4	Central Pine Barrens Plan – Critical Resource Area.....	511.60
5	Wetlands.....	2,229.17
6	Trails.....	1,637.09
7	Aquifer Recharge Areas.....	648.49
8	Village/Hamlet Green, Parks, Recreation/Open Space.....	1,873.32
9	Historic Places.....	1.6
<b>TOTAL.....</b>		<b>30,061.53</b>

It is recognized that all parcels within the identified Community Preservation Project Plan cannot be acquired, even if every landowner was willing to sell. Consequently, use of alternative land preservation tools will be explored, including, among other options,

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that this acreage includes parcels that may meet the criteria for more than one Target Area. Therefore, the actual total number of acreage contained in the Project Plan is **27,648.60**.

clustering, conservation easements, tax abatement, public/private partnerships and/or other cooperative agreements with private landowners. The identification and evaluation of all available land use alternatives to protect community character is provided in Part III of this Project Plan.

## **B. METHODOLOGY FOR ESTABLISHING TARGET AREAS AND PRIORITIES**

To implement a plan for preservation of community character, clear definition and prioritization of land protection target areas is required. The inventory of parcels contained in this Project Plan was developed by Southampton Town, with the assistance of many private individuals and organizations, county and state agencies, to meet this requirement.

The initial stage of developing a Community Preservation Project Plan involved looking at existing land conditions, through field inventories, aerial photographic interpretations and biogeographical research, followed by an evaluation of which areas are most important to protect. Target areas for conservation efforts were identified and mapped using the Town's computerized Geographic Information System (GIS), as so much of the more critical biological and land-use information was already available in GIS form. The geographic data sets used in preparing the community preservation plan included: (1) A Townwide agricultural land-cover and inventory map; (2) over 1,000 mapped occurrences of biotic communities; (3) NY Natural Heritage Program rare element maps; (4) digitized maps of public and private lands devoted to some extent to conservation; (5) a Townwide land-use and zoning map; (6) a digitized composite parcel-specific tax map; (7) reported and mapped occurrences of local state and national register historic sites; (8) a digitized map of Peconic and South Shore Estuary watershed boundaries, including proposed Peconic Estuary Program Critical Resource Areas; (9) mapped Central Pine Barrens Core Preservation Area boundaries; (10) Central Pine Barrens Critical Resource Area boundaries; (11) NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Freshwater and Tidal Wetland maps; (12) Town-adopted open space target area maps; and (13) Town property type/tax assessment codes.

GIS mapping and display of these geographic data sets showed where protected area networks currently exist and where new reserves, corridors, and/or reserve linkages could logically be formed. Information on existing protected lands was particularly important, as their geographic arrangement showed where gaps in land protection needed to be filled. Wetlands and farmlands that are of high priority for preservation were also easily revealed.

Protection priorities were set using a range of criteria. Numerous plans and reports had already documented the significance of many target areas, both as natural and recreational areas and as valuable agricultural and cultural resources. Detailed maps from these plans showed currently vacant but unprotected areas that are already of high priority for protection. It was the goal of the initial Community Preservation Project Plan to pull this information together in order to identify key areas Townwide which are priorities for public land acquisition, consolidation and management, land use regulation and other public and private strategies necessary to preserve community character.

In order to provide comparable information for inventorying and prioritizing parcels, private holdings were mapped and classified by community preservation target area type. These categories were designed to meet several objectives. These include:

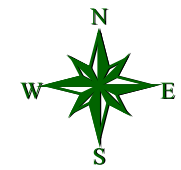
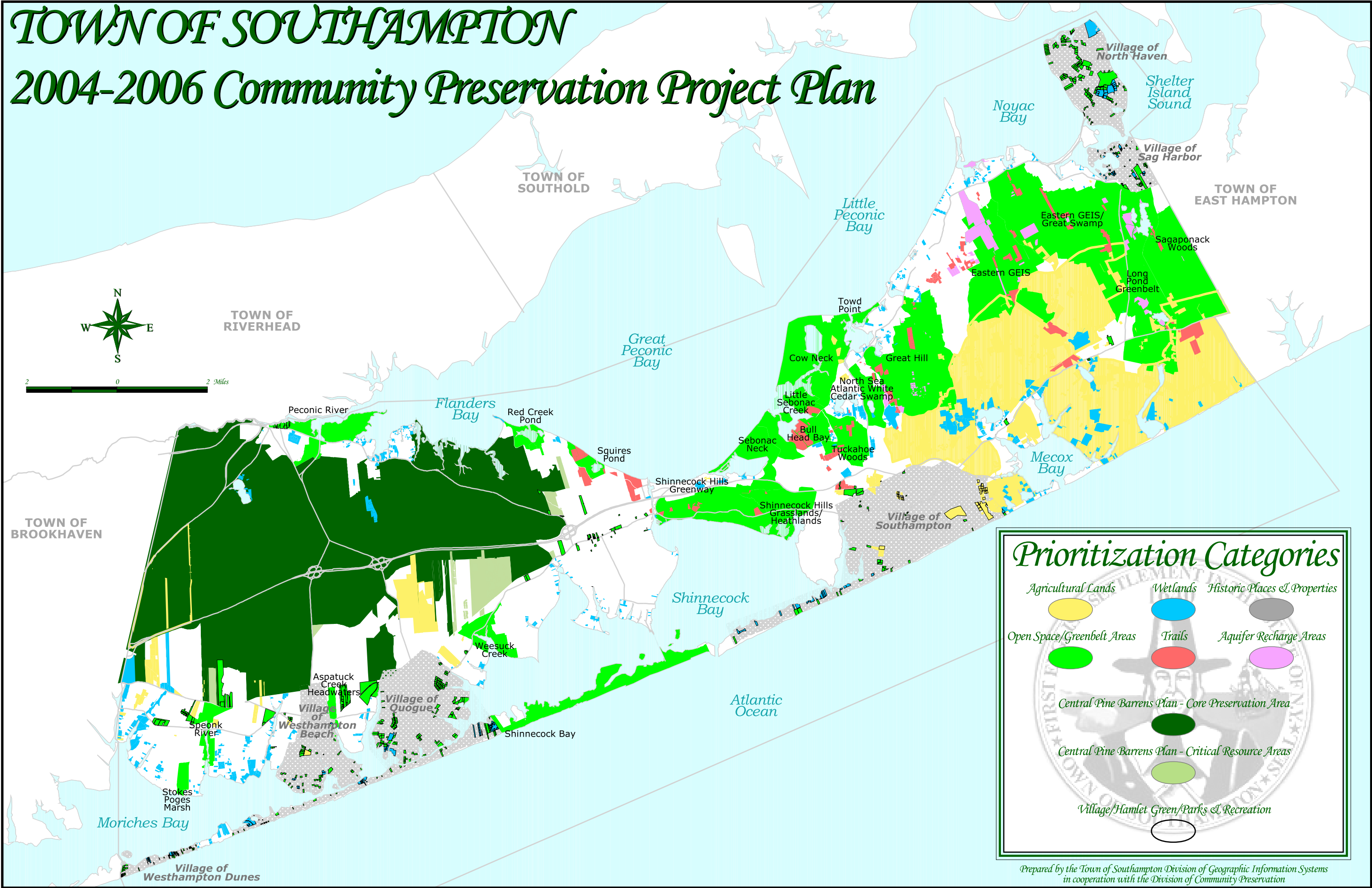
1. To identify open space units or target areas that have already been defined through past open space and farmland preservation plans, hamlet studies and related town, county and state land inventories and acquisition programs, including citizen input obtained during public hearings on the Town's Comprehensive Plan Update;
2. To group together land units or parcels that have certain homogeneous natural, agricultural, historic, recreational, and/or other important community benefits;
3. To arrange parcels in a system that will aid decisions about prioritization, acquisition and/or other land preservation;
4. To furnish consistent units for inventory and mapping; and
5. To provide uniformity for prioritization of individual parcels and categorization with respect to eligible community preservation category.

