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US House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
Washington D.C. 20515

Southampton, New York: Southampton Town Supervisor Patrick A. Heaney's; written testimony to the Subcommitee on Water Resources and Environment regarding the "Reauthorization of the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act" on July 12, 2007

The Town of Southampton is a coastal community of 59,000 residents, who live 70 miles east of New York City on the narrow south fork of Long Island, between two of our nation's most economically and ecologically significant waterways: the Peconic Estuary, which is included in the National Estuary Program, and the New York State designated Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve. **Along with over 300 miles of bay shoreline and 19,000 acres of inland tidal areas, we're also naturally blessed by nearly 20 miles of pristine Atlantic Ocean beaches,** which have been ranked as some of the best beaches in America and as some of the finest vacation spots in the world.

Southampton beaches and their adjacent bays and ocean waters are the lifeblood of the Town. The summer season draws hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors to our beaches from all over the world. These visitors come to enjoy the exceptional recreational experiences of our coast and, in doing so, contribute millions of dollars to local economy throughout Long Island's East End. Visitors to our area are attracted to our coastline, by our beautiful ocean waves and pure white sands, as well as by our pristine waters, magnificent scenery, abundant fishing, farmland, recreational boating, gourmet dining, parks and hiking trials, lush wetlands, and magnificent bays.

Concern for our beaches is deeply rooted in our cultural traditions, as Southampton's coastal resources have a long and rich history. From an early period of native American fishing, hunting, oyster harvesting, and near shore whaling, to present

day commercial fin fishing and shell fishing, generations have depended on the resources of the coast, and have enjoyed a unique quality of life on Southampton's shores that is we believe is simply unmatched nationwide. From these roots, arose a maritime heritage and cultural attachment to the shore that belongs not only to the past, but also to present and future generations of Southampton Town.

Today, thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of revenue are still dependent on the traditional maritime industries of our beaches and adjacent waters. **The commercial fishing fleet at Shinnecock Inlet in Hampton Bays, is the second largest in the State of New York, with nearly 50 local and transient commercial trawlers operating out of the port year round. Collectively, several thousand commercial and recreational fishermen fish our local waters, with dockside value of all fish landed likely totaling at least $16 million per year.**

Southampton's public beaches are our No. 1 tourist and recreational destination. Each summer, our population nearly triples, **with attendance totals at our public beaches reaching approximately 370,000 last year. Southampton Town generated nearly $1 million in direct revenue from Town beach access permits in 2006.** Beachgoers also pump millions of dollars into the regional economy, through monies spent on recreational boating, swimming, diving, shopping, kayaking, sailing, birding, second home development, and eco-tourism, and are the economic mainstay for local restaurants, stores, and service industries throughout Long Island's East End.

In terms of biodiversity, our local beaches, estuaries and offshore waters are irreplaceable, as they provide us with ecological services valued in the millions. They support nearly 200 rare and uncommon species of animals and plants. These species include federally threatened sea turtles, shorebirds, raptors, offshore whales, and rare plants, as well as nearly 150 species of fish and shellfish critical to the marine ecology and economy of our Town.

Pathogen inputs to the Peconic and South Shore Estuaries are presently a significant concern, because of the potential human health risks and the economic losses associated with the closure of shellfish beds and public bathing beaches. Our local bays are critical spawning grounds for nationally significant bay scallops and commercially vital finfish, which have sharply declined in numbers, due to excessive nutrients, low oxygen levels, contamination of shellfish beds, and recurring Brown Tide. Millions of dollars are being spent by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, New York State, Suffolk County, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Stony Brook University at Southampton, The Nature Conservancy, the Town of Southampton, and other organizations to support pathogen management and Brown Tide research, in order to improve water quality in our area. However, additional research and funding is needed to keep our beaches clean.

Preserving clean and sustainable beaches and healthy recreational waters is one of the highest priorities for the Town. Tremendous advances have been made to clean up water quality and beaches, by controlling pollution and pathogens from non-point

sources, such as road runoff and boat septic wastes. Our non-point source pollution education began with the Town of Southampton's 1993 passage of its own Clean Water Bond Act, which provided an ongoing source of local funding to clean up the area's roads, which continues today. Since then, the Town has received matching funds from the State and the County, which have enabled us to spend millions of dollars, to implement structural storm water management actions along hundreds of miles of shore fronting roads.

Thanks to federal assistance, the Town also has in place a very successful mobile vessel pump-out program to eliminate boat wastes, with seven 23 ft long boats in operation seven days a week between Memorial Day and October 15th each year. Last year, we pumped free of charge, close to 100,000 gallons of septic waste, from recreational boats in the Peconic and South Shore Bays.

