

15. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Long Island's only source of fresh water is precipitation that supplies the underground aquifers, which are completely surrounded by the salt water of the ocean. As precipitation percolates down from the ground surface through the porous sandy soil, most pollutants are removed by filtration or biological action.

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Responsibility for protection and management of Suffolk's sole source aquifer rests primarily with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services' Division of Environmental Quality. The Division has an integrated management program with elements designed to safeguard the quality of water supplies, to protect the groundwater resource from non-potable elements and contaminants, minimizing the impact of residential, commercial and industrial development, and to promote water conservation. The Division of Environmental Quality also identifies the best means of sewage collection, treatment and disposal; ensures that plans for subdivisions meet all relevant Sanitary Code requirements for water supply, and for sewage treatment and disposal; oversees new construction; regulates industrial waste, sewage treatment plants and toxic and hazardous materials; participates in county emergency response activities. The Division is also responsible for monitoring the quality of bathing beaches and marine resources.

WATER SUPPLIERS

By far the largest supplier of water is the Suffolk County Water Authority - a quasi-public agency whose members are appointed by the County Legislature. It has no taxing powers, but sells bonds and is, therefore, responsible to its bondholders for financial soundness. It serves approximately 150 communities from one end of the County to the other. Water bills are based on water usage. Wells and pumping stations are spaced about two miles apart and water at all pumps is tested, chlorinated and treated, if necessary.

In addition to the Suffolk County Water Authority, there are some other municipal and private water companies. Large tracts of sparsely

populated land are not served by any supplier and homeowners must rely on their own wells. Water for farm irrigation comes from farmers' wells.

OPEN SPACE PROGRAMS

Three important programs have been in the forefront of Suffolk County's efforts to preserve and acquire open space: Farmland Preservation, the Open Space Program, and the Water Protection Reserve Fund. The Farmland Preservation Program has been responsible for the protection of more than 7,000 acres of farmland, at a cost of \$40 million. Since its inception, the Water Protection Reserve Fund has permitted the County to purchase 12,000 acres of land, using 0.25% sales tax. These purchases have been concentrated on the preservation of key waterfront properties, freshwater and saltwater wetlands, a series of stream corridors, and deep recharge areas that extend throughout the mid-portion of Suffolk County's pine barrens. The Open Space Program, created in 1986 and funded via general obligation bonds has saved approximately 5,000 acres at a cost of \$84 million.

Community Greenways is a new open space program authorized by referendum in 1998 and is funded at \$62 million. Community Greenways targets three uses for acquisition: open space (\$20 million), active recreation (\$20 million) and purchase of development rights for active farmland (\$20 million).

SUFFOLK COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the County Legislature, the Soil and Water Conservation District provides consultation and technical assistance to Suffolk County residents, commercial agricultural producers and municipalities. Functions and responsibilities include: sediment and erosion control, nonpoint source pollution control, irrigation water management, drainage and flood control, and protection of natural resources.

Many activities of the Soil and Water Conservation District are associated with water quality improvements to both ground and sur-

face waters. Development of farm conservation plans and implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs), which reduce potential sources of pollution, are emphasized. Accordingly, control of urban storm water surface runoff, development of watershed management plans, and implementation of urban BMPs which improve water quality are also priorities of the Soil and Water Conservation District.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

An Environmental Bill of Rights for Suffolk County (Article 1 of the Charter) was approved by voter referendum in 1970. This law established a basic policy for the County: to conserve and protect its natural resources, the quality of the environment and natural scenic beauty, its agricultural land, and its historic sites. The

Council consists of nine voting members, one of whom is the Chair of the Parks Committee of the County Legislature; the other eight members are non-salaried and are appointed by the County Legislature with the approval of the County Executive. The Council reviews all County-initiated projects that may have an impact on the environment, and makes recommendations regarding the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to the County Legislature, Executive and initiating unit. The Council also advises the County Legislature and the County Executive on which County-owned properties to dedicate as County nature preserves or historic trusts, and which properties should be purchased for preservation. Suffolk County Legislative Resolution 871-1972 establishes the Suffolk County Historic Trust and appoints the Council members as trustees thereof.



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North Fork Vineyards