Nine classes of parcels or target areas are defined by this plan. These are outlined in Table 1. The location and boundaries of each target area are illustrated by Figure 1. Descriptions of each of these target areas are provided in Part II C. of this Project Plan.

Within each target area, the Project Plan lists every project site which the Town should undertake pursuant to the Community Preservation Fund. (Complete parcel listings are provided in Appendices A and B.) Every parcel which needs to be considered for preservation in the Town in order to protect community character is identified. All available land use alternatives which may be applied to preserve community preservation lands are also noted, with respect to both the larger target area and individual parcels and categories of parcels.

# TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON

## 2004-2006 Community Preservation Project Plan



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### Prioritization Categories

- |   |          |                              |
|---|----------|------------------------------|
| Agricultural Lands                                  | Wetlands | Historic Places & Properties |
| Open Space/Greenbelt Areas                          | Trails   | Aquifer Recharge Areas       |
| Central Pine Barrens Plan - Core Preservation Area  |          |                              |
| Central Pine Barrens Plan - Critical Resource Areas |          |                              |
| Village/Hamlet Green/Parks & Recreation             |          |                              |

Prepared by the Town of Southampton Division of Geographic Information Systems in cooperation with the Division of Community Preservation

**Table 1**

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROJECT PLAN  
TARGET AREAS**

<b><u>ID No.</u></b>	<b><u>Category</u></b>
1.	Agricultural Lands
2.	Open Space/Greenbelt Areas
3.	Central Pine Barrens Plan - Core Preservation Area
4.	Central Pine Barrens Plan - Critical Resource Areas
5.	Wetlands
6.	Trails
7.	Aquifer Recharge Areas
8.	Village and Hamlet Greens, Parks, Recreation and Open Space
9.	Historic Places and Properties

**C. TARGET AREAS, PROJECTS AND PARCELS**

**1. Agricultural Lands – Target Area and Priority Parcels**

In 1972 the Town of Southampton adopted a local law establishing the Agricultural Overlay District as part of the Zoning Code. This zoning map and text amendment identified the economic and environmental importance of the Bridgehampton and Haven soil associations that are among the most productive agricultural soils in New York State. The 4,515 parcels and 13,550 acres that comprise the Agricultural Overlay District today contribute significantly to the rural and resort character of Southampton. Both residents and visitors recognize the views and vistas created by the agricultural land areas within the District as key contributing features to the Town’s overall quality of life.

The Agricultural Overlay District, as defined by the boundary appearing as part of Figure 1, will serve as the Town of Southampton's Community Preservation Project Plan target area for the preservation of farms and farmland. The State enabling legislation indicates that the Town's Plan "shall include the preservation of lands in agricultural production as a highest priority." In support of this priority, the Town of Southampton, through the joint efforts of the Farmland Committee, Peconic Land Trust and Department of Land Management, completed a Farm and Farmland Preservation Strategy. The Strategy's inventory of farmland indicated that 8474 acres of agricultural land remain within the Town of Southampton's Agricultural Overlay District in 1998. Today, 4,763.03 acres of agricultural land remain within the Town of Southampton's Agricultural Overlay District. A total of **3,553** acres of prime agricultural land have been preserved through the purchase of development rights, establishment of agricultural reserves through the subdivision process and through the efforts of the Peconic Land Trust. The Town is also in the process of preserving an additional **125** acres of farmland through the purchase of development rights.

An evaluation and ranking of the remaining unprotected parcels of farmland has been completed through the Town's 1998 farm and farmland inventory. Eight specific categories of farmland have been identified utilizing the following evaluation criteria: presence of prime agricultural soils; size; ownership; active agricultural use; potential for future agricultural use; continuity to preserved or unprotected farmland; participation in either the Town or State agricultural assessment programs; status of subdivision activity; overall visual quality; open space continuity; and commitment to farmland preservation. Based on that evaluation, Appendix A lists the remaining unprotected farmland parcels by Suffolk County Tax Map Number and the following categories.

Category 1	37 parcels	295.52 acres
Category 2	103 parcels	1,794.57 acres
Category 3	33 parcels	723.51 acres
Category 4	120 parcels	383.90 acres
Category 5	77 parcels	305.02 acres
Category 6	73 parcels	251.97 acres
Category 7	174 parcels	288.48 acres
Category 8	89 parcels	209.72 acres

Together, categories 1 through 3 comprise approximately 2,813.60 acres or approximately 65% of the remaining unprotected farmland within the Town. These parcels meet the majority of the criteria previously identified and should be assigned the highest priority for potential preservation. Category 4, which includes approximately 384 acres, consists of 11

parcels with active subdivision applications currently being reviewed by the Planning Board. Many of these parcels provide opportunities for the establishment of agricultural reserves. The remaining categories consist primarily of small parcels, often previously subdivided or isolated, that may have limited long term agricultural use potential.

## **2. Open Space/Greenbelt Lands - Target Area and Priority Parcels**

In order to identify and prioritize open space target areas for the Town's Community Preservation Project Plan, past open space assessments and adopted plans were revisited, with an eye towards consolidating and, where possible, linking existing protected area networks. Guidance was, in particular, taken from the following:

Environmental Advisory Committee. Southampton's Environmental Advisory Committee, or EAC, which was established pursuant to Local Law 42 of 1992, serves essentially as an open space committee to the town, providing recommendations regarding land acquisition and protection to the Town Board and other local boards. Their role in the community preservation planning and prioritization process is a crucial one, as they formulated for Southampton its 1995-96 Open-Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan. The EAC will continue to play a major part in the planning process for the town, as they are charged with reviewing the listing of priority projects and land protection recommendations of the Southampton's Community Preservation Plan.

Adopted Open Space Plans. The town's community preservation plan is, in large part, built upon the recommendations of previous town adopted plans. These include Southampton's 1985 Long Pond Greenbelt Action Plan, and its 1986-87 and 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Program Reports, which have essentially served as the town's blueprints for natural area preservation for the past ten years. These plans called for the conservation of close to twenty different major watersheds, wetlands, forests and beach areas across the town, all of which are reflected in the town's community preservation plan.

While the town's community preservation plan follows these adopted plans closely, it also builds upon the recommendations contained in this Project Plan. Pulling together of this information showed where gaps needed to be filled, so that existing complexes and wild places could be tied together, to make the community preservation goals a reality for the town. To assess which areas were particularly important or at risk, all other biogeographical data bases, as well as county and state open space documents were likewise reviewed.

New York State Open Space Plan. The 1998 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan and Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement, which were prepared jointly by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, provided additional guidance on community preservation priorities, including specific parcels which need to be acquired in order to protect community character in Southampton Town. All of the priority conservation projects identified in the state plan within Southampton have been included in the community preservation plan. These include the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve (Shinnecock Bay), Peconic Pinelands Maritime



Reserve Projects (Tuckahoe Woods and Chardonnay Woods/Henry's Hollow) and the Pine Barrens Core and Critical Resource Areas.

Draft Comprehensive Plan Update and Public Hearing Comments. Recommendations contained within Southampton's 1996 Comprehensive Plan Update and public input received during public hearing on the plan were considered as part of the community preservation planning process. The town's community preservation plan includes, as part of the open space target areas, all of the significant natural areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Department of Land Management Recommendations. In addition to being based upon past evaluations of open space needs and adopted local and state plans, Southampton's Community Preservation Project Plan also incorporates the recommendations of the town's Department of Land Management staff, which were based on considerable study and assessment of current land use, ecological and conservation values, natural area protection and recovery needs, economics and existing open space protection strategies. Local knowledge of land preservation, conservation, recreational and acquisition goals, as expressed in former and current town conservation endeavors, was also applied.

