

DRAFT
MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR
MECOX BAY
September 2018



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Department of Land
Management
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MECOX BAY MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE				
RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (2018-2019)	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	TARGET OBJECTIVES (2019-2023)	FUNDING	OUTCOME (2023)
Mecox Bay Management Plan Adoption				
<i>By December 2018, complete agency review and any needed revision to September 2018 Draft Mecox Bay Management Plan.</i>	<i>Board of Trustees, Town of Southampton, NYSDEC, USFWS, Army Corps of Engineers</i>	<i>The plan needs to align with federal, state, and local government policies and regulations. Operate in accordance with interim agreed upon plan standards and criteria for inlet opening and closure, in coordination with NYSDEC, USFWS and Army Corps, and pursuant to needed permits and approvals, until plan is formally adopted by Trustees and Town.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Implement a management plan for Mecox Bay, that preserves its unique biodiversity, beauty, culture, identity, recreational assets, storm protection benefits and economic values for generations to come.</i>
<i>Release plan to the public in fall 2018.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Release of the plan to the public will allow for independent review and further consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic factors that drive adoption of plan and recommendations.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Commence and complete SEQR (State Environmental Quality Review Act) review.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town Board, NYSDEC</i>	<i>Compliance with all state requirements, as such demonstration is fundamental to plan adoption and implementation.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Commence and complete NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) review, if required.</i>	<i>Army Corps, USFWS</i>	<i>Compliance with all federal laws, as deemed essential, to implement plan.</i>	<i>Federal funds.</i>	
<i>Hold Public hearings, complete SEQR review and finalize Mecox Bay Management Plan.</i>	<i>Board of Trustees, Town Board</i>	<i>Input, support and partnerships across all sectors, inclusive of government and stakeholders, will be key to finalizing the plan and meeting community objectives.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>By 2019, Adopt Mecox Bay Management Plan.</i>	<i>Board of Trustees, Town Board</i>	<i>Adopt a joint Trustees/Town plan that collectively builds upon and achieves a consensus among federal, state and local agencies, landowners, research</i>	<i>Trustees, Town Board</i>	

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		<i>and conservation groups, as to how to best manage Mecox Bay.</i>		
Federal and State Agency Issued Permits and Approvals				
<i>By 2019,commence application to NYSDEC and Army Corps and obtain ten year inlet maintenance permits, tidal wetland permit, state-issued water quality certification, coastal consistency review and Department of the Army Nationwide General Permit.</i>	<i>Board of Trustees, NYSDEC, Department of State, and New York District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</i>	<i>Issuance of required ten year state and federal inlet maintenance permits is the highest level of agreement that is needed by the Trustees and the Town, in order to proceed with future planned inlet openings and closures consistent with plan recommendations.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Provide for continued long lasting meeting of inter-agency goals and objectives for Mecox Bay.</i>
<i>Obtain emergency authorizations from NYSDEC, if conditions warrant inlet opening/closure, prior to obtaining 10 year inlet maintenance permit.</i>	<i>Board of Trustees, Town, NYSDEC and Army Corps</i>	<i>Multi-sectoral assessment of emergency threats will facilitate response and provide mechanism for meeting plan goals, with respect to protection of human life, health and welfare, as well as living resources.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Complete Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation with USFWS, if needed, as part of federal permit authorization.</i>	<i>Board of Trustees, Town, NYSDEC, Army Corps, USFWS</i>	<i>Compliance with all federal laws, as deemed essential, to implement plan.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, federal funds</i>	
<i>Ensure consistency of management plan with Fire Island to Montauk Point Reformulation Study (FIMP) and Tentative Federal Selected Plan (TFSP)</i>	<i>Town, Army Corps</i>	<i>Ensure an integrated and collaborative approach to bay and inlet management, with state and federal partners, that will provide for long term protection of the environment and storm damage reduction.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Regularly monitor management actions and standards, for their effectiveness in achieving plan goals. Update plan, as needed, to achieve long term plan goals.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Adaptation and improvement of management recommendations and actions, by evaluation of new scientific evidence and emerging issues related to management response, on a five year cycle, will</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	

