

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 49, NUMBER 5 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 2019

NEXT MEETING



DATE: Tuesday, February 19, 2019
REASON: Library Is Closed on Lincoln's Birthday; We're Bumped to the Third Tuesday
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
 144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)
SPEAKER: Don Riepe
TOPIC: Jamaica Bay: Past, Present, and Future

Join us for a special program on the wildlife, history, management, and issues surrounding Jamaica Bay, a 13,000-acre estuarine preserve in Brooklyn and Queens. Jamaica Bay has been seriously altered over the past 300 years, especially since 1900; however, its marshes, ponds, open waters, and uplands still attract thousands of nesting, migrating, and wintering birds and other wildlife. Over 340 bird species and 100 fish species have been documented as residing in or at least visiting the bay, and it is a mecca for birders and naturalists from the tri-state area. Don Riepe grew up around the bay and has worked there for the past 40 years, photographing its wildlife diversity and changes over time. His program will reflect the beauty and challenges facing this great urban natural resource.

Don has been the NY Chapter Director of the American Littoral Society for the past 25 years and has been designated as Jamaica Bay Guardian by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. He retired from the National Park Service in 2003, where he worked as a naturalist and manager of the 9,155-acre Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Don has written many articles on natural history subjects and his photographs have appeared in many publications, including *Scientific American*, *National Wildlife*, *Audubon*, *Defenders*, *Underwater Naturalist*, *Parade*, and *The New York Times*. Currently, he serves as an advisory board member for NYC Audubon; co-chair of the Jamaica Bay Task Force; and chair of the Wildlife Hazard Task Force, JFK Airport. In his spare time he leads tours to places like Iceland, Costa Rica, Belize, and the Florida Everglades.

Pre-Meeting Book Discussion. Arrive a half-hour early to participate in a discussion led by R. U. Abyrdar II (aka Paul Stessel) of the book that he and Sy Schiff reviewed in the previous *Skimmer*. This meeting's book is *Look Up! Birds and Other Natural Wonders Just Outside Your Window* by Woody Wheeler.

Parking Lots. In addition to the parking lot adjacent to the library, there's a lightly used, well-lit, and fairly close municipal lot on the east side of S. Ocean Ave., on the near (south) side of the gas station that borders Sunrise Highway.

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 •  IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE •
 • BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS. •
 • **SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS!** •
 • •

SSAS Mission Statement — *The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.*

HEMPSTEAD LAKE STATE PARK "Revised" Environmental Assessment

Brien Weiner

In the wake of a flood of opposition to tree removal at Hempstead Lake State Park (HLSP), the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) announced at the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting on December 12 that the HLSP Environmental Assessment (EA) was being revised due to requests for additional information by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD, which is funding the project with Sandy recovery funds), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). We were also informed that

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II with Sy Schiff

Spring is coming! Trust me!! Well, maybe in a couple of months or so, anyway, but... and one of our favorite groups of birds are the warblers! So, put the two together, spring and warblers, and you have our next featured book:

North on the Wing: Travels with the Songbird Migration of Spring by Bruce M. Beehler. So, if you enjoy warblers and



can't wait for spring migration, you must read this book! A story about a man's 100-day journey, a northward trek along the Mississippi Flyway to find migrating neotropical birds flying north in the spring! A marvelous book! Sy's contribution begins now!

The author, a trained and expert ornithologist, took three months off, aided by grants and donations, to explore, view the nesting of the 37 species of wood warblers that breed in the eastern U.S., and document the trip in a book. Emulating Edwin Way Teale's journey *North with the Spring*, which he notes as a precursor for this adventure, he also traveled north. Teale moved up the Atlantic flyway. Beehler chose the central flyway, starting in Texas and staying close to the Mississippi River.

The journey begins on the Gulf of Mexico coast, anticipating the arrival of north-traveling migrants, and proceeds to follow them as they move into the Canadian North Woods. There he pauses, riding east across the top of the Great Lakes and down into the Adirondacks for the last of the breeding warblers on his journey. A detour on the way drops him into Michigan for the Kirtland's Warbler.

He stops to observe southern breeders on the list while he and the north-wending migrants continue on their way. He checks each off as they reach their breeding grounds and he observes them.

As the bio notes list, besides ornithologist, Beehler is a naturalist, conservationist, author, and lecturer. So the journal includes comments about just about anything he encounters and sees on his trip. Of course, the birds get their full share. The trip is to see each species on its breeding turf. However, many are seen and mentioned as he and they travel toward their final nesting ground. Conservation and the pitfalls of past logging get full attention. So do trees, flowers, and everything else.

Starting in Texas, he stops at appropriate refuges and parks to bird and check off breeders. Every night is spent at a campground in these places, living out of a tent. This is a good outdoor travel guide to the central U.S. He out-passes the spring at times, so camping gets a bit cold. Then the mosquitoes and black flies are mentioned, but this gets much less attention than I would anticipate. He's sleeping and camping out with them at their peak season in the North Woods.

Finally in the Adirondacks, he gets his last breeding warbler, now all 37 of them. This is not necessarily a bird

book, but a travel book by a skilled observer and naturalist. It's also a conservationist pushing his agenda based on what he observes and describes. The book is a pleasant light read.

So, read it and ENJOY!!!

FREE AUDUBON BIRD PRINTS TO DOWNLOAD

Editor's note: Here's a June 23 e-mail from the National Audubon Society that hasn't fit in the last four *Skimmers*. The prints are at www.audubon.org/birds-of-america.

You don't have to be a multi-millionaire to bring home *The Birds of America*. When a rare first-edition copy of John James Audubon's magnificent work recently went to auction, it brought in a staggering \$9.6 million — with every dollar of the sale price to be devoted to conservation. Too pricey for most of us bird lovers, for sure, no matter how worthy the cause. So we have good news: You can hang Audubon's prints in your home for free! Browse all 435 vibrant images from *Birds of America*, then download your favorites in crisp, clear, high resolution — ready to be printed, framed, and enjoyed.



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31ST ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

Bill Belford

The remaining waterfowl survey dates for the 2018–2019 season are **Saturdays, February 2 & 23**, and **March 23**. Our group visits the various ponds in southern Nassau County from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park. Volunteers can help out for a few hours or the whole day. Call Bill Belford at 385-1759 for more information and/or to volunteer.

AUDUBON'S GUIDE TO ETHICAL PHOTOGRAPHY

This winter's appearance of Snowy Owls on the barrier beaches in SSAS's area has been accompanied, as has become all too predictable, by the appearance of misguided people, especially photographers with telephoto lenses, who encroach on them, forcing these birds to waste precious energy while retreating. See <https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/audubons-guide-ethical-bird-photography> for info on how to admire all birds responsibly.

VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

One of the wonderful perks that you get from an Audubon membership is the chance to be a part of your local Audubon chapter, South Shore Audubon Society.

You are automatically a valued member of this active and friendly chapter, so please come out to the next meeting at the Freeport Memorial Library from 7:30–9:30 P.M., usually on the second Tuesday of the month (third Tuesday this month), to hear what you can do to help preserve your local environment's health and viability, to hear about local issues that you can help to solve, and to see an interesting program.

Whether you are a beginning birder or someone with a large life list, you will enjoy our weekly Sunday bird walks. Check out the special events that are mentioned in the *Skimmer*. Attend them yourself, and bring your family and friends too.

You are warmly invited to be an active participant in this vibrant all-volunteer organization comprised of persons who, like you, care about the earth we live on, about our local environment, and about the creatures that live alongside us.

Our new members since the last *Skimmer* are:

Baldwin	Sally Graham, Helen Munster, Leslie Tisher
Bellmore	Ruth Berman, Carol Seligson
Bethpage	Rosemarie Del Prete, John Vitrano
Brooklyn	Tom Henk
Cedarhurst	David Etengoff
East Meadow	Jill Grossman, Jean Kestel, Prem C. Srivastava, Marie Zembruski
East Rockaway	Gail Carley
Farmingdale	Frances Amdracchi, Darren Bourne, Barbara Brugnoni, Beatrice Fallon, Christopher Hamlin
Franklin Square	Axel Heyman, George Pettinato
Freeport	Joseph Austin, Amy Finch, William T. Higgins, James Miller
Garden City	John Casas, Joan Dooley, Evan Soufarapis
Glen Oaks	Roslyn Bernstein
Hewlett	Anila Midha, Robert Nadler, Gloria Strauss
Hicksville	Agnes C. Coughlin, Edward Groody
Levittown	Wayne Treibish
Long Beach	Willa Damien, Linda Leone, Jackie Schwartz, Eleanor Sobel, Susan Vinci
Lynbrook	Amu Garbarini
Malverne	J. Betty Bernstein, Claudette & Vincent Costa, Joyce Walsh
Massapequa Park	Elizabeth McWeeney
Merrick	Dianne M. Withers
Oceanside	Craig & Susan Brenard, Felicia Clark
Plainview	Sharon Brody
Rockville Centre	Paul Fagan, Mary Jo Fox, Eric Mingorance
Seaford	Patricia Facchini, Elizabeth Wordsman
Uniondale	Janeen Johnson, Marilyn Stabenau
Valley Stream	Lucia M. Annunziata, Linda Sapadin, Glenn Schuman
Wantagh	Frank Philipp, Kyle Rhodehouse, Javier Samudio, Gail Siegel
West Hempstead	Mueller Family, Lydia P. R. Pratesi
Woodmere	L. R. Hilton



