

# OUR TOWNS

7/18/11



A plan for protecting the estuary and watershed of Oyster Bay and Cold Spring Harbor is nearly complete. Above, boats are tied together at anchor in Oyster Bay Harbor.

## LONG ISLAND

# Watershed plan nearly ready

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The water — whether for sailing, swimming or making a living off its shellfish — defines many of the municipalities around Oyster Bay and Cold Spring harbors.

“It’s the heart of this community,” said Patricia Aitken, executive director of Friends of the Bay, a nonprofit environmental protection organization. “But until now, nobody looked at it as a whole, and brought everyone together.” She was referencing her

group’s nearly complete Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Watershed Action Plan, a long-term road map to protect and preserve the area’s estuary and watershed. One of its major accomplishments was gaining participation from all 18 adjoining municipalities.

A new committee includes both Long Island counties, the towns of Oyster Bay and Huntington, the City of Glen Cove and 13 villages. Officials say the unified approach to topics as varied as stormwater remediation and shellfish sanctuaries can aid in the pursuit of state

and federal money.

“They like to see that what you’re doing is part of an overall plan,” said Eric Swenson, Oyster Bay’s environmental control superintendent. “It’s government and citizens’ groups working together.”

The action plan has been nearly two years in the making, and was preceded by another two-year effort, the State of the Watershed Report. After three community meetings, Friends of the Bay closed the draft action plan’s public comment period earlier this month. That 117-page draft document

is posted at friendsofthebay.org. Counting water quality reports her organization began producing in the early 2000s, Aitken says putting together the action plan cost close to a half-million dollars.

She expects to complete it by mid-August. One of its priority recommendations is creating an online library to help residents understand the complex water-quality standards, regulations and issues surrounding Oyster Bay and Cold Spring harbors.

“We need a lot more public education,” she said.

Still, the area’s harbors, officials say, remain among Long Island’s cleanest for swimming and shellfishing (some to the west have been closed to commercial fishing for decades). Keeping high water quality is important to Rob Crifa, a former Friends of the Bay director and coordinator of the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee.

“We want people to kayak, swim, sail and fish here,” he said. “We want that interaction. It’s getting them to connect with the water — and become stewards for the future.”