

8. Scenic Resources

8.1 Environmental Conservation Law Provisions Regarding Scenic Resources

The Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act (Environmental Conservation Law Article 57) includes scenic resources in the class of resources to be considered during preparation of the Pine Barrens Plan. It also includes unique scenic resources which are of regional or statewide significance as one of the bases of Critical Resource Area definitions. Additionally, in the promulgation of the interim goals and standards for development during the planning period, the Commission included scenic resources as one of the factors to be considered and accounted for in development applications.

Scenic resources had been previously explicitly addressed by the State Legislature. The legislature, in 1972, passed the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act (Article 15 of the Environmental Conservation Law). The Rivers Act was intended to protect and preserve, in a free-flowing status, those rivers of the state which possess outstanding natural, scenic, historical, ecological and recreational values important to present and future generations. Rivers meeting the Act's criteria may be designated by the State Legislature for inclusion in the program. They are placed within the wild, scenic or recreational categories based upon current land use patterns.

Currently, four Long Island rivers are within the Act's provisions: the Peconic, Carmans, Connetquot and the Nissequogue. Of these, the Peconic River (in its entirety), and the Carmans River's northern stretch (that portion north of Sunrise Highway) are within the Central Pine Barrens area.

The Rivers Act provides for the setting of boundaries around each river's banks. Development proposals within these boundaries are then reviewed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

8.2 Definition and Identification of Scenic Resources

The inventory and analysis of scenic resources of the Central Pine Barrens necessarily requires a practical operational definition.

Scenic resources are defined as those landscape patterns and features which are visually or aesthetically pleasing and which therefore contribute affirmatively to the definition of a distinct community or region within the Central Pine Barrens.

Application of this operational definition is guided by the results of studies performed elsewhere, including New Jersey and Cape Cod. The *New Jersey Pinelands Comprehensive Plan* (1981), for example, utilizes the results of a study of visual preferences. Those results identified generic categories of landscapes and views which respondents found appealing. Generally, landscapes with surface water, undisturbed forests and scenes showing small degrees of human impact were found to be preferable over suburban, commercial, excavated or otherwise extensively disturbed

landscapes. The study also discriminated among specific categories of preferred water or forest views.

Similarly, Cape Cod's *Regional Policy Plan for Barnstable County* (1991) reported that rural character was important to 74% of the respondents in their choice to live on the Cape, based upon a residents' survey. Consistent with this finding, 60% identified the loss of open space as one of the most serious issues facing the area, and 71% urged protection of scenic landscapes be undertaken.

Consequently, these findings permit us to qualitatively address the value judgment problem posed by the well-worn adage "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." This is accomplished by including in the inventory those scenic resources falling within categories which ranked high on such surveys.

8.3 Functions of Scenic Resources

Scenic areas, open spaces, rural landscapes, vistas, country roads and other factors interact to produce a net effect upon individuals or communities. Some of the commonly listed benefits of this complex of landscapes attributes include:

Defining the character of human communities physically located within the area. This "sense of place" may in turn influence which communities within an area become more desirable locations to live than others.

Distinguishing one community from neighboring ones, by providing physical and perceptual breaks among them. This, in turn helps build a regional identity founded upon a diversity of built and unbuilt areas.

Displaying the natural resources of an area, and thereby encouraging tourism and recreational industries with a positive economic benefit. The *Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan* (1991) estimates that some 48% of that region's economic base is derived from tourism and summer visits, and that activity is linked to rural character and open space resources.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of scenic and aesthetic resources is their *infinite renewability*. Cultural, social and economic activities which are based upon such resources, therefore, can be sustained indefinitely.

8.4 Inventory Methodology

Scenic resources are not definable in isolation from other resource categories. Historic sites and buildings, archaeological sites, community gathering places, surface water bodies, shorelines, rural roads, etc. may be part of, or stand separate from, larger geographic areas identified as scenic. Overlap among resource inventories should therefore be expected. The inventory below notes a number of such overlaps.

Scenic resources are inventoried here within a scale range practical for the study area. Generally, those identified have an areal extent of several acres or larger. Scenic linear features are generally listed only if they are one half to one mile or more in length. This precludes a listing of individual historic buildings, bridges, small creeks, short trail or road segments, etc., despite their possessing "scenic" qualities individually.

At the other end of the spectrum, very large land areas or vague descriptions are also avoided, as they contribute little to eventual analysis or recommendations. Thus, the inventory excludes such entries as "the Core Preservation Area," "all two lane roads within the Core Preservation Area," "all surface waters," etc.

