

East Hampton Receives \$250,000 Grant For Coastal Plan

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East Hampton Town has been awarded a \$250,000 state grant to develop a plan to combat sea level rise and coastal erosion.

The town will use the money to put together a Coastal Assessment and Resiliency Plan, which will outline ways to prevent damage caused by hurricanes and nor'easters, and to recover from them.

The Town Board voted in the spring to apply for grant funds for a comprehensive analysis of the town's vulnerable coastline, from Wainscott to Montauk. The town will now begin gathering and evaluating scientific data to help it prepare for the worst in the years to come.

"This is an opportunity for us to plan for the future and to look at our land use, so we're not in a position of having to react to an emergency as opposed to being prepared for it," said Supervisor Larry Cantwell. "What happens if there's a catastrophic hurricane and downtown Montauk is severely damaged? What do we do if that happens? We need to talk about 'what if?' and how we should respond."

Mr. Cantwell said that members of the environmental group Concerned Citizens of Montauk were instrumental in assisting the town with the grant proposal, and had been advocating for the effort from some time. "They provided help to the Natural Resources and Planning departments in putting together the grant and supporting it on a state level. We certainly appreciate their help on this," he said.

"For all of us thinking about these issues for a couple of years now, it's very exciting that East Hampton is in a position to actually take this project on," said CCOM Executive Director Jeremy Samuelson. "I think the stars seem to be aligning here. There's a broad-based community understanding that planning efforts like this are critical to our future, and now we have political support to move forward. Finally, after many grant applications, one of these has landed, and we have the resources to address these issues head on."

The town also is still in the process of working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to install giant sandbags along a 3,000-foot stretch of shoreline in Montauk as part of the Downtown Montauk Emergency Stabilization Project, a temporary shield against coastal storms in the immediate future. The project, which is expected to begin in January and be completed by the start of the summer season, is not a permanent solution, though the sandbags will be covered with sand to create an artificial dune.

The town is awaiting recommendations from the Fire Island to Montauk Point Reformulation Study, otherwise known as FIMPS, to help it decide on a more permanent form of protection for the Montauk shoreline in particular.

"It is of paramount importance to look at our coastline and take into consideration sea level rise and the potential impact that it is going to have on our shoreline in the future, and to plan for what the possible outcomes are," Mr. Cantwell said of the Coastal Assessment and Resiliency Plan.