**a. Open Space/Greenbelt Target Area: Project Sites**

Within Southampton Town, there are twenty-two large open space complexes or project sites which will need to be protected as part of the Town's Community Preservation Plan. These will serve as large protected intact natural areas and ecological core preserves. If properly buffered and linked together, these target areas would provide a functional network of interconnected reserves for the Peconic and South Shore regions. All of the proposed open space project sites contain existing protected lands; however, they are fragmented by private inholdings and roads. The community preservation plan calls for protection of these parcels by acquisition or other means to consolidate ownership and management of this open space. The highest priorities for preservation include:

<u>Project Sites</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Aspatuck Creek Headwaters	(57.12 acres)
Bullhead Bay	(179.20 acres)
Cow Neck	(741.58 acres)
Eastern GEIS	(695.19 acres)
Eastern GEIS/Great Swamp	(789.80 acres)
Great Hill	(952.50 acres)
Little Sebonac Creek	(109.05 acres)
Long Pond Greenbelt	(623.49 acres)
North Sea Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	(127.12 acres)
Peconic River	(115.94 acres)
Red Creek Pond	(119.01 acres)

<u>Project Sites (cont.)</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Sagaponack Woods	(405.66 acres)
Sebonac Neck	(322.66 acres)
Shinnecock Bay (Tiana Area)	(272.78 acres)
Shinnecock Hills Grasslands/Heathlands	(59.86 acres)
Shinnecock Hills Greenway	(393.00 acres)
Speonk River	(133.07 acres)
Squires Pond	(43.55 acres)
Stokes Poges Marsh	(20.01 acres)
Towd Point	(18.75 acres)
Tuckahoe Woods	(157.84 acres)
<u>Weesuck Creek</u>	<u>(109.17 acres)</u>
<b>Total Acreage</b>	<b>6,446.35</b>

**b. Open Space/Greenbelt Target Area: Project Sites Described**

- (1) Aspatuck Creek Headwaters. This critical headwaters and watershed for Quantuck Bay and the greater South Shore Estuary Reserve System is located in the Quogue, Quogue and Westhampton areas, and extends from Brook Road north to the Suffolk County Airport. It drains out of the Central Pine Barrens and contains exemplary occurrences of unbroken red maple, hardwood swamp and pitch pine-oak forest, as well as tidal marsh. Aspatuck forms a spectacular stream corridor, one which is critical to the Quantuck and Moriches Bay fisheries. It also sports state-threatened osprey and nesting green-backed heron, as well as a myriad of other wading birds. White-tailed deer, mink, red fox and spotted turtle are among the fauna, with thousands of migrating songbirds using the area to refuel and roost.

The Aspatuck Creek Headwaters area is almost entirely enclosed by heavily populated communities, yet its interior remains quiet and secure. Unless the Town succeeds in securing protection for a sizable portion of this vulnerable watershed, the integrity and quality of the great Quantuck Bay community will no doubt be put at risk. Southampton's Environmental Advisory Committee and the Town's 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Program have recognized the ecological significance of this area, and have earmarked it as an Open Space Acquisition Target Area for the Town.

- (2) Bullhead Bay. This area of tidal marshes, oak-hickory forests and spring-fed maple and tupelo swamps takes in the coastal reaches of Tuckahoe, and is absolutely critical to Bullhead and Peconic Bays. The Bullhead Bay wetlands encompass what is perhaps the largest and highest quality wetland and rich deciduous woodland complex remaining in Tuckahoe. Spanning hundreds of acres, this expanse of wildlands is a sanctuary for an extraordinary collection of native flora and fauna. Among its botanical treasures are great oaks, sassafras and tupelo towering nearly 100 feet into the forest canopy, and impressive populations of seldom seen cardinal flower, blue beech and swamp white

oak. Wildlife includes the great horned owl, black-crowned night heron, white-tailed deer, State-threatened red-shouldered hawk and possibly endangered tiger salamander.

A critical component of the Bullhead Bay ecosystem, this unspoiled watershed and outstanding sweep of wetlands is also essential for filtering and purifying waters entering the surrounding tidal bays and marshes. Several large acquisitions are critical here, as some of the area's most magnificent wetland complexes face imminent development threats. Southampton Town's Comprehensive Plan Update has highlighted Bullhead Bay as a significant natural area that must be preserved.

- (3) Cow Neck. Cow Neck is located approximately one mile west of North Sea Harbor, in the northern section of North Sea along the Peconic Bay. This estuarine complex is one of Long Island's premier natural resources, containing over 1,200 acres of coastal marshes, wooded shorelands and tidal creeks. Ranking as perhaps the largest and most significant wetland complexes in the Town, the area is well known for its exceptional ecological diversity and outstanding biological productivity. Its vibrant mosaic of beaches, marshes, meadows, maritime forest, freshwater swamp and successional woodland groves sustain a rich variety of plant and animal life, including significant populations of State-endangered least tern, State-threatened common tern and State-endangered piping plover. The abundant wetlands support incredible numbers of wintering waterfowl, as well as copious quantities of commercially valuable fin and shellfish stocks. Its estuarine creeks are a magnet for diamond-back terrapin, and the shoreland woods are known for its bountiful white-tailed deer. Hawks and owls are common hunters and breeders in these reaches, including merlin, kestrel, sharp-shinned, cooper's, broad-winged and red-tailed hawks. State-threatened northern harrier, osprey and red-shouldered hawk also occur, along with barn owls, which nest at the Cow Neck Estate. Biologists have recorded several rare plant species and communities here, including Polygonum glaucum and maritime red cedar forest. The vistas throughout the Sebonac Creek and Cow Neck area are stunning, with a striking panorama of water, marsh, forest and sky which ranks certainly as one of the most scenic in the Town.

For at least a decade, the Sebonac Creek/Cow Neck area has been a conservation priority among virtually every agency and organization involved in land protection in the region. Although hundreds of acres are already in public, Nature Conservancy, or Peconic Land Trust ownership, there is a critical need to extend wildlands protection beyond the existing preserves. Consolidation of existing assemblages of open space in one contiguous network should be the highest priority, together with rescue of those ecologically critical lands which are imminently threatened by development. The Town's Environmental Advisory Committee has recommended preservation of this area, as part of the Town's 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan.

- (4) Eastern GEIS. The Eastern GEIS (Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement for Implementation Plan for Open Space, Eastern GEIS Groundwater Study Area, Town of Southampton, NY) is a broad sweeping plan for protection of open space in the Noyac and Bridgehampton regions, which was adopted by the Town in 1980. It recommends preservation for a magnificent stretch of the South Fork Pine Barrens, a large remaining

intact block of forest east of the Shinnecock Canal. It includes a cornucopia of glacial forested knolls and kettles, as well as the fabled Camps Pond region where the endangered tiger salamander still survives. Mixed mesophytic forest and pine oak woodlands blanket the region, with local concentrations of chestnut oak. A critical aquifer recharge area, the Eastern GEIS lands are crucial to the future quality and well being of the Town.

- (5) Eastern GEIS/Great Swamp. The ecological significance of the Great Swamp region and its importance as an open space priority protection area has been recognized by both the Town's 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Program and Southampton's Eastern GEIS plan. Located north of Bridgehampton, this target area lies between the Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike and Scuttlehole and Brick Kiln Roads.

Centered on the Bridgehampton moraine, the Great Swamp contains what is perhaps one of the finest collections of inland freshwater wetlands remaining east of the Shinnecock Canal. Hosting pristine stretches of red maple-hardwood swamp amid pitch pine-oak and mixed mesophytic forests, this large wild area provides nesting and breeding grounds for abundant neotropical migrant songbirds and other forest interior wildlife. Sharp-shinned, coopers and red-tailed hawks are commonly sighted, along with great horned owl, red fox, raccoon, muskrat and white-tailed deer. Interior vernal ponds attract numerous amphibians, including spotted, marbled and State- endangered tiger salamander.

Also anomalous to these forests are some exceptional native plant occurrences, particularly white wood anemones, jack-in-the-pulpit and witch hazel, as well as some massive American beech. Likewise noteworthy is the surrounding upland terrain of glacially sculptured knolls and kettles, especially the natural amphitheater formation which rises up near the swamp's western edge. These morainal highlands are cloaked in pine and oak and continue in a fairly unbroken pattern across Brick Kiln Road up towards Whiskey Hill, Bridgehampton Raceway and eventually Trout Pond to the northwest. This larger region takes in some fairly extensive roadless areas and is irreplaceable with regards to native biodiversity, open space and groundwater resources.

Despite the presence of several cherry-stemmed roads, and managed wildlife foot plots within the shooting preserve, as well as the existence of the transmission corridor, sporadic housing and the Bridgehampton Race Track to the west, much of this natural area remains essentially roadless and in almost exemplary condition. However, virtually all of these wildlands are still in unprotected private ownership, and thus extremely vulnerable to forest incursions and loss. Currently, the Great Swamp area is endangered by several major residential development proposals, the largest of which would affect hundreds of acres. In response to this threat, a coalition of landowners, residents and environmental groups is working to ensure that the future of this wild area is permanently secured.

- (6) Great Hill. Located in the North Sea section of Southampton, the Great Hill area is one of the largest contiguous blocks of Pine Barrens forest remaining east of the Shinnecock Canal. Marked by open woodlands and moraine hills, it offers both scenic and recreational values, and is a critical linkage for the Paumanok Path. Wildlife diversity is also noteworthy, as deer, fox, bobwhite, turkey and an array of hawks can be found. Spectacular freshwater wetlands tie in with Great Hill to the south. Protection of this area would preserve the quality of the underlying aquifer, as well as offer an opportunity to combine this site with the Town-owned North Sea Landfill and form a large recreational park. The Town's Comprehensive Plan Update recognizes Great Hill as a significant natural resource, a most critical area to preserve.
- (7) Little Sebonac Creek. Little Sebonac Creek is an estuarine complex located in the West Neck section of Southampton that, along with Bullhead Bay, plays a key role in maintaining water quality within this section of the Peconic Bay. Its importance is due to the presence of tidal marshes, intertidal creeks, shorelines with freshwater wetland fringe, and oak-heath woods. The tidal creeks receive abundant freshwater from the wetlands located to the east found in the woods of West Neck.

The target area's boundary is marked by West Neck Creek to the south, Little Sebonac Creek to the west, Island Creek to the north and Millstone Brook Road to the east. It is located between the open space target areas of Bullhead Bay and Cow Neck.

The creeks and marshes of the complex serve as a nursery for finfish and shellfish. Shorebirds and raptors alike nest, breed and hunt within its limits. These include the state threatened Osprey and Northern Harrier as well as merlins, kestrels, and various hawks such as Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Red Tail. In addition to protecting water quality, preservation of the area's wooded shorelines is critical to the survival of these and other species. The Town's Environmental Advisory Committee has recommended preservation of this area, as part of the Town's 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan.

- (8) Long Pond Greenbelt. The Long Pond Greenbelt encompasses a magnificent north-south corridor of interconnected ponds and woodlands stretching from the Village of Sag Harbor to Sagaponack and the Atlantic Ocean shore. This chain of crystal clear ponds embraced by lush wetlands and fringing Pine Barrens forests hosts some of the highest concentrations of rare species and natural communities known in the State.

Extravagantly rich in plant, mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian and insect life, the Greenbelt forms one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the Town. As many as 84 different bird species are found in this area alone, many of which depend directly or indirectly on the wetland complexes found in this corridor. Rare and unusual varieties include State-threatened osprey, acadian flycatcher and chuck-will's widow, as well as a multitude of neotropical migrants such as American redstart, scarlet tanager, wood thrush, white-eyed and red-eyed vireos, together with yellow, black-and-white, cerulean and blue-winged warblers. A host of mammals also make their home here in

this rich variety of habitats with white-tailed deer, red fox, flying squirrel, opossum, mink, several bats and possible river otter topping the list.

Along the wooded pond edges and in the shallow waters can be seen an interesting array of reptiles, such as spotted turtle, stinkpot, painted turtle, snapping turtle and northern water snake. Red-spotted newt, pickerel frog, wood frog, bull frog and green frog, along with spotted, marbled, blue-spotted and State-endangered tiger salamanders, have also been recorded here. Away from the ponds, ribbon snake, garter snake, black racer, hognose snake, ringneck snake and milk snake dwell in the open forests, together with Fowler's toad, spring peeper, gray tree frog and red-backed salamanders. The insect fauna is especially lively with at least three rare varieties of dragonflies and damsel flies having been documented.

A marked feature of the Greenbelt's ecology is its magnificent collection of coastal plain pond and pondshore communities, thirteen of which occur in this system. Both statewide and globally, these environments are both considered very rare and vulnerable to extinction, and harbor the highest concentration of rare plants and animals in the State. Within this network of groundwater fed ponds, a progression of vegetation zones radiate out from the open water, giving rise to a plethora of unusual flora, including at least 17 species of rare plants. Exemplary red maple-hardwood swamp forests can likewise be found in the Greenbelt, some of which merge imperceptibly with the coastal plain ponds. No less important are the surrounding pitch pine-oak woodland communities, which burst forth with a riot of colorful mountain laurel, azalea, arbutus and lady slipper orchid flowers each spring.

The Long Pond Greenbelt was officially designated as a high priority for preservation in 1985 through the Town's adoption of the Long Pond Greenbelt Action Plan. The Town's Comprehensive Plan Update and 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Programs have likewise noted this area's significance, and identified it as one of the highest acquisition priorities for the Town. As a result of these initiatives, hundreds of acres have already been preserved.

Even so, the task of securing the region's full range of diversity is far from complete. The collection of coastal plain ponds and the species are still highly vulnerable to water and airborne pollution, excessive groundwater pumping, development and other human disturbance. Much of the area's wildlife needs large contiguous blocks of habitat to maintain their populations, thus any additional incursions which would further fragment these woods could have devastating environmental effects. Saving as much of the surrounding watershed as possible is likewise crucial, as it is the only way that the Greenbelt's characteristic hydrology and aquatic biodiversity can be preserved.

- (9) North Sea Atlantic White Cedar Swamp. Located within the watershed of Little Fresh Pond in North Sea, this area is one of the only remaining fragments of coastal Atlantic white cedar swamp on Long Island's East End. Ranked S1 and G3G4 by the New York Natural Heritage Program, this community type is extremely vulnerable to extirpation in the State. "Cedar bogs" such as this are key habitat for rare species such as the Hessel's

hairstreak, a rare green butterfly whose larvae feed solely on Atlantic white cedar plants. These towering evergreen stands also offer unique outdoor research and educational opportunities, as well as providing a striking contrast to neighboring home and other vested land. The North Sea swamps are today mostly unprotected, with development and pollution being their greatest threat. The Town's Comprehensive Plan Update has recognized the importance of this area, and has targeted the site as one of the more significant natural areas to be preserved.