8.5 Scenic Resource Inventory for the Central Pine Barrens

8.5.1 Sunrise Highway (NYS 27) from CR 51 intersection east to NYS 24 intersection

This broad, clear road segment offers northerly views of the Manorville and Riverhead Hills, northerly and southerly views of the dwarf pine plains, Flanders hills, the glacial outwash plain and agricultural lands. Eastbound travelers, under clear conditions, obtain a wide sweep from the north through the east.

8.5.2 Riverhead-Moriches Road (CR 51) and Center Drive from CR 111 north to Riverhead County Center .

This roadway provides wide, expansive views of the Manorville and Riverhead Hills, southerly views from the top of moraine and northerly views of Riverhead hamlet and the northerly farmland. This corridor contains one of the few views of the Riverhead region available to motorists or touring cyclists; most such views are available only from interior trails traversing the moraine.

8.5.3 Riverhead-Moriches Road (CR 63) from CR 51 north toward Riverhead

This segment provides glimpses of the open water of Wildwood Lake (looking northeasterly through easterly), the NYS Sarnoff Preserve and portions of Cranberry Bog County Nature Preserve.

8.5.4 Riverhead-Westhampton Road (CR 31) and Riverhead-Quogue Road (CR 104) from Suffolk Airport north to Riverhead

The dwarf pine barrens and the NYS Sarnoff Preserve are visible here. See the separate inventory entries for the Dwarf Pine Barrens and the Riverhead Hills.

8.5.5 Flanders Road (NYS 24) from approximately Cross River Drive (CR 105) east to Jackson Ave.

Flanders marsh, Birch Creek, Owl Pond and Sears Bellows County Park line this heavily forested corridor. This roadway also passes Birch Creek Road (with its undeveloped Peconic Bay view) and Spinney Road (an interior forest road now split by Sunrise Highway). Architectural history is revealed along stretches of this road to the careful observer. Examples include the 19th century Flanders boarding houses (frequented by vacationing urbanites in the days prior to the paving of Flanders Road), some of the earliest-built private residences in eastern Suffolk (many continuing in private use), several private fishing and hunting club sites (although the actual structures are generally not visible from the main road), and, of course, the much publicized Big Duck.

8.5.6 Yaphank hamlet and Yaphank-Middle Island Road (CR 21) from Lower Lake north to Cathedral and Prosser Pines

Views available here include the northerly edge of Southaven County Park and the open waters of Lower Lake (Carmans River system), Yaphank hamlet and historic district, Upper Lake (a Brookhaven town park), Warbler Woods and Flower City county preserves, Cathedral Pines County Park and Prosser Pines County Nature Preserve. Considerable historic and cultural resources are present here, and form the basis for part of the scenic nature of the area.

8.5.7 William Floyd Parkway from northerly edge of Brookhaven Laboratory north to Route 25A

This segment's scenic qualities are derived from an essentially intact buffer of pitch pines and oaks along both sides of the roadway. This continuous green corridor is reinforced by a center median which is heavily wooded north of the Whiskey Road intersection. Few curb cuts or traffic signals disrupt the traveler's impression. Views of the state and town parkland along the eastern side (from Whiskey Road northbound) comprise the buffer on that side.

8.5.8 Rocky Point Road (CR 21) from approximately Whiskey Road north to northern edge of state preserve

This corridor is almost entirely forested, with a state-leased farm tract at the intersection with Whiskey Road. A number of natural and historical resources are found off this road corridor (*see* the separate entry for the NYS Rocky Point lands).

8.5.9 North Street and Mill Road through Manorville hamlet

This area is lightly developed residentially, with a mix of forest, field and agricultural land uses interspersed.

8.5.10 Schultz Road and Wading River-Manorville Road

Some light residential development occurs within the large county and federal holdings which dominate the land uses here.

8.5.11 NYS Rocky Point Natural Resource Management Area

This 5100+ acre tract includes both marked and unmarked trail systems, with views ranging from north shore forests to pitch pine reclaimed areas and mixed pine-oak woods. Morainal topography occurs in the northern areas, with some open vistas at select points. The northwest quadrant is particularly rolling, with hollows and pocket depressions. Visible to the educated eye, are the scattered artifacts of the former use of the site by the RCA Corporation as a world-wide radio facility. Historical resources are also found in the Sarnoff Preserve (*see* the Riverhead Hills entry). These historical resources complement the natural resource value of both areas by partly explaining the visually striking patterns of current vegetative cover and trail layouts.

8.5.12 Prosser Pines County Nature Preserve

A former white pine plantation, Prosser Pines offers a visually distinct experience through its modest trail circuit which lies under the high, shaded canopy of the white pines. Planted during the 19th century, this area complements the historical resource value of the nearby Yaphank hamlet and road corridor.