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		<i>enhance plan effectiveness in achieving priority goals.</i>		
Monitoring of Inlet and Barrier Beach Geomorphology				
<i>Monitor and periodically survey bathymetry in bay shoals to estimate volume changes.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>On-going sophisticated modeling of changes in bay and beach geomorphology is key to understanding bay, inlet and barrier dynamics and processes, as well as to responsible decision making with respect to planned inlet openings and closures.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Assurance that possible threats to ocean beaches and Mecox Bay are being addressed based upon the best available science.</i>
<i>Monitor, survey and/or GPS map dry sand beach widths along proximate ocean beaches. Calculate and quantify littoral sand budget.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, Bridgehampton-Water Mill Beach Erosion Control District (BECD)</i>	<i>The aim is to ensure that decision making, with regards to mechanical inlet closures, is based upon reliable comparative data and maps of beach conditions, as well as standard agreed upon closure criteria.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>GPS average high water and seaward dune toe lines, within 1500 feet west and east of the inlet, both approximately 4 days prior to and approximately 14 days after inlet opening, to assess, based upon comparative data, whether dry beach width has decreased in width by 50% or greater.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Data collection will serve as one of the primary catalysts for deciding whether or not there are observed severe changes in channel meandering or ocean beach width.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Complete pre and post storm damage assessments, to assess changes in inlet and barrier beach geomorphology, and whether planned inlet openings or closures may be beneficial in addressing impacts.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Investments in pre and post storm damage assessments, surveys, and photo documentation will allow for an accurate assessment of how flood shoal and ocean beach conditions change, which is essential for inlet management positions, and, in the case of engineered beaches, may well position the Town and Bridgehampton-Water Mill beach</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	

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		<i>erosion control district (BECD) for federal assistance for repair, in the event of federal disaster declarations.</i>		
<i>GPS map inlet location, width and configuration.</i>	<i>Trustees</i>	<i>These data sets will continue to be a key component in modeling inlet behavior, as a consequence of natural and manmade openings, and in deciding whether excessive inlet meandering and erosion threats warrant mechanical closure.</i>	<i>Trustees</i>	
<i>Re-nourishment of Mecox Bay Barrier Beaches</i>				
<i>Evaluate potential for dredging and re-use of overwash material for re-nourishment of barrier beaches.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, NYSDEC, Army Corps, USFWS</i>	<i>Better mechanisms need to be in place for deciding when excavation and return of inlet overwash deposits back to ocean beaches is warranted.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Beach conditions remain in good condition with a stable to improving trend.</i>
<i>Re-nourish ocean beach, within bounds of Trustees easement, with compatible sands dredged from shoal, if deemed warranted and permitted.</i>	<i>Trustees</i>	<i>Such pilot approach to ocean beach re-nourishment would warrant consideration, only in extreme circumstances, where there has been a significant loss of sand to the flood shoal and great risk of storm damage to the mainland or ocean front homes, as a result of a tropical cyclone or major nor'easter.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, private funds</i>	
<i>Re-nourish ocean beaches with trucked in compatible sand.</i>	<i>Private landowners, BECD</i>	<i>Utilization of trucked in sand of a compatible grain size for beach re-nourishment purposes can prove to be a viable practicable alternative, where access to and use of flood shoal sand is environmentally denied.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, private funds</i>	
<i>Re-nourish privately-owned area barrier beaches with sand dredged from offshore borrow sites.</i>	<i>BECD, Town</i>	<i>Building on the success of the 2013 BECD project, supplemental sand could be sought, for re-nourishing ocean beaches, along the Mecox Bay</i>	<i>Private funds</i>	

