



The Southampton Press

July 28, 2005

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NEWS

Bay Bottom Donated To Baykeeper

By Michael Wright

A restaurant owner from Hampton Bays has donated approximately 290 acres of bay bottom in Great Peconic Bay to the Peconic Baykeeper program.

The Baykeeper, a not-for-profit environmental stewardship and advocacy organization, will relocate shellfish from the donated bay bottom and create shellfish spawning sanctuaries in other local waters.

Environmentalists will also test the effects of shellfish farming and harvesting on the bay at the site.

The bay bottom was donated to the Baykeeper by Skip Tollefsen, owner of the Lobster Inn restaurant on County Road 39. The section of bay bottom is one of several privately owned parcels in Great Peconic Bay that were formed at the turn of the century for oyster cultivation. Mr. Tollefsen, who owns more than 600 acres of bay bottom in Southampton, has held discussions with Town Trustees about donating a similar sized parcel to them in the future.

According to Kevin McAllister, the Peconic Baykeeper, the section of bay bottom donated to his organization was, historically, a very productive hard clam spawning area. He expects to be able to remove large numbers of mature hard clams from the property and transplant them to other areas around the local bays to help restore natural clam populations. Mr. McAllister said he will look to partner with the Town Trustees and possibly Suffolk County for help in harvesting and transplanting the clams.

“We have all this land and we want to put it to good use for the entire bay,” Mr. McAllister said. “I hope there will be a lot of partnering with the Trustees and the county.”

He said that portions of the bay bottom will also be loaned to commercial shellfish growers—who keep shellfish in cages resting on the bottom—to test the impacts of such forms of aquaculture on local bays and surrounding environment. The group will also test various methods of harvesting wild shellfish and compare their impacts on the bay bottom and other marine organisms.

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The Eastern Edition focuses on news and event relevant to the following areas:

- East Hampton
- Bridgehampton
- Sagaponack
- Sag Harbor
- North Sea
- Noyac
- Water Mill
- Southampton Village
- Shinnecock Hills.

The Western Edition focuses on news and events in:

- Hampton Bays
- East Quogue
- Quogue
- Westhampton
- Speonk
- Eastport
- parts of Flanders and Riverhead.

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One section of the bottom will be left entirely untouched, as a control to compare the change of conditions on harvested sections of the bay bottom.

Mr. McAllister said that his organization has received a grant from the New Tudor Foundation to conduct a survey of the bay bottom. The survey will assess shellfish populations, beds of submerged aquatic vegetation, and the sediment composition of that section of bottom.

Issue Date: Southampton Press 7/28/05

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