- (10) Peconic River. The Peconic River target area takes in a critical stretch of riverfront wetlands in the Riverside and Flanders areas, and has been designated an open space priority acquisition area by both the Town's Comprehensive Plan Update and the 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan. Ranked as the largest groundwater fed river in New York State, the Peconic River embraces an immense variety of habitats and is the lifeblood of the Riverhead and Riverside areas. Flowing out the forested heart of the Central Pine Barrens, the watercourse supports many freshwater and tidally dependent plant and animal communities and serves as a vital biological corridor for countless species. The river is a major component of the Peconic Estuary system, as it supplies essential nutrients and minerals to the open bay, and serves as an irreplaceable spawning and nursery ground for innumerable commercially valued finfish. Together with the Peconic Bay, it provides an economic mainstay for the people and communities of the East End, as the fishing, boating and tourism industries it supports are the backbone of much of the area.

A vast, sinuous tract of swamp, bog and marshes stretches along much of the riverfront, attracting enormous numbers of breeding and migrating birds. Backed by pitch pine-oak forests, the calm expanse of tidelands and salt meadows also provide an important haven for wildlife, including diamond-backed terrapin, mink, red fox and white-tailed deer. The open space of the riverfront is attractive to man as well, and is often sought out for its scenic vistas and fishing and boating opportunities.

Almost twenty years ago, the Peconic River was designated a wild, scenic and recreational river of statewide significance, a move that was intended to ensure that his outstanding watercourse remains in an ecologically healthy state. Nonetheless, the biological communities of the Peconic River and Bay system have undergone unprecedented changes in recent years, including dramatic declines in the quality of its surface waters, together with associated crashes in the region's major fin and shellfisheries. The fragility of the river and bay was, in particular, underscored by the sudden collapse of the scallop industry, with catches in most years dropping to a mere tenth of what they were over a decade ago. This deterioration prompted the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to designate the Peconic River and Bay complex as an estuary of national significance, and to incorporate the watercourse within the National Estuary Program. This initiative began with the goal of identifying and assessing sources of pollution, particularly as they relate to the Brown Tide, an end which has yet to be accomplished. Recommendations as to how to protect coastal water quality and the health of the bay's living resources have also come forth, as it was

recognized right from the start that the health of this estuary depends in large part upon what we do to maintain the purity of its surface waters.

The Peconic Estuary Program Committee, the multi-agency commission that is developing a plan to save the Peconic River and bay complex, believes that controlling and guiding future development and growth should be one of the top priorities. Stringent protection of wetlands and natural shoreline vegetation is being called for, as well as density controls for all watershed lands. Some large biologically important wetlands still remain unprotected, and thus need to be a target of future land acquisition efforts if the ecology and water quality of the river and bay is to be protected and restored.

- (11) Red Creek Pond. This area of Hampton Bays has been a Town priority for acquisition since the 1986-87 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan. It contains an extraordinary estuarine complex, much of which has already been preserved. Extensive County and Town holdings exist here; however, additional tidal wetlands and bay beachfront need to be preserved.
- (12) Sagaponack Woods. Sagaponack Woods is located in northern Bridgehampton and has been identified as an Open Space Priority Acquisition area by the Town's Environmental Advisory Committee and Southampton's 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan. This is a largely unspoiled area of dry oak-mixed heath forest which sweeps down from the Ronkonkoma moraine across the outwash plains. The northern extension includes some moderately hilly terrain with elevations ranging from 50 feet in the glacial kettles to 150 feet on the higher knolls. The southern part levels out considerably, eventually merging with the coastal "flatlands" of the Wainscott and Sagaponack regions.

Among the area's merits is its significant value as a groundwater recharge zone, as well as its biological importance to forest interior birds. Pine warbler, scarlet tanager, whip-poor-will, American redstart and vireos have all been recorded as nesting here, with hawks such as broadwings and red-tails also known to frequent these woods. Two seasonally flooded shrub swamps provide the only water in the Sagaponack Woods area, making them a magnet for migrating songbirds as well as abundant white-tailed deer. Native plant diversity throughout these forests is characteristically low; nevertheless, their well-developed understory communities of huckleberry, blueberry and mountain laurel remain an impressive sight. The assemblage of existing woodland trails are a plus for avid hikers and horseback riders in the region, and add an important recreational dimension to the open space values of these woods.

- (13) Sebonac Neck. Sebonac Neck is located on the Great Peconic Bay and includes a large assemblage of beaches, bluffs, wetlands and forested land. Also known as Bayberry Woods, the area has been identified as an open space protection priority site by both the Town's 1996 Comprehensive Plan Update and the 1995 New York State Open Space Plan. Its successional maritime forests and sandy bluffs are exemplary and form a prominent part of the magnificent Sebonac Neck headlands fronting the Great Peconic



Bay. Found here are extensive bayberry thickets, blueberry and beach plum, skirting stunted stands of salt-cropped pine, cherry, tupelo, post oak and cedar on a windswept site. No less significant are the tract's abundant freshwater and tidal wetlands, including a mile-long stretch of pristine salt marshes and coastal marshes fringing Cold Spring Road.

Sebonac Neck is also an important nesting site for shorebird species, including endangered piping plover and least tern. To preserve this diverse ecology and beachfront, this largely unprotected area must be permanently secured.

- (14) Shinnecock Hills Grasslands and Heathlands. Recognized as one of the last remaining fragments of rare maritime grasslands and heathlands, this area of Shinnecock Hills is a critical area whose preservation has been urged by both The Nature Conservancy and the Town's 1996 Comprehensive Update Plan. The Shinnecock Hills Grasslands and Heathlands support a wealth of rare and uncommon species, including the bushy rockrose, Nantucket shadbush, sandplain gerardia and the regal fritillary butterfly. The Town's Community Preservation Plan Project may represent the last real hope of saving these treasured lands.
- (15) Shinnecock Hills Greenway. This is an area of scenic open pine woodlands and maritime heathlands, which runs west-east along the railroad, across the hilly Shinnecock moraine. The Town's Comprehensive Plan Update recognizes it as a significant natural area which needs to be saved. One of the last vestiges of the natural Shinnecock landscape, the corridor has significance not only as open space and a passive greenway, but also as a future critical linkage for the Paumonak Path. Its attractions include a striking topography of glacial hills and rounded kettlehole depressions as well as a medley of wildflowers, heaths and other interesting plants. White-tailed deer abound in these woodlands and shrublands, along with quail, woodcock and fox. Magnificent vistas are afforded of both the Shinnecock and Peconic Bays. The 1970 Master Plan established that an upland preserve and greenbelt park be established along the railroad, with a corridor extending to Montauk Highway located further to the south.
- (16) Shinnecock Bay (Tiana Area). The lands targeted for protection lie in Hampton Bays and East Quogue, especially the western portion of the stretch of barrier island from the Ponquogue Bridge to the eastern boundary of the Village of Quogue.

This undeveloped stretch of barrier and marshland edging the Shinnecock Bay is a key component of the South Shore Reserve Estuary system, one of the largest and most valuable estuaries along the Atlantic seaboard. A land of shimmering waters, expansive salt hay meadows and pristine maritime dunes, the area is of paramount importance to birds, especially wintering waterfowl and migratory raptors, songbirds and shorebirds traveling along the Atlantic Flyway. The bayside mudflats, eelgrass beds and spartina marshes are, in particular, recognized as critical, as these habitats serve as major nesting and refueling areas for countless birds. They also are a haven for fin and shellfish and thus are of vital economic importance to the community. Sea turtles have been known

to reside in these shallow coastal bays, including several federally endangered and threatened species. The vistas found along here are magnificent and are certainly prized by all who visit or reside in the Southampton area. This stretch of wetlands is also crucial to preserving surface water quality, as these marshlands serve as natural filters for water running through the Shinnecock Bay.