OFFSHORE WIND AND WILDLIFE Report on a Recent Scientific Workshop

Jim Brown

Two SSAS board members, Guy Jacob and myself, attended a workshop this past fall on the impacts of Offshore Wind Energy Development (OWED) on wildlife. The workshop, a meeting of scientists, offshore wind developers, members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs, e.g., SSAS), representatives of governmental agencies, and others interested in this important issue, took place on November 13 and 14 at the Fox Hollow Inn in Woodbury. The workshop even continued into the following day with several “post-workshop” meetings. Fully titled “State of the Science Workshop on Wildlife and Offshore Wind Energy Development,” the event was hosted by NYSEERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority), with advice from its Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG, pronounced “E-Twig”). The November meeting was the first of its kind, and NYSEERDA will be scheduling others in the future.

NYSEERDA is the agency tasked with promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy. It is responsible for helping guide New York offshore wind energy development. Pursuing the goal of developing offshore wind, NYSEERDA has created Technical Working Groups, including the environmental one, to carry out and publicize research on the multitude of possible impacts (environmental, economic, and social) of wind turbines in the marine environment. Members of the E-TWG are volunteers, but NYSEERDA supports the members with funding for technical support staff from the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) of Portland, Maine. Jillian Liner, Audubon New York's Director of Bird Conservation, serves on E-TWG. Wing Goodale, with whom SSAS and NYC Audubon worked on a wind energy grant several years ago, is the Senior Deputy Director at BRI. His 2015 report, “Offshore Wind Energy Development and Birds in New York: Managing risk and identifying data gaps,” is available on SSAS's website. Both Jillian and Wing spoke at the November workshop.

The objectives of the State of the Science workshop were listed as addressing “key advances in our understanding of environmental impacts on wildlife populations,” “remaining priority data gaps and research needs,” and “opportunities for collaboration and regional coordination” of scientific studies. Numerous panels dealt with a wide variety of issues, problems, and wildlife species. Possible impacts on marine mammals, sea turtles, zooplankton, fish, bats, and, of course, birds, were discussed. Impacts at various stages of a wind farm's development were presented, from initial surveying to construction to operation to eventual decommissioning. The nature of cumulative impacts was addressed, as well as considering the impacts related to only one wind farm. Research from Europe was analyzed, bearing in mind that the

environment of the U.S. coastline differs from that of Europe, and the differences in the species present.

The science discussed during the two days I attended the workshop was indeed far-reaching. Some of it was very complex and technical. Nevertheless, the panels were informative, even for the non-expert. It would be impossible to summarize in this short space all the panels' contributions, but some of the many findings and issues I personally found interesting include: 1) Whales, such as the endangered Right Whale, are likely to be most impacted during the construction phase of wind turbine construction, due to the noise produced by pile driving. Whales are very sensitive to sound, and noise in the ocean can be harmful and even deadly to them. New York and New Jersey already have the noisiest waters on the East Coast. Methods are being studied to reduce this possible negative impact. 2) Seals have been known to "haul out" on wind turbines and fish from them. 3) Cormorants (pictured) are often attracted to wind turbines, and for this reason perches have sometimes been constructed for them at wind farms. 4) Larger turbines are constantly being developed and, in general, the larger ones have less-negative impacts on wildlife. 5) The foundations of wind turbines are biomass hot spots — they attract many types of fish and benthic species such as crabs, clams, and mussels. 6) A major danger to sea turtles is ship traffic, and this impact could be increased if recreational fishermen are attracted to areas around fish-rich turbines. 7) Researching the impacts of wind farms on different species is complicated by the simultaneous impacts of temperature changes caused by global warming. 8) More fish are generally found around wind farms than in other areas of the ocean. Black sea bass, in particular, love wind turbines. 9) Cumulative impacts of wind farms along the eastern seaboard can be mitigated by providing wildlife corridors between them.



