

# LONG ISLAND COMMUNITY REAPS MANY BENEFITS FROM CONSERVATION PURCHASES

---

*In acquiring 96 acres, a Long Island community and its allies help protect the area's traditional character, water quality, resilience to hazards, and much more.*

---



*The Town of Southold's purchase of conservation properties supports the working waterfront, farms, and open spaces.*

---

***"The purchase and preservation of these environmentally sensitive properties will have resilience benefits for wildlife and people for generations to come."***

*Jim McMahon,  
Town of Southold Department of Public Works*

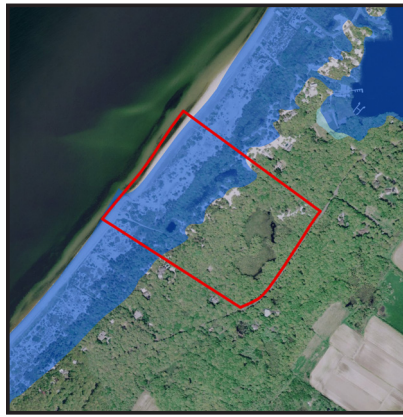
---

## Changing Growth Patterns




**Southold, New York.** The Town of Southold in Suffolk County is located on the North Fork, Long Island's northeastern peninsula. The town's 54 square mile area includes Plum, Fishers, and Robins Islands and many low-lying areas subject to coastal storms. Established in 1640, Southold supports lively fishing and agricultural sectors, and its residents and many visitors greatly value the area's character, which features distinct historic hamlets nestled among farms and waterfronts near public lands that are ecologically rich and diverse. Recreational and nature tourists are drawn to this area for its natural beauty and the opportunity to pursue outdoor activities.

The town's traditional development patterns began to shift in recent years as retirees and second-home owners bought Southold real estate. Large low-density land parcels were increasingly broken up, sold off, and developed. Southold officials and residents became concerned about protecting the area's farmland, waterfront, beaches, and waterways, which are intrinsic to its nature-based economy and way of life. Maintaining local water quality is of particular concern to the community. The groundwater source underlying Suffolk County is classified as a "sole source aquifer," which means that the community relies exclusively on the groundwater aquifer for its water supply. The commercial and recreational fishing and tourism industries are also dependent on clean bays and harbors.

---



*Both parcels contain flood-prone high-hazard areas.*

-  Property Boundaries
-  FEMA 100 Year Floodplain
-  FEMA 500 Year Floodplain

## The Response

The Town of Southold partnered with private landowners and numerous agencies and organizations to purchase farmland and open space to ensure preservation of the town's rural community character. For example, two properties totaling 96 acres were recently purchased—one parcel on Long Island Sound and the other parcel within the Peconic Estuary. Conservation of these natural areas supported several of the town's community goals, such as preserving water quality, traditional character, and its second-home and tourism economy, while also providing an array of additional benefits. These acquisitions were funded through the Community Preservation Fund, which levies a transfer tax of 2% on each real estate transaction in Southold, and other sources, such as NOAA's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP), with assistance from the New York State Department of State, the Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the Suffolk County Open Space Program. Each of these partners agreed that these areas were high priorities for protection, and their collaboration ensured a successful project.

## The Benefits

Before the purchase, the two properties had been zoned for residential development, allowing up to 32 single-family homes. By keeping these lands undeveloped, community leaders have maintained native vegetative cover and kept impervious surfaces and fertilized turf from increasing, avoiding delivery of additional contaminated runoff into waterways and safeguarding water quality.

Both parcels include low-lying flood-prone areas. By conserving these areas, the town avoids future potential losses to homes and property from coastal storms. In fact, the acquisition increases the town's resilience to hazards, since the land retains its natural capacity to absorb stormwater and lessen flooding. The coastal position of both properties may provide longer-term resilience as well, by allowing natural storm-buffering dunes and coastal marshes to migrate inland with time as more frequent and powerful coastal storms and rising sea levels affect the coast.

Buffering two estuaries of national ecological significance—the Long Island Sound Estuary and the Peconic Estuary—the protected lands feature a rich ecology of wetlands, dunes, beaches, and woodlands. In addition to providing valuable wildlife habitat and ecological diversity, the coastal tracts increase the connectivity of the town's network of natural lands. Now residents and tourists alike have more opportunities to connect to the coast and pursue outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, swimming, fishing, and birding.

To learn more about the benefits of coastal conservation for hazards resilience, visit

- TNC's Coastal Resilience project at [www.coastalresilience.org](http://www.coastalresilience.org)
- NOAA's Coastal Inundation Toolkit on the Digital Coast at [www.csc.noaa.gov/inundation](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/inundation)
- NOAA's Conserving Coastal Wetlands for Sea Level Rise Adaptation approach page on the Digital Coast at [www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/wetlands](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/wetlands)