Saving what remains of the barrier and bayside marshes has been a top priority of the Town since its 1970 Master Plan. Preservation has also been urged by the Comprehensive Plan Update, the 1997 New York State Open Space Plan and Southampton's 1986-87 and 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plans.

- (17) Speonk River. This vital stretch of riverine, wetland and pine barrens habitats are critical to the South Shore Estuary and form an integral part of Moriches Bay. The Town's 1970 Master Plan envisioned a greenway in this area, a nature preserve and park system, which would have run the length of the Speonk, from the open bay waters and tidal marshes to the interior of the central pine barrens core. Much development has since occurred adjacent to the river; however, the headwaters are still relatively intact. Hence, a renewal of land protection efforts is needed to ensure a wildlife sanctuary and to provide for recreational opportunities.

Acquisition of key wetlands, woodlands and floodplains would secure and enhance surface water quality, thereby protecting the considerable investment the Town has already made in stormwater abatement at the site. It would also provide additional wetland restoration opportunities, and thus complement the wetland enhancement initiatives already proposed by Southampton's comprehensive South Shore Estuary Reserve wetlands restoration plan. Additionally, wildlife would greatly benefit and a host of unique vistas and recreational amenities would likewise be preserved. Accordingly, Southampton's Community Preservation Project Plan has identified the Speonk River as an open space target area, so that the quality of life in this section of the Town can be preserved.

- (18) Squires Pond. Squires Pond is a pristine estuarine pond whose preservation has been urged by the Town's 1996 Comprehensive Plan Update and the 1986-87 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan. It contains State-designated tidal wetlands, beach and dune habitats and fronts on the Great Peconic Bay. Rare and endangered species include piping plover and least tern, along with several rare plants. The area is also an important environmental education site, being used by area colleges and schools.
- (19) Stokes Poges Marsh. The Stokes Poges Marsh is a northern extension of the Moriches Bay and South Shore Estuary Reserve complexes, and has long been an open space priority preservation area, with many Town acquisitions having occurred. Encompassing one of the largest remaining tracts of mainland estuarine intertidal emergent marshes in Moriches Bay, Stokes Poges is crucial in terms of waterfowl conservation as it supports magnificent numbers of black duck and mallard. Waders and shorebirds include American bittern, clapper rail, black-crowned night heron, snowy egret, great egret, glossy ibis, great blue heron, green-backed heron, dunlin,

black-bellied plover, marble godwit, willet, red knot and white-rumped sandpiper. Short-eared owl, which is listed as a species of special concern by New York State, can also be found here.

Marshes such as Stokes Poges are also critical to the continued viability of the Moriches Bay fisheries, as they tie in with the surrounding waters which are vital as nursery and feeding areas for bluefish, winter flounder, fluke and weakfish. Atlantic silversides, pipefish and sticklebacks can be found in the marsh, along with a diverse range of marine invertebrates and wetland-associated wildlife, such as muskrat, raccoon and white-tailed deer.

- (20) Towd Point. Towd Point is situated close to North Sea Harbor in North Sea and has been a priority acquisition area since the Town's 1986-87 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan. Much of the more critical lands have been preserved; however, there remains a few acquisitions which need to be accomplished to complete the Towd Point Open Space Plan.

As an undeveloped barrier beach ecosystem and tidal creek, Towd Point is exemplary and of critical importance to the Town. The concentration of nesting least terns and piping plovers has historically been of County-level significance, at times exhibiting some of the largest concentrations on the South Fork. Fronting on Little Peconic Bay, Davis Creek and North Sea Harbor, the site contains significant wetlands and shellfisheries as well as public access to the shore. State-threatened osprey also nest at the site.

- (21) Tuckahoe Woods. A 1995-96 Town Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition priority area, Tuckahoe Woods is located in the Tuckahoe section of Southampton Town. Tuckahoe Woods is locally known for its quiet woodland paths, stunning vistas and exceptional plant and animal habitat. A mosaic of small wetland pools and moist swamp pockets amid an open palette of oak heath woods and beech oak forests, the tract offers a welcome contrast to the suburbanized areas to the south.

Birdlife is varied and unusual and includes many rapidly disappearing species. Recent breeding bird inventories recorded 62 varieties, 51 of which are considered possible, probable or confirmed breeders. Among these are at least nine species of forest-interior birds – rose-breasted grosbeak, ovenbird, great crested flycatcher, red-eyed vireo, scarlet tanager, black-and-white warbler, eastern wood peewee, wood thrush and hairy woodpecker. Belted kingfisher, woodcock, wood duck, northern oriole, northern bobwhite, red-tailed hawk and State-threatened red-shouldered hawk have also been known to occasion the area, together with a host of migrant songbirds such as eastern phoebe, veery, white-eyed vireo, and northern parula, yellow, magnolia, blackburnian, blackpoll, black-throated green and yellow-rumped warblers.

A colorful variety of amphibians and reptiles also hold stake here, including spotted, marbled and red-backed salamanders (lead phase), eastern spadefoot toad, painted and spotted turtles, wood frog, green frog, bull frog, spring peeper, northern black racer,

eastern milk snake, garter snake and tiger salamander, the latter of which is listed as endangered in the State. Red fox and white-tailed deer abound, as well as opossum, muskrat, eastern chipmunk and raccoon.

Vegetation includes healthy stands of maturing American chestnut, cathedral-like groves of American beech and splendid patches of swamp azalea. The land and waterscapes of Tuckahoe Woods are also of interest, as a distinctive overlook rises out of this relatively flat area, affording a panoramic view of Cow Neck, Peconic Bay and Robins Island to the north. The area's watershed values are likewise significant, as these forests overlay critical groundwater recharge areas and serve to replenish the surface waters of Big Fresh Pond.

Tuckahoe Woods is an important natural area retaining considerable wildness and important plant and animal habitat, yet it remains today essentially vulnerable and unprotected. Several key acquisitions are needed if the integrity of this area is to be preserved.

- (22) Weesuck Creek. Located in East Quogue along the eastern shores of Weesuck Creek, this area was identified as an acquisition priority by Southampton's 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plan. Weesuck Creek sustains some exemplary occurrences of high and intertidal marshes, biologically significant areas whose protection is critical to maintaining the overall ecology of Shinnecock Bay. In contrast to the heavily developed western coast, these eastern shorelands still remain relatively pristine, with unbroken forests of oak, pine, pale and tupelo hugging most of the water's edge. Salt hay meadows characterize the area, backed by red maple-hardwood swamps and coastal Pine Barrens communities.

The plenitude and diversity of life that these wetlands hold include a profusion of song and wading birds, as well as white-tailed deer, great horned owl, mink and snapping turtle. Raptor species nest in the area, including red-tailed hawk and State-threatened osprey.

Much of the biological productivity of the greater Shinnecock Bay system can also be tied to tributaries such as Weesuck, as these assemblages of clear shallow water and healthy estuarine marsh are nursery and feeding grounds for bluefish, flounder, weakfish, tomcod and blue claw crab, all of which have commercial and recreational significance. Forage fishes such as sticklebacks, killfish, pipefish, Atlantic silverside and menhaden also seek out these areas, thus increasing the area's importance to finfish throughout the bay. As a watershed, Weesuck is equally crucial, as its wetlands replenish and purify countless gallons of water moving through the Shinnecock estuarine system. Its shoreland vistas also command attention, especially when its marshy and naturally wooded backdrop is viewed from further out on the bay.

Residential development continues to rank as perhaps the greatest threat to the biologically rich wetlands and coastal forests of Weesuck Creek. Roads and housing literally abut virtually all of the western side of the creek, generating damaging nitrate

inputs along a major stretch of this biologically valuable watercourse. Preservation of some key wetland parcels is crucial now to combat this tide and to aid in the long-term preservation and recovery of this system.