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		<i>barrier, with little potential for negative environmental impacts.</i>		
<i>Re-nourish town-owned ocean beaches with emergency stockpiled sand.</i>	<i>Town, Trustees</i>	Off-season emergency stockpiles will be established at area town-owned beach parking lots and the east end of Flying Point Road, for use in mechanical inlet closures, conditioned upon removal, prior to Memorial Bay to prevent loss of needed summer vehicular parking. Reserves of sand could be deposited for re-nourishment of town-owned beaches prior to restricted bird season.	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Inlet Openings</i>				
<i>Continue to allow for natural inlet openings, without human interference, unless bay conditions warrant intervention.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>The natural hydrodynamics of the inlet and bay barrier processes make Mecox Bay one of the richest complex coastal ecosystems in the Town. Seasonal erosion and accretion of ocean beaches, together with overwashes and input of sediments to the bay, are integral to the area’s sustainability and evolution. A policy of avoiding human intervention, as much as is practicable, is therefore warranted.</i>	<i>No funding necessary.</i>	<i>The costs and benefits of natural and planned inlet openings will continue to be weighed, in the interest of preserving water quality and living resources, while avoiding undue adverse impacts on bay and inlet hydrodynamics and storm related damages.</i>
<i>Proceed with decision-making with regards to necessity for and timing of planned inlet openings, based upon plan recommendations and criteria.</i>	<i>Town, Trustees, NYSDEC, Army Corps, USFWS</i>	<i>Planning for inlet openings based upon collectively agreed upon principles, standards and environmental triggers.</i>	<i>Town, Trustees</i>	
<i>Excavate/dredge inlet channel within designated 250 feet wide central corridor, to restore aquatic habitat and protect water quality, in</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Standardizing protocols and criteria for planned inlet openings will lessen</i>	<i>Town Community Preservation Fund (CPF) Water Quality Funds</i>	

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<i>accordance with state and federal approvals.</i>		<i>risks of adverse impact related to excessive channel meandering.</i>		
<i>Monitor inlet opening to ensure active floodway remains within limited central corridor and does not migrate or meander excessively to the east or west.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Field observations, together with GPS mapping of inlet location, size, and configuration, provides information critical to deciding whether active inlet management actions need to be taken.</i>	<i>Town, Trustees</i>	
<i>Stockpile and/or re-use and grade dredged material within inlet corridor, as part of inlet dredging.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Any sand, which is excavated from inlet and stockpiled within channel corridor, will be graded, consistent with natural morphology and contours of flood shoal, outside restricted shorebird season, to avoid adverse impacts to listed species and habitats.</i>	<i>Town CPF Water Quality Funds</i>	
<i>Create off-site emergency stockpiles using sand dredged from channel, as part of inlet dredging</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Creation of off-site emergency stockpiles aids in emergency preparedness and avoids possible adverse impacts to listed species.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
Manage Floodway to Mimic Natural Overwashes and Encourage Inlet Openings within Designated Centrally Located 250 feet wide Corridor				
<i>Construct and maintain 25 feet wide berm or nearly horizontal elevated plateau of sand with 1 on 15 slope, within channel corridor and aligned with Dune Road, outside of restricted shorebird season, consistent with management plan and required agency approvals.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Underpinning this strategy is the need to encourage, without adverse impacts to endangered species, natural inlet openings to occur, within a 250 feet wide centrally located corridor, lessening the potential for erosive impacts to dunes, as well as effects on ocean beaches to the west and east of the inlet.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>The inlet will continue to be protected and managed in a manner which lessens potential for storm damage and other adverse impacts.</i>