It is apparent that many scientists — ornithologists, ichthyologists, cytologists, and others — are working with NYSERDA and its Environmental Working Group to study the possible impacts of wind farms on birds and other wildlife. Audubon New York, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Nature Conservancy, and the Wildlife Conservation Society are NGOs that are involved. Also part of the E-TWG are scientists from various state and federal agencies. At this point it is necessary that baseline wildlife survey data be obtained as quickly as possible, as wind farms are currently being planned and built in U.S. waters. Science is being funded and studies completed that should help us optimally site and construct offshore wind farms, so as to minimally impact wildlife, some species of which are already endangered due to climate change and other human-based activities.

More information on the actual papers of the "State of the Science" workshop can be found at www.briloon.org/offshorewindny/workshop.

NYSERDA studies related to offshore wind completed and in progress can be found at <https://www.nysERDA.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Offshore-Wind/Studies-and-Surveys>.



JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in nearly real time. Now, more than 180,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

You're invited to participate and it's free! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count (**Friday, February 15 through Monday, February 18**), simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish.



If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must create a free online account to enter your checklists; go to <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/>. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information.

Your help is needed every year to make the GBBC successful! Then keep counting throughout the year with eBird, which uses the same system as the Great Backyard Bird Count to collect, store, and display data any time, all the time (including GBBC data from previous counts).

The information from GBBC participants, combined with other surveys, helps scientists learn how birds are affected by environmental changes. It can provide the first sign that individual species may be increasing or declining from year to year. Data gathered over many years help highlight how a species' range may be expanding or shrinking. A big change, noted consistently over a period of years, is an indication that something is happening in the environment that is affecting the birds and that should receive attention. GBBC information also allows us to look at what kinds of birds inhabit different areas, such as cities and suburbs compared to more natural habitats.

In 2018, New York birders reported 171 species, including 110 in Nassau County. Visit birdcount.org to search the lists from previous GBBCs by place and/or species.



NAT'L AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (844) 428-3826



ONE STEP CLOSER TO OCEAN BLUES

Guy Jacob

At November’s end, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), a division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), issued Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHAs) for offshore exploration permits, which now await final approval from the U.S. Department of the Interior for the seismic permits. If they’re approved, like a fire alarm resounding endlessly through the night, all living beings within our Atlantic Ocean will indeed suffer untold harassment.

NOAA Fisheries scientists are professionals who understand how vulnerable our oceans are; on their website, lots of valuable research is synthesized for public perusal. But the Trump Administration isn’t listening to NOAA scientists. Donald Trump’s executive order, “Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy,” instructs the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to re-evaluate opening the Outer Continental Shelf to oil and gas exploration and drilling, including the Atlantic Ocean and eastern Gulf of Mexico. The issuance of IHAs for Atlantic seismic airgun blasting permit applications brings us one major step closer to exploration.

In reaction to the announcement, Rep. John Rutherford (R-Florida) circulated a Dear Colleague letter urging Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and now-former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to deny the final seismic survey permits. 93 House representatives signed the letter, including all five Long Islanders — Gregory Meeks, Kathleen Rice, Thomas Suozzi, Peter King, and Lee Zeldin — who all quickly responded to our request to support Rutherford’s initiative. Collaboration between members of different political parties is exactly what we need to protect our fragile oceans, and we hope Rutherford’s letter has some impact.

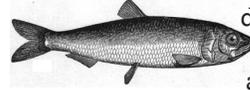
Airgun signals account for 75% of the annual NOAA Fisheries data recordings, and this explosive release of air can create source amplitudes up to 240 dB. The simultaneous worldwide origin of these sonic manifestations engenders a cacophony of sonic discord that is ravaging ocean life.

Water is a superhighway for sound. Sound travels best through a compact medium, and water is much denser than air. In air, sound travels an average of 1,080 feet (330 meters) per second. But sound torpedoes through water at 4,725 feet (1440 meters) per second. Because sound travels four times more quickly through water, its effects are far reaching and devastating. Densely packed H₂O molecules catapult sound waves throughout the ocean ecosystem even while this deafening noise pollution beneath the sea decimates life. And all the while, we terrestrial beings move about oblivious to just how profoundly the havoc we wreak will come back to haunt us above the sea.

Because water is such an excellent conduit for sound, seismic air blasts become weapons of mass mutilation,

maiming and slaughtering organisms, from the largest whales to the most diminutive invertebrates throughout the web of marine life.

Seismic blasts drive commercially viable fish literally running for their lives. While the fossil fuel industry profits, our fishing industry suffers. Numerous studies demonstrate the negative impact on various fish species. Because of airgun blasts, there have been 40% to 80% reduced catch rates for Atlantic cod, haddock, rockfish, herring (pictured), sand eel, and blue whiting. Studies have also found damaged hearing structures in fish such as pink snapper.