8.5.13 Southaven County Park and Carmans River

Scenic views of, and from, the Carmans River abound here. An extensive trail and road system lead from the southerly end, where the river is broad, to the northern end, where the waters of Lower Lake feed into the narrow, fast moving stream of the Carmans River there. Historical and cultural resource values are also abundant, as the site continues to serve its traditional role as a hunting, fishing and canoeing area. Park buildings found here tell the story of the era of the Long Island sportsmen's camps, dating from only one or two generations.

8.5.14 Brookhaven State Park

Marked and unmarked trails traverse the hilly glacial topography in the northerly stretches. Paths often follow contours, emphasizing swales, kettleholes, and ridges. Further south, the trails reveal a mixture of forest types, including a flat, savannah-like area.

8.5.15 Peconic River and associated Coastal Plain Ponds from Middle Country Road (NYS 24) south to Schultz Road and east towards Connecticut Avenue

A large, somewhat linear, L-shaped corridor, this extensive county holding offers numerous pond shore views from interior trails and roads. Scenic views are provided by such ponds as Woodchoppers, Round, Sandy, Grassy, Duck, Zeeks, Jones and Peasys. Scenic areas are also found in interior trails, especially as they traverse fields or cross vegetation types.

8.5.16 Swan Pond County Parkland

Swan Pond and the former cranberry bogs to its south (into which Swan Pond drains), and the associated uplands offer open water and field views. A boat launch site and an earthen dam provide numerous water views. These are somewhat isolated from the main complex of the Peconic River system noted above, but are distinguished by their views of the former bogs, and

the bird life which they now support. Artifacts of former bog activity are present, as they are in Cranberry Bog County Nature Preserve (*see* separate entry).

8.5.17 Manorville-Riverhead Hills from roughly the Long Island Expressway extending along an arc running southeast and east to CR 51

A clear day unlocks extensive views from here to the southwest, south and southeast, often reaching to the Atlantic Ocean waters. A number of specific sites are identified on trail maps and guides, and include, for example, Bald Hill and several ridge lines offering views to the north as far as the Long Island Sound bluffs. Trail systems, ridge lines and kettleholes provide other viewpoints. Significant historical sites are also found here, a notable example of which is the traditional semi-annual gathering place known as Hunters Garden.

8.5.18 Riverhead Hills, an extension of the above "arc", running from CR 51 east past Suffolk Community College, Speonk-Riverhead Road to CR 104

This area includes the Hampton Hills county parkland and the NYS David Sarnoff Preserve. Views here include a southerly sweep of the entire dwarf pine barrens area (from the elevations immediately below the radar domes off of CR 51), views of Wildwood Lake, views to the north from the trail system on the southerly portion of the Sarnoff Preserve, and short distance vistas afforded by the rolling nature of the morainal topography.

8.5.19 Cranberry Bog County Nature Preserve located south of Riverhead County Center

Pond shore views, former cranberry bogs, white cedar swamps, upland pitch pine forests are all within short distances in this preserve. With assistance, the visitor can interpret a number of historical artifacts found there to learn about the operation of a typical cranberry bog. This is also evidenced at the Swan Pond site cited elsewhere in this inventory.

8.5.20 Sears Bellows / Maple Swamp / Flanders Hills County parkland from Flanders Road (NYS 24) south to Sunrise Highway; from Pleasure Drive east to Bellows Pond Road

This complex consists of diverse vegetation, upland forests, high and breezy ridges east of Spinney Road with some short distance views to the east, and wetlands and surface waters associated with Maple Swamp, Birch Creek, Owl Pond, Sears Pond and other local water bodies. Extensive stands of mountain laurel exemplify the diversity of trail views in the midst of the pine-oak woodlands here.

8.5.21 South Flanders and Henry's Hollow region

Considerable topographic relief (where the moraine falls off abruptly south of Sunrise Highway) offer scenic views here of the knob - and - kettle topography.

8.5.22 Dwarf Pine Barrens

In addition to being the subject of views referenced above, the dwarf pine barrens also offer a less-well publicized view from within. An observer's eye simply rises above the low canopy, revealing an unusual vista.

This area also contains a number of landscape features deriving from military activity at the former Suffolk County Air Force Base (now the County's Gabreski Airport), and the intense subdivision of the area earlier this century. Intriguingly, one such landscape feature is only visible from a viewpoint far to the north along the southerly slopes of the Hampton Hills property. From that vantage point, the peculiar pattern of different stages of growth following selective cutting, fires, etc. is visