

Vigilance Required to Protect the Sound

By Al Caccese

THE LONG ISLAND SOUND is blessed with remarkable and awe-inspiring beauty, but it is equally important as a commercial and recreational resource for millions of citizens, and as a fragile ecosystem that supports an incredible diversity of marine and other wildlife. It has been recognized as being nationally significant with its Congressional designation to the National Estuary Program.

Much is being done to protect this resource not only by the Environmental Protection Agency, the States of New York and Connecticut, but also by local governments, industry, academia, conservation organizations and the public. The linchpin holding the various efforts together is the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) that was developed by the Long Island Sound Study in 1994 and adopted

by the Governors of New York and Connecticut, and the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In 1996, the Governors of both States and the EPA Administrator signed an agreement that emphasized habitat restoration and nitrogen reduction in the implementation of the CCMP. Too much nitrogen restricts the amount of oxygen available in the water supply. This loss of oxygen results in a condition known as hypoxia, which has a deleterious effect on the health and reproduction of aquatic life. Since 1996, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in and around the Long Island Sound by the federal government, the surrounding states and their municipalities. Tremendous success has been achieved toward the restoration of this

important ecosystem, and things are looking even better after the adoption of the 2003 Governors' Agreement which set specific milestones for implementation actions, including, among other actions and activities, nitrogen reduction targets through 2014 to meet the requirements of the hypoxia management plan.

Recently, there has been significant concern that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in New York City is seeking to modify the process required of it to upgrade sewage treatment plants as required in a consent order with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Such a change would jeopardize the nitrogen reduction schedule and could be an unimaginable setback to the progress made to date. The experimental treatment technolo-

gies being considered by the City are unproven and as a result DEP cannot provide the data necessary to prove that there will not be a delay in the agreed-upon implementation schedule.

Audubon New York has met with Commissioner Ward of the NYC DEP and advised him in a frank and unambiguous manner of our concern. We have also met with Governor George E. Pataki and NYS DEC Commissioner Erin Croty to voice our concern. Both the Governor and the Commissioner expressed reservations about the new process and suggested that they were committed to meeting the reduction goals that have been previously agreed upon. Audubon New York will stay vigilant on this important issue.

Building a Conservation Voice in NY – Action Network Makes Strides

By Sean Mahar

LAST YEAR, Audubon New York formed a stronger partnership with the National Audubon Society by joining their *Audubon Action Network*. This free, email based advocacy network, now provides Audubon New York members with unique opportunities to make a difference in State and local Governments, as well as the Federal Government. As part of the *Audubon Action Network*, New York members will receive Audubon New York's "E-nest", a monthly email newsletter highlights current conservation priorities before the state legislature. Members will also receive the "Audubon Advisory," National Audubon Society's bi-weekly email newsletter addressing National legislative issues.

Through each of these email updates, members will receive alerts on pressing environmental conservation issues, and from there will be directed to Audubon's Take Action website. This website provides members the opportunity to learn more about the issues, and facilitates their ability to quickly and easily contact lawmakers on those issues. In the past year, many of our legislative campaigns were bolstered through the help of our New York advocates. Hundreds of letters were generated in response to the Invasive Species Task Force legislation, securing funding for the Environmental Protection Fund in the State Budget, and prohibiting the use of All Terrain Vehicles in the Forest Preserve and Pine Barrens.

The *Audubon Action Network* is not only limited to your computer. To raise local awareness of pressing conservation issues, Audubon will frequently hold Action Evenings in locations across the State. These evenings provide a forum for like-minded individuals to meet one another, to learn about how these pressing environmental issues will affect their backyard, and to learn how they can help make a difference on those issues through writing letters, signing petitions, or calling their representatives. Action Evenings also allow everyday citizens to learn about Audubon programs, and how they can be involved with Audubon in their local community. So far, events have been held in Buffalo and New York City, with more being scheduled for the upcoming year. These events provided increased support for the Invasive Species Task Force Legislation, our pesticide education campaign, and National Audubon's campaign to prevent oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

On any important conservation issue, it is always crucial for constituents to call, write, fax, or email their lawmakers. The more your elected officials hear from you, the better the chance they will embrace the conservation point of view. In the coming year we hope you will help us increase the effectiveness of this program by becoming a member and encouraging your friends and family members to do the same. Always remember, birds can't vote, but you can!

KeySpan-Jamesport



This fall, Governor George E. Pataki toured the KeySpan property at Jamesport with state and local officials, as well as conservation and agricultural organizations and individuals. This future state park was the top open space priority for Audubon New York, whose efforts received recognition by the League of Conservation Voters earlier this year.