To combat the loss of precious beaches and wetlands, the Town of Southampton has in place a Community Preservation Fund, a 2% real estate transfer tax which has generated $250 million over the last eight years for land and water preservation. **Of this, the Town has $34.5 million to purchase nearly 200 acres of beach land; plus another $215 million on open space and wetlands preservation; historical preservation and recreational facilities.**

Working together with the State of New York, the County of Suffolk, and the Town's seven incorporated villages, Southampton is continuing to work towards safeguarding additional critical stretches of coastline, expanding public access to this magnificent resource, and contributing greatly to local maritime businesses and our quality of life. Voters town wide have continued to send a strong message to the Town to protect our beaches and coastal shorelines, by supporting, in 2006, a ten year extension of the Town's Community Preservation Fund to 2030.

Effective restoration of our living marine resources is likewise being achieved through partnerships and collaboration at all levels of government. Matching funds from the State and County have enabled the Town to be very proactive in its efforts to implement key recommendations from ten years of studies to restore the Peconic and South Shore Estuaries. These local initiatives include, among others, water quality monitoring, scallop seeding, shellfish population surveys, aquaculture pilot projects, residential and commercial fuel oil tank removal rebate programs, and restoration of our beaches, dunes, wetlands, and eelgrass beds.

Since the 1985 collapse of the bay scallop harvest, some of the baymen have become innovative and are harvesting fish and shellfish in cages sunk in open water. Mecox Bay is the area's only historically indigenous oyster population. Some baymen have turned to growing them in a highly controlled manner; farming oysters affords harvesters some particularly unique benefits and shellfish farming is widely considered to be less invasive and wholly beneficial for the surrounding environment. Some two dozen baymen have been growing out oysters in racks in the state-controlled waters of Peconic Bay. Further, five local fishermen were given permission over the last year by the

Southampton Town Trustees for shellfish farming, known as mariculture or aquaculture, in town-controlled Cold Spring Pond as a part of a pilot program intended to test the viability and compatibility of small scale aquaculture with town interests.

We urge you to continue to act to protect our coastal resources, so that we can further these important water conservation initiatives, and so that we can leave for future generations, beaches as beautiful and magnificent, as those that we are blessed with today. Our maritime resources and beaches are not only crucial to maintaining our economic health and recreational pursuits, but are critical to maintaining our very way of life. On behalf of the residents of Southampton and our neighboring communities, I thank you for this opportunity to speak to the vital need for the your ongoing support to protect our beaches.

TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK

Southampton Beaches:

- **Miles of Ocean Coastline-- 20 miles**
- **Miles of bay coastline—300**
- **Tidal surface waters constitute about 19,310 acres of tidal area, distributed among bays, coves, ponds and creeks.**

Beachgoers:

Southampton Town Parks Department reported in 2006 that 39,927 beach access were sold. The estimated number of attendees at the Southampton beaches in 2005 was 365,606; and in 2006 beach attendees were estimated at 370,000.

Revenue received per permits:

Non Resident -	**$527,285.00**
Resident -	**440,310.00**
Total	**$967,595.00**

Coopers Beach in Southampton Village, an incorporated village with the boundaries of the Town of Southampton, was ranked third in 2007 by Dr. Stephen Leatherman, director of the coastal research laboratory at Florida International University the "10 Best Beaches in America" list for its width, superb water quality, health of dunes and vegetation, environmental quality of the sand, safety records, parking, and facilities. (East Hampton Village's Main Beach, just 8 miles east of Southampton Town border was ranked seventh.)

Ocean Beaches in Southampton Town:

Pikes Beach
Tiana Beach Oceanside
Ponquogue Beach
Flying Point Beach
W. Scott Cameron Beach
Mecox Beach
Sagg Main Beach
Foster Memorial Beach

<u>Second Home Owners/Tourists:</u>

Annual population—59,000
Residence Owners Receiving Tax Bills Outside of the Town – 15,294
Estimate summer population in Southampton - 170,000

<u>Commercial Fishing Industry:</u>

The commercial fishing fleet at Shinnecock Inlet in Hampton Bays, is the second largest in the State of New York, with nearly 50 local and transient commercial trawlers operating out of the port year round. Several thousand commercial and recreational fishermen fish our local waters, with dockside value of all fish landed likely totaling at least $16 million per year.