The exact location of any one blasting zone is little matter. Sound can travel a straight line as long as the flight between New York and Las Vegas, so the marine mammals and fish offshore of NY are still very much vulnerable. Neither do oil spills respect state borders. We cannot advocate for protecting New York without also rejecting calls for seismic blasts and drilling along the entire Atlantic coast. From Florida to Maine, our fate is tied together.

Seismic blasts and subsequent offshore drilling spell nothing but trouble for our oceans, our economy, and our way of life.

Editor’s note: In mid December, eight environmental groups filed a lawsuit seeking to overturn the permits, which allow five companies to survey an area extending for 350 nautical miles from the coasts of every state from Delaware through central Florida. See <https://www.nrdc.org/media/2018/181211-2> for info.

BIRD WALKS Joe Landesberg

All walks start at **9 A.M.**; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Call me at 467-9498 in case of questionable conditions or for other info. Check www.facebook.com/SSAudubon (you don’t need to have a Facebook account) for cancellations, changes, and lists from recent walks. Directions and lists of what we’ve seen in recent years are at www.ssaudubon.org.

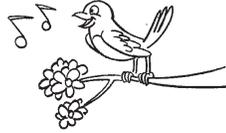
- Jan. 27 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3; led by Bill & Bill; phone nos. on back page)
- Feb. 3 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Feb. 10 Massapequa Lake*
- Feb. 17 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Feb. 24 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
- Mar. 3 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Mar. 10 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner

*For Massapequa Lake (the southern end of Massapequa Preserve), use street parking on westbound side of Merrick Road, west of Lake Shore Blvd.

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PROPOSED JONES BEACH ENERGY AND NATURE EDUCATION CENTER

Michael Sperring

Our last *Skimmer* had a paragraph about Governor Andrew Cuomo's November 9 announcement of a planned \$18M education center plus a Park Preservation Area designation at Jones Beach's West End 2. SSAS's half of Nassau County contains two of the 132 Important Bird Areas in NY, Hempstead Lake State Park and West Hempstead Bay/Jones Beach West. See <https://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/state/new-york> for info about IBAs or borrow the book from a local library (Hicksville, Hewlett, and Suffolk) via encore.alisweb.org.

I filled out a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) form at openfoil.ny.gov and obtained some documents from NYS Parks, including the Full Environmental Assessment Form that was completed on November 21; the three paragraphs below are taken from the FEAF, which will be discussed by SSAS's Board while this newsletter is at the printer. The Theodore Roosevelt Nature Center at West End 1, which opened in 1999 and has a deteriorated roof among other problems, is in an area that's more vulnerable to flooding than West End 2, so the proposed location for the new center was changed as plans progressed.

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) proposes a partnership with PSEG Long

Island, the Long Island Power Authority, and New York Power Authority to construct and operate a new Energy and Nature Education Center in the West End 2 parking field of Jones Beach State Park. In addition, OPRHP will designate 218.5 acres within the west end of Jones Beach State Park as a Park Preservation Area (PPA) to enhance protection of its significant maritime coastal habitat. The project site includes the West End 2 parking field and the PPA; disturbance will be limited to the West End 2 parking field. This action includes the abatement and demolition of the existing comfort station and removal of 12.6 acres of concrete from the existing parking area. The proposed Center and a separate accessible comfort station, with rest rooms and showers, will be constructed within the West End 2 parking field.

The Center will act as a gateway to the PPA; exhibits and programs at the Center will teach visitors about the PPA and how the designation benefits the park and its plant and animal life. The PPA boundary begins at the furthest west terminus of Jones Beach State Park, extending north and south to the waters' edge. The eastern boundary is set back 150 ft from the western edge of the



existing West End 2 parking field. The PPA designation fosters a high level of stewardship by maintaining the ecological integrity of the PPA through the management of all unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species of

flora and fauna; limiting development to appropriate passive recreation such as hiking, fishing, and birding; and encouraging scientific research, study, and public environmental education.

The West End 2 parking field will be reduced and divided into two separate lots; the 12.6 acres of former pavement will be restored to vegetated dunes. The western entrance ramp to the West End 2 parking field will be closed and replaced by a new configuration of entrance and exit ramps located at the center. Pathways will provide access to the beach and tie into the existing bike path. The project will take approximately two years to complete but all existing recreational access will be able to continue throughout.



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