**c. Open Space/Greenbelt Target Area: Parcel Categories**

Within each of the above open space/greenbelt project sites categories of parcels have been established as follows:

OSG1 parcels, or those parcels which should have the highest priority for acquisition in order to protect community character; and

OSG2 parcels, or those parcels whose preservation can be accomplished using other combinations of land use alternatives.

Acquisition parcels were prioritized using the following criteria:

- (1) land acquisition protection priorities established by town, county and state agencies as per past conservation evaluations, open space programs, bond acts and adopted plans;
- (2) ecological uniqueness, including presence of rare, threatened or endangered fauna, flora or natural communities;
- (3) extreme sensitivity to disturbance;
- (4) vulnerability of the resource to loss or degradation as a result of permitted land uses;
- (5) adjacency to existing public or private lands;
- (6) consolidation of existing protected lands and targeted unprotected parcels and inholdings into a logical resource management unit;
- (7) parcel value as a linkage or corridor between existing protected lands;
- (8) availability of "willing sellers";
- (9) significance as a groundwater recharge area;
- (10) protection of scenic vistas;
- (11) protection of trail systems; and
- (12) preservation of public access.

The results of this evaluation are listed in Appendix A. Parcels are listed by Suffolk County Tax Map Number and categorized as OSG1 or OSG2. Many of the OSG1 parcels would form or expand upon existing open space reserves (strictly protected areas) or serve as primary linkages in continuous open space networks. In contrast, many of the OSG2 parcels would serve as buffer zones to biologically critical interior reserves.

**3. Central Pine Barrens Core Preservation Area  
&  
4. Central Pine Barrens Critical Resource Area**

The Central Pine Barrens is an extraordinary near-wilderness region that includes part of Southampton, Riverhead and Brookhaven Towns. It is home to a large assortment of wildlife as well as a magnificent assemblage of pitch pine-oak forests, coastal plain ponds, marshes, and streams. Also among its treasures is the dwarf pine plains, a globally endangered forest ecosystem. The Central Pine Barrens likewise sports some of the greatest concentrations of rare, threatened and endangered species in the state, and is a priceless source of deepflow recharge to eastern Long Island's groundwater aquifer and sole source of drinking water.

In 1993, New York State passed the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act to protect this resource and created a five member Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning and Policy Commission to develop a comprehensive land use plan. The Town Supervisors of Brookhaven, Riverhead, and Southampton, as well as the Suffolk County Executive and Governor, are represented on the Commission. The Central Pine Barrens Comprehensive Land Use Plan (the "Plan") was completed and officially adopted in June 1995.

To safeguard ecological and hydrological resources, the Act delineated a core reserve or Core Preservation Area (the "Core") where strict protection measures would be employed. The Plan also defined Critical Resource Areas (CRA's) outside of the core where additional natural resources needed to be secured. To achieve these goals, it is the Plan's intent to acquire 75% of the privately held, undeveloped and currently unprotected lands within the Core. In addition to fee title acquisition, the Plan also allows for transfer of development rights as well as the use of Planned Development Districts to accomplish preservation. Within the CRA's, both land purchases and other land use alternatives would be used to achieve the resource protection goals.

Southampton has included the Central Pine Barrens Core and Critical Resource areas as Community Preservation Projects, as their protection is urged by both the 1998 NYS Open Space Plan and the Central Pine Barrens Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Town's Western GEIS study and 1996 Comprehensive Plan Update have likewise called for preservation of this resource, as well as the Town's 1986-87 and 1995-96 Open Space and Greenbelt Acquisition Plans.

Further acquisitions are needed to consolidate public ownership and management of this magnificent area which has become New York State's third largest forest reserve. Accordingly, the town's Community Preservation Plan lists all of the remaining vacant unprotected land in the Core and CRA's as acquisition priorities and notes those primary and secondary land use strategies to be employed to preserve community character and achieve the area's resource protection goals.

## 5. Wetlands Target Area

The wetlands of Southampton are indispensable and fragile natural resources which are immensely important to both the environmental and economic health of the Town. The rich assemblage and complex variety of wetlands, ranging from small wet depressions, interdunal swales and vernal ponds, to expansive marshes, swamps, bays, creeks and ponds, sustain a multitude of natural functions and values, making them essential to maintaining the ecology and biodiversity of the Town. They also perform important flood protection and pollution control functions, as well as provide a great expanse of scenic natural open space to recreate in and enjoy.

Increasing state and local recognition of these values has prompted several local wetland preservation initiatives, including implementation of a strict town wetlands law (Chapter 325 of the Town Code) in 1993. Significant town and state monies have also been used to aid in securing and restoring these systems.

The Town's Community Preservation Project Plan complements these efforts by identifying over 1,000 wetland parcels that warrant consideration for acquisition. These wetland sites meet the eligibility criteria set forth in the legislation, as well as those prioritization criteria presented in the Open Space Target Area section (Part II C.2.f.) of this Project Plan. To the maximum extent possible, the plan complements the wetland protection goals of past town and state bond acts and related land acquisition programs.

## 6. Trails Target Area

As part of its community preservation plan, the Town of Southampton has identified any additional remaining unprotected parcels whose acquisition is crucial to secure and complete existing trails. All of the parcels listed in this target area are critical linkages for the following trail systems: (a) the Paumanok Path; (b) Tuckahoe Woods; (c) Oak Ponds-To-Peconic Bay Trail; (d) Morton-To-Kellis Pond Trail; (e) Trout Pond-To-Brick Hill Trail; (f) Brick Kiln Woods (also known as Great Swamp); and (g) the Bay-To-Ocean Trail. These trail systems are described as follows:

- a) Paumanok Path: The Paumanok Path is a hiking-trail project of regional importance that will ultimately extend approximately 125 miles from Rocky Point to Montauk Point. It has been a planning priority for at least the last ten years and is recognized as the most significant trail project on Long Island. When completed, the Paumanok Path will be the longest trail on Long Island, nearly four times the length of the second-longest trail (Western Suffolk County's Long Island Greenbelt Trail). It will act as the backbone of Southampton's trail system, with a number of trails using the Path as part of a loop or serving as a spur to the Path.

The Paumanok Path has received governmental support and endorsement from the National Park Service, New York State and Suffolk County, as well as the Townships of Brookhaven, Southampton and East Hampton. In addition, a number of non-profit

organizations have identified the Paumanok Path as a top priority project, including the Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference, Southampton Trails Preservation Society, East Hampton Trails Preservation Society and Group for the South Fork.

As of December 2004, about **90-95%** of the Paumanok Path is in place. A hiker can access the trail in Rocky Point and follow the white rectangular trail blazes for 50 miles through the Central Pine Barrens until he/she reaches Red Creek in Hampton Bays. Additionally, a hiker can get on the Path at Sagg Road in Sagaponack and travel 45 miles to Montauk Point.

Only the 30-mile section in eastern Southampton -- between Red Creek Park and Sagaponack -- remains to be completed. Even in this section, there are substantial portions of the Paumanok Path that are presently in place (e.g., Big Woods Preserve to North Sea Road, Laurel Valley County Park, Brick Kiln Road to Widow Gavits Road), amounting to approximately 10 miles of trail.

Southampton Town's Trails Advisory Board, in collaboration with local trail advocacy organizations and interested individuals, has identified potential trail corridors for the uncompleted sections of trail. From the planning reports, 141 land parcels are recognized as prime candidates for inclusion in Southampton's Community Preservation Program. Of these, 76 parcels are found along the preferred route of the Paumanok Path, while the remaining 65 parcels are deemed important for viable alternative routes.

