

BEACHES REBOUND

*in time for **summer** fun and sun*

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Water — the primary lure for beach-bound summer visitors to the East End — has been enemy No. 1 over the past several months, with a string of nor'easters pounding the surf and the sands from Wading River to Montauk. But towns have replenished what was lost to erosion, and beaches and bluffs are ready for visitors.

"The summers are great out here and everybody knows it," Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman said. "I think a lot of people are going to come out here. It's going to be a good summer."

With the good comes the bad, and officials are working to keep the ocean beaches mostly clean — both of bacteria and trash — and are also trying to make sure those who want to enjoy the beaches find parking to do so.

The beach near downtown Montauk, which absorbed much of the brunt of the regional storm damage, was recently rebuilt.

Ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft will make it easier to visit without a car — and are an added bonus when the



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sun goes down and the nightlife heats up — as will free shuttle services and an expanded Long Island Rail Road schedule.

Many beaches offer day passes for those who don't have resident parking stickers. It can cost as much as \$50 to dig

your toes in the sand at Cooper's Beach in Southampton Village, but that's the price to visit the beach ranked fourth in the nation by coastal expert Stephen P. Leatherman, aka Dr. Beach. The director of the Laboratory for Coastal Research at Flor-

ida International University has spent several years studying beach erosion and storm impacts.

Here's what you need to know about the issues facing East End beaches this summer season:

PUBLIC ACCESS/OPTIONS, BEACH PASSES

In Riverhead, parking lots at smaller beaches such as Wading River and Reeves Beach have had a tendency to fill up faster, according to Parks and Recreation Superintendent Ray Coyne. Iron Pier Beach in Jamesport and other large beaches have had the capacity to handle crowds, but residents near beaches in smaller surrounding hamlets have complained recently that their parking lots have overflowed during recent beach seasons.

"Right now, [beach parking] is reaching the top-top of the glass, and once it starts spilling over, we're really going to attack the issue," Coyne said.

Some residents have suggested issuing nonresident passes to the larger beaches and restricting them at smaller beaches, Coyne said, adding that Reeves Beach has alternative parking spots that can open up.

In Southold, Supervisor Scott Russell said the increased popularity of the town's beaches has led to more



users than the town can accommodate. "You're dealing with volume, whether it's a day pass or a yearly pass," Russell said.

New Suffolk Beach, one of the most

popular — but smallest — beaches in Southold, has experienced overcrowding and public access problems. Russell said it is getting to the point that the town may either consider limiting

the number of beachgoers or implementing a management plan for New Suffolk that could potentially be implemented at other beaches.

Along the South Fork, Southampton has issued a steady average of 44,039 beach parking stickers annually between 2015 and 2017, according to figures from the town's Parks and Recreation Department.

Town Councilwoman Christine Scalera said the town has generally experienced little, if any, public access issues at town-owned beaches.

Parking access at town beaches in Shelter Island was an issue in years past, but town officials have had some success in solving the problem at Crescent Beach, the town's most popular. Residents have a better chance of finding parking spots with a switch to 24/7 access permits, Highway Superintendent Jay Card said.

East Hampton officials did not return requests for comment.

EROSION

A \$1 million fix to rebuild a ravished ocean beach will ensure a wide swath of white sand when hipsters, surfers and others descend on Montauk this summer.

Town Beach in Southold, the town's main public beach and one of the most visible North Fork attractions, sustained some of the heaviest erosion damage of any area on the East End this year and is in far worse shape.

Damaged beaches are a larger issue for tourism on the South Fork than in Southold, where farms, wineries and dining are almost as much of a draw as the water. Still, business owners worry how the diminished shoreline could affect their bottom line.

"They don't come strictly for the beaches, but they enjoy the beaches," said Amy Uyanik owner of the 15-unit Southold Beach Motel across from Town Beach on Route 48.

A contractor spread sand and cobble rocks naturally deposited nearby to widen the beach, which sits on the Long Island Sound. Completion of the work left the beach 25 feet from the edge of the parking lot to the low tide mark, said Southold Supervisor Scott Russell. A long-term solution, which would include revetment, restoration and resurfacing the parking lot, would cost between \$500,000 and \$600,000, Russell said.

"Realistically there is no way the budget could handle an appropriation for that amount," he said, adding that



though narrow, the beach is safe and usable.

In Montauk, where storms uncovered a half-mile-long stretch of buried sandbags intended to combat erosion along the beach, the town is required through an agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to rebuild the beach. East Hampton Town budgeted about \$1,050,000 to spread sand

over the exposed dunes, and officials said it will be ready when the crowds roll in.

Erosion and sea-level rise remain a concern on the South Fork's easternmost tip. In February, consultants working with East Hampton Town presented a plan for businesses to retreat inland as the best long-term solution.

Baiting Hollow bluffs did sustain sig-

nificant erosion, although all Riverhead Town beaches will be open for the season, said town Councilwoman Catherine Kent.

No sand replenishment projects were done in Southampton Town this year, Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman said.

"I expect this summer the beach should be wide and enjoyable," he said.

TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

H heavy traffic remains a persistent issue for those traveling to the East End, and this year won't be much different. The good news is that free shuttles, earlier and more frequent trains, ride-sharing services and a new Suffolk Bus app will make it easier to get around.

A state grant and money from East Hampton Town will fund a free Hampton Hopper shuttle servicing the hamlet of Montauk. The service will operate from June 28 to Sept. 3 and will run every day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., from Hither Hills to the downtown and harbor areas.

The Free Ride, an app-based service that uses small electric cars to offer free lifts around downtown Southampton, East Hampton and Montauk, will resume Memorial Day weekend and will run seven days a week through Labor Day.

This summer marks the first time that Uber and Lyft ride-sharing services will be available all season.

The best strategy to deal with traffic remains timing your trip to avoid the rush, said Southampton Town Su-

pervisor Jay Schneiderman. Friday afternoon into evening and later in the day on Sunday have long been the busiest periods on the roads during Hamptons summer weekends.

"There's going to be traffic," Schneiderman said. "I think people have gotten used to it."

Long Island Rail Road users can extend their Hamptons weekend with the extension of an early morning rush hour train that will leave the Southampton station at 4:41 a.m. beginning May 21. The train, which previously originated farther west in Speonk, will stop in Hampton Bays, Westhampton and Speonk before continuing to Penn Station.

The LIRR is also doubling its weekend service to the North Fork, with four roundtrips between Ronkonkoma and Greenport.

Suffolk County bus service riders can see locations in real time using the new Rider app. It is expected to roll out within the next two weeks, said Legis. Bridget Fleming (D-Noyac).



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TRASH PICKUP

Southampton has seen its share of trash issues at local beaches rise in recent years, not just in summer but into the fall season.

Jeff Standish, the town's public works director, said the amount of beach trash has been "more than ever in the last few years."

"There is definitely much, much more garbage," Standish said, adding that he had to find an extra \$6,000 this year to pay for landfill-related costs for the town.

The garbage volume at beach barrels normally tends to taper off shortly after Labor Day, but in recent years the overflow has extended into October around Columbus Day, Standish said. He added that the increase could be related to the dumping of household trash by tourists and local residents.

Standish and Town Supervisor Scott Russell said the town has been considering its options, including installing cameras near the beach barrels.

In Riverhead, officials said



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they have seen more trash at local beaches in recent years from May to September.

To combat this, Councilwoman Catherine Kent, a liaison on the town's Recreation Advisory Committee, and Parks and Recreation Superintendent Ray Coyne said the town has placed more barrels at beaches and increased trash pickups on the beach from once a week to Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Southampton parks director Kristen M. Doulos said the

town has had to deal with the piling up of household trash left at beach cans, mostly in July and August.

The town's park maintenance staff increased garbage collection last year to twice a week-end on local beaches, resulting in higher overtime costs.

The town has also placed additional "Big Belly" solar trash compactors at more of the town's beach pavilion locations. The methods have led to savings. Last year, it cost Southampton \$25,000 to remove beach

trash, according to Doulos' office, about \$9,000 less than in 2016.

On Shelter Island, Highway Superintendent Jay L. Card said trash barrels at the town's four beaches are usually emptied five times a week starting in May. Shelter Island spends about \$60,000 annually in trash service costs for beaches, including staffing, truck, fuel and other costs.

East Hampton officials did not return requests for comment.

LAW PROTECTS CONNECTICUT'S TRANS INMATES

The Associated Press

HARTFORD — Transgender inmates in Connecticut will soon become the first in the nation to have a legal right to be housed in a prison that matches the gender with which they identify, a law being lauded by civil rights advocates as groundbreaking.

In addition to housing, it also gives inmates the right to be searched by a correction officer who matches their self-identified gender, to be addressed in a manner consistent with their gender identity, and have access to commissary items, such as clothing, that matches their gender identity.

"This is a really big deal," said David McGuire, executive director of the ACLU of Connecticut. "It is, in our mind, the most protective transgender policy and law in the country."

The legislation passed this spring as part of a larger bill that also dealt with the rights of pregnant inmates.

The law codifies much of a directive the Department of Correction put in place in February, which outlines procedures for assessing and dealing with gender nonconforming inmates.

That directive was formed, in part, in response to a 2014 case involving a transgender Connecticut teen, who ended up being held for a time at an adult prison for women because the state could not figure out where to place her, said Mike Lawlor, the governor's undersecretary for criminal justice policy and planning.

It is designed to dovetail with state law that bans discrimination in public places on the basis of gender identity or expression and the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act, Lawlor said.

The law, which goes into effect July 1, requires a diagnosis of gender dysphoria or a legal identification that matches the person's gender identity. The "presumptive placement" can be changed if prison officials determine it would present problems, according to the law.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated there are 3,200 transgender inmates in the nation's prisons and jails.

WATER QUALITY

Beachgoers can expect glittering, blue-green waves at ocean beaches this summer, though blue-green algae remain the main threat in ponds and other freshwater bodies.

Blue-green algae, a human health hazard also known as cyanobacteria, can cause skin irritation, rashes or even liver damage, according to the Suffolk County Health Department. Officials advise people to monitor media reports and watch for signage to avoid water bodies affected by the algae. A blue-green algae advisory was issued May 11 by the county for Lake Agawam in Southampton, and advocacy group Concerned Citizens of Montauk announced it will take biweekly samples at Fort Pond.

"In any bodies of water that are warm, nutrient rich and still, there is a high threat of blue-green algae," said Colleen Henn, Eastern Long Island chapter coordinator for the Surfrider Foundation, a beach advocacy group.



The organization uses volunteers to take weekly water samples tested for enterococcus, a coliform bacterium that indicates fecal pollution from either humans or animals, at 50 water bodies from East Quogue to Montauk.

High levels of enterococcus bacteria have not triggered an ocean beach closure in Suffolk since the 1980s, according to a

spokeswoman for the county Health Department. Surfrider data showed levels above the EPA standard for coastal recreational waters at several ocean beaches last year following heavy rainfall, Henn said. Those readings could be due to stormwater runoff or oversaturated wastewater systems leaching into the groundwater.

"That's a trend we are going

to keep an eye on," Henn said.

Brown tide and rust tide, types of algal bloom that pose no danger to human health but can be harmful to shellfish, remain a threat in bodies like Shinnecock Bay but have not been spotted this year, according to Ed Warner Jr., president of the Southampton Town Trustees.

Algal blooms are not a problem at ocean beaches.