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Monitor and Maintain Water Quality.				
<i>By 2019, fabricate, install and maintain in-situ moored and fixed real time water quality sensors in Mecox Bay, to monitor bay water levels, dissolved oxygen, salinity, nitrates and blue green algae, as triggers for mechanical inlet openings.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town and Stony Brook University School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences (SoMAS)</i>	<i>By 2023, obtain five years of water quality monitoring data, in order to assess effectiveness of inlet openings and closures in achieving water quality improvement goals, to establish pollutant load reduction targets, and prioritize where management actions are needed.</i>	<i>Town CPF Water Quality Funds</i>	<i>Restored water quality, as a consequence of collective efforts to change land use practices and management of the bay and inlet based upon best available scientific evidence and advice.</i>
<i>Protect and restore surface waters and aquatic habitats through wetland permitting and other regulatory frameworks</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, NYSDEC, Army Corps</i>	<i>Taking a strong stand, with regards to requiring adherence to wetland regulations, is vital to maintaining and improving water quality and aquatic habitats.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Continue to purchase and preserve key environmentally sensitive wetlands, coastal habitats and watershed lands</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Continued investment in wetland, shoreland and watershed preservation is viewed as essential in order to maintain and enhance water quality and biodiversity.</i>	<i>Town CPF Monies</i>	
<i>Require and encourage septic system upgrades, within the Mecox Bay watershed, including landward relocation in areas vulnerable to inundation and installation of nitrogen reducing innovative alternative on-site wastewater treatment systems (I/A OWTS), through wetlands permit and septic system rebates.</i>	<i>Town, County of Suffolk</i>	<i>Over successive decades, the quality of water entering Mecox Bay from land use would have no significant adverse impacts related to nitrogen inputs.</i>	<i>Town CPF Water Quality Funds and County Septic Rebates and low interest loans.</i>	
<i>Implement aquatic habitat restoration projects.</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Achieve a net gain in wetlands, which are essential for filtration of contaminants.</i>	<i>CPF Water Quality Funds</i>	
<i>Implement best management practices to foster water quality improvements.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, Private Landowners</i>	<i>BMPs will help address all land-based sources of water pollution system-wide, including from residential and</i>		

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		<i>agricultural lands, as well as public facilities and roads.</i>		
<i>Mechanically open inlet when bay water levels are excessive and when there is documented flooding of septic systems and basements.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Avert threats to human life, health and welfare as a consequence of home inundations, septic effluent pollution and harmful algal blooms (HABs), by managing inlet openings to allow for adequate water flows and flushing.</i>	<i>CPF Water Quality funds</i>	
<i>Open inlet when salinity falls below 8 parts per thousand (ppt) and persists at this level for a minimum of three days.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Maintenance of salinity levels is directly linked to the continued health and sustainability of commercially important bay shellfisheries, most notably American oyster grounds.</i>	<i>CPF Water Quality Funds</i>	
<i>Open inlet when dissolved oxygen (DO) falls below 3 mg/l and persists at this level for a minimum of three days.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Sharp declines in DO need to be used as a trigger for planned inlet openings, to avoid hypoxia, fish kills and potential adverse impacts to shellfisheries.</i>	<i>CPF Water Quality funds</i>	
Inlet Closures				
<i>Allow for natural closure of inlet, except in cases where there has been excessive meandering of the inlet or greater than 50% loss in dry sand beach width, west and east of the inlet, based upon comparative surveys or GPS mapping pre and post openings.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Unnecessary modification of the Mecox inlet and/or unsupported intervention in the natural hydrodynamics of the inlet and bay barrier processes can have unintended costly environmental and economic costs.</i>	<i>No funding necessary</i>	<i>Natural and mechanical inlet closures will proceed in an environmentally sound manner.</i>
<i>Mechanically close inlet when channel meandering has exceeded 150 feet to either side of the centerline of the designated centrally located 250 feet wide floodway corridor.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Implement actions to avoid potential for excessive meandering of the inlet, based upon scientific research, prior observations of inlet behavior and knowledge of potential for adverse impacts to dunes and ocean beaches.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	

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<i>Mechanically close inlet where storm events have shifted excessive amounts of sand from the beach/channel way to the flood shoal.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Recognize the possible need for emergency post storm response, based upon damage assessments and develop consensus for when mechanical closure may be necessary in the aftermath of storms, large overwashes and/or severe flooding.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Mechanically close inlet, where there has been a significant loss of dry ocean beach, not related to severe storms or shore hardening structures, where GPS mapping of average high water and seaward dune toe lines, within 1500 feet west and east of the inlet, both approximately 4 days prior to and approximately 14 days after inlet opening, has revealed a decrease in beach width of 50% or more.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Build capacity and justification for implementing inlet closures, when warranted due to changes in ocean beach conditions.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
Protect and sustain rare and endangered animals and plants				
<i>Continue to survey, document and monitor rare plant and animal occurrences along the Mecox Bay barrier beaches, floodway and sand flats, inclusive of piping plover, least tern, red knot, seabeach amaranth and seabeach knotweed.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, NYSDEC, USFWS</i>	<i>Continue to directly engage NYSDEC and USFWS in rare and endangered species monitoring and reporting of occurrences and potential impact assessments, to improve scientific understanding of management issues that potentially threaten sustainability of listed species.</i>	<i>Federal, state, Town and Trustees funds</i>	<i>Mecox Bay maintains its diversity of rare shorebirds and plants, with a trend towards increased populations and habitats.</i>
<i>Take protective measures to prevent loss, injury or harassment of listed species, individuals and colonies, including installing symbolic fences, predator exclosures, beach/snow fences and interpretive signage; restricting ORV use, requiring environmental windows for permitted construction, and</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, NSDEC, USFWS</i>	<i>The prescribed endangered species protection mechanisms are already in place and will continue to be delivered by the Trustees, in coordination with the Town, NYSDEC and USFWS.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	

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<i>adhering to required buffers and setbacks.</i>				
<i>Prohibit mechanical inlet openings and closures during restricted shorebird season.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, NYSDEC, Army Corps, USFWS</i>	<i>Prioritization of protection of listed species is integral to plan implementation.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Establish protocols for permitting and undertake inlet openings and closures during restricted bird season, when there is an immediate threat to health, welfare, and water quality, pursuant to federal and state emergency authorizations and subject to mitigation conditions.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, NYSDEC, Army Corps, USFWS</i>	<i>Any divergence from the prohibition on inlet openings and closures, during the restricted plover and least tern season, and/or within environmental windows set, as needed, to protect red knot, would and can only occur pursuant to state and federal emergency authorizations.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
<i>Maintain morphology of natural floodway, washover deposits, and un-vegetated sand flats, while inhibiting excessive dune building or land aberrations and vegetation colonization.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Inlet habitats will continue to be managed to sustain healthy and diverse populations of listed species.</i>		
<i>Design, grade and maintain inlet closure berm, as a nearly horizontal plateau, with 1 on 15 or gentler slopes, to mimic natural overwash conditions and avoid adverse impact to listed species, with all work performed outside of restricted shorebird season, consistent with management plan criteria.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, NYSDEC, Army Corps, USFWS</i>	<i>Pro-active measures, in terms of management of the inlet corridor, can lessen the potential for adverse impacts to ocean beaches and dunes.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	
Protect and restore living resources.				
<i>Protect and restore shellfisheries, inclusive of American oyster grounds, by managing inlet openings to improve flushing, restore aquatic habitats and maintain optimal salinity and DO levels.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Actions which seek to protect and restore shellfisheries result in water quality improvements, as well as ecological and economic benefits for the Town.</i>	<i>CPF Water Quality Funds</i>	<i>Long term sustainable living resources are maintained and enhanced over successive decades.</i>

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<i>Promote scientific research with regards to occurrences of anadromous fish and viability of restoring anadromous fish runs.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, Sea Grant</i>	<i>By 2023, develop and implement plans for anadromous fish recovery, in coordination with Sea Grant.</i>	<i>Use town funds as leverage for possible grants..</i>	
<i>Design and implement wetland restoration projects within greater Mecox Bay, inclusive of tributaries and headwaters.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town, private landowners</i>	<i>Invest in and seek outside funding for prioritized wetland restoration projects.</i>	<i>Trustees, CPF Water Quality funds, grants and private monies</i>	
Improve Coastal Resiliency/Adapt to Climate Change and Rising Sea Levels				
<i>Consider scientific evidence that Mecox Bay is under threat from climate change, including rising sea levels, more severe flooding, changes in barrier island morphology, water quality impacts and effects on aquatic habitat health, due to increasing intensity of rain events, storms, nor'easters and hurricanes.</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Tackling climate change is vital to the future of Mecox Bay.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	<i>Assurance that Mecox Bay is more resilient to the effects of climate change and will continue to provide significant natural resource, economic and social values for future generations.</i>
<i>Expand the scope of the plan to address emerging climate change issues and to improve coastal resiliency</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Keeping abreast of climate change issues will lead to improved strategies for addressing flooding and bay barrier/inlet changes and adaption of management plan as needed.</i>	<i>Trustees, Town</i>	