- b) Tuckahoe Woods: Tuckahoe Woods is an interesting natural area of deciduous forest, maple swamps and vernal ponds, highlighted by wonderful vistas from atop Tuckahoe Hill. Currently, a significant portion of Tuckahoe Woods is in public ownership (Southampton Town, Southampton Village, Suffolk County), and the area contains a number of existing trails. The Paumanok Path is intended to traverse this interesting area.

The trail plan for Tuckahoe Woods includes an interior loop trail (with the Paumanok Path comprising one side of the loop), and spur trails from each of the four roads that border the area (i.e., Sandy Hollow Road, Sebonac Road, North Magee Street, West Neck Road). The West Neck Road spur is expected to continue north to overlook Big Fresh Pond.

Presently, public access is secured for two of the spur trails, Sebonac Road and Sandy Hollow Road. The third spur trail -- North Magee Street -- has been described for the Paumanok Path in sub-section (a) above.

- c) Oak Ponds-To-Peconic Bay Trail: The Oak Ponds-To-Peconic Bay Trail is a linear trail corridor oriented in roughly a north-south direction. It will utilize the Paumanok Path between the North Sea Landfill and Rose's Grove, with connections planned for the southern section from North Sea-Mecox Road to the Landfill, and for the northern section from Rose's Grove to Peconic Bay.



- d) Morton-To-Kellis Pond Trail: The Morton-To-Kellis Pond Trail is a linear north-south trail project that has been in the planning stages for more than a decade. Among the highlights of this planned corridor are Morton National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Laurel Valley County Park, Camps Pond, Atlantic Golf Club's trail easement, Long Pond (Bridgehampton), and Kellis Pond. The Morton-To-Kellis Pond Trail will intersect (and follow for a short distance) the Paumanok Path in Laurel Valley County Park.
- e) Trout Pond-To-Brick Hill Trail: The Trout Pond-To-Brick Hill Trail is another linear north-south trail project. Among the highlights of this planned corridor are Trout Pond, "Golf At The Bridge's" natural open space areas, and the overlook at the south end of Brick Hill. The Trout Pond-To-Brick Hill Trail will intersect (and follow for a short distance) the Paumanok Path in "Golf At The Bridge's" natural open space.
- f) Brick Kiln Woods (also known as Great Swamp): Brick Kiln Woods is an ecologically rich area of deciduous forest and maple swamps. The trail plan for Brick Kiln Woods includes an interior loop (with the Paumanok Path comprising one side of the loop), and spur trails from each of the four roads that border the area (i.e., Brick Kiln Road to the north, Brick Kiln Road to the west, Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike, and Scuttlehole Road). Additionally, a large loop is planned between Brick Kiln Woods and Brick Hill to the west, so a second spur trail is anticipated to Brick Kiln Road to the west.
- g) The Bay-To-Ocean Trail: The Bay-To-Ocean Trail is another linear north-south trail project that has been in the planning stages for at least a decade. Among the highlights of this planned corridor from Sag Harbor to Sagaponack are Mashashimuit Park, the Long Pond Greenbelt, Poxabogue County Park, Sagaponack farmland and Atlantic Ocean beaches. The Bay-To-Ocean Trail will intersect (and follow for a short distance) the Paumanok Path in the Long Pond Greenbelt.

## **7. Aquifer Recharge Target Area**

The Town of Southampton, which features historic villages, rural landscapes, extensive bay and ocean coastlines, unique natural resources, and pristine groundwater, is facing intense land development pressure. Once characterized by a land pattern of small villages separated by vast expanses of farmland and woodland, in recent years, the Town has seen both the cumulative adverse impacts and potential threats from development sprawl, particularly in the area east of the Shinnecock Canal. In examining this part of Town, the Southampton Town Board has concluded that it possesses extremely diverse and fragile natural resources and wildlands that, in addition to being unique ecosystems, provide pure groundwater recharge to the aquifer below. As a result, this area contains one of the largest sources of pristine groundwater in New York State. Moreover, it is a critical sole-source aquifer, providing the only local drinking water supply. Lastly, but also importantly, the area is well known for its scenic beauty and recreational values.

There are many privately held lots and contiguous large tracts of land within this Target area that, in addition to being critical wildlands and groundwater recharge areas themselves, are in close proximity to existing protected lands that could be adversely impacted by development. Development of these lots and tracts could lead to increased risk of habitat loss and degradation, as well as possible contamination of the public drinking water supply. It is in the public interest to comprehensively protect these lands and that they be permanently preserved. Priority land areas have been identified as the following:

- Tuckahoe Woods
- Great Hill and Noyack Hills
- Great Swamp
- Long Pond Greenbelt
- Sagaponack Woods
- Trout Pond

Preservation of these land areas individually, or separately, is not a comprehensively effective means of achieving the overall goals of critical wildlands and groundwater protection. Though separated physiologically, these lands each contribute ecologically to the overall ecological health and vitality of the study area as well as the biodiversity of the area a whole. For example, there are rare plant species in the Greenbelt that are considered a dynamic population due to the geographic migration of seedlings from year to year. As a result, these rare plant species may be located in different locations each year. Fragmented preservation, therefore, is not successful since there is no one habitat location for these species. The recommendations of this Target area specifically are therefore comprehensive preservation of ecologically contiguous and interrelated natural lands, protection of these habitats and of the impacts due to habitat fragmentation.

## **8. Village and Hamlet Greens, Parks, Recreation and Open Space Target Area**

The Community Preservation Fund enabling legislation provides the opportunity for the Town of Southampton, in cooperation with the villages and hamlets, to identify projects and parcels that present opportunities to establish traditional greens, parks, recreation areas and other forms of open space.

The Community Preservation Project Plan has identified **686** parcels comprising approximately **1,518.57** acres within the villages of Sag Harbor, North Haven, Southampton, Quogue, Westhampton Beach and Westhampton Dunes. These parcels were identified by each of the villages and recommended for incorporation as part of the Plan. The village recommendations have been derived from various comprehensive planning efforts and other land use and conservation studies conducted by each of the villages. Appendix A provides a complete listing of the recommended village parcels. Figure 1 presents a graphic presentation of the location and distribution of the recommended village parcels.

The Plan has also identifies **114** parcels and project areas comprising approximately **583.84** acres within the Town's hamlets. These parcels and project areas have been identified by the Department of Land Management based on the following sources: recommendations compiled as part of the Town's comprehensive planning process; current zoning and land use studies; an analysis of hamlet land use patterns and conservation opportunities; and specific recommendations advanced by representatives from various hamlet groups. Figure 1 identifies the location and distribution of these parcels and project areas. Appendix A provides a complete listing of the specific parcels and project areas.

## **9. Historic Places and Properties Target Area**

The Community Preservation Fund enabling legislation also supports the Town's identification of opportunities for the preservation of historic places and properties listed on the New York State register of historic places and/or protected under a municipal historic preservation ordinance or law. As part of the Town's comprehensive planning process, a report identifying the Town's historic resources has been completed. Appendix A incorporates an inventory of historic resources by villages and hamlets. The inventory, while not providing Suffolk County tax map numbers for each historic resource, does provide the most comprehensive survey of places and properties compiled to date for sites and districts designated by either the Town's current Landmarks law or the national and state registers. The inventory also identifies other potential historic and cultural resources that have been identified by the Comprehensive Plan Update consultant team, citizen advisory committees, village and hamlet historical societies and other local, state and national resources. Further detailed survey work will be necessary prior to preparing future recommendations for local landmark or state and national register nominations.

The Plan identifies the three following properties designated as Town landmarks: the Big Duck in Flanders; the Mill in Speonk-Remsenburg; and the Water Mill in Water Mill. The Plan also identifies six properties listed on both the state and national registers. An additional 78 properties are also identified as part of the statewide inventory. Finally, the plan recognizes, through both maps and text, additional properties identified by local historical societies and citizen advisory committees.