CLAMMING As per the Peconic Baykeeper – Kevin McAllister:

- **Clam Diggers Licenses issued in 2004 – 184**
- **Southampton South Shore Commercial Hard Clam Landings Harvested in 2003 –approximately 2,000 bushels = 1,000,000 clams**
- **Peconic Estuary Hard Clam Commercial Landings in Bushels in 2004 –approximately 15,000 bushels = 7,500,000 clams.**

There are consistently 2 to 8 clam dredge vessels that harvest surf clams and ocean quahogs from offshore fishing grounds and make a significant contribution to the total volume and value of the port's annual harvest. There are typically 2 longline vessels based at Shinnecock that fish for pelagic species like tuna and swordfish. There are 3 lobster boats, and 10 to 15 full time baymen, who harvest shellfish like clams, oysters or mussels.

Steve Tettelbach, Associate Professor Marine Sciences and Biology at the Southampton Campus of Long Island University, guesses that at its height there may have been about 600 commercial fishermen on the East End.

Brown Tide:

In 1982, the harvest of 500,000 lbs of bay scallops from the Peconic Estuary accounted for 28% of all U.S. commercial landings and had a dockside value of $1.8 million. After the appearance of the brown tide in 1985, the bay scallop population was virtually eliminated. Recent reports indicate that brown tide or a similarly destructive organism may be returning this summer to Southampton bays.

Dr. Christopher Gobler, a professor at Stony Brook University Marine Science center in Southampton and one of the nation's leading brown tide researchers said (Southampton East June 28, 2007 edition) that the bloom is the densest in Quantuck Bay, a nearly landlocked body of water midway between the inlets to Shinnecock and Moriches where the tidal flushing of the inlets has its most minimal effect. The brown tide organism's most destructive feature is that it chokes out other algae that shellfish will eat, and the shellfish, particularly bay scallops, die in shocking massive numbers.

Town Trustee Ed Warner, Jr. and longtime bayman said that in the last two years the Trustees, Cornell Cooperative Extension and The Nature Conservancy have released more than 100,000 scallops in the Tiana Bay and seeded new beds of eelgrass in hopes of jump-starting natural populations. A brown tide outbreak could wipe out all their efforts in a matter of weeks. The area is also one of the largest and most productive razor clam harvesting areas in the town, an important market that sustains many baymen through the lean times of winter. Razor clams, like bay scallops, are particularly susceptible to the starvation of brown tides and die off quickly. Mr. Warner said the loss of razor clam stocks in western Shinnecock and Tiana could be devastating for some fishermen.

Water Quality:

East Hampton Press, June 27, 2007 – Mosquito drains are serving as aqueducts that pour pollution into fragile tidal estuaries. Dr. Christopher Gobler and Florian Koch, doctoral candidate, unveiled findings of that waters in and around marshes sectioned by mosquito ditches have from very high levels of bacteria and nitrogen, degrading water quality and possibly killing important marine plant and animal species. They conducted their study in the fringe marshes of Flanders Bay in

Southampton, where poor water quality has been the norm for decades and in Accabonac Harbor in East Hampton, where local officials have begun damming the mosquito drains in hopes of curtailing their ill-effects and restoring the marshes to their original condition. Since the last outbreak of brown tide, pollution control measures – like runoff abatement projects and upgrades in sewage treatment – have reduced the amount of nitrate-laden pollutants that enter local waters and spark blooms of other algae, cutting off the bloom decay cycle that given brown tide it's most important sustenance. The Town of Southampton has a comprehensive stormwater runoff program.

- **Estuarine Waters are among the most productive of natural environments of Southampton, supporting the valuable commercial and sports fisheries associated with the coastal area. Waterfowl hunting, marinas, boatyards, repairs and supplies, processing operations and tourist related industries comprise some of the spinoff operations associated with the fisheries. Some species dependent on these waters at different periods of their lives are stripped bass, blue fish, weakfish, clams and scallops. The estuaries provide a multitude of habitats, circulating nutrients and fresh water that combine to create a highly productive environment. Estuarine waters are also critical for waterfowl wintering areas, recognized for being part of the Atlantic Flyway.**
- **Tidal Wetlands serve as the buffers between the coastal waters and the land. These areas provide a unique variety of habitats. The mix of freshwater into salt water forms an environment of varying salinities, a condition crucial to the development of certain tidal organisms such as crabs and shellfish.**
- **Freshwater Wetlands are described as the subset of wetlands that lie upstream of tidally influenced waters. Numerous types of wildlife require the water provided by ponds, swamps, bogs, stream courses and salt marshes of Southampton. Many waterfowl, including mallards, black ducks and wood ducks breed and feed in surface waters. Belted kingfishers, little green-backed and great blue herons, and northern water snakes hunt here, as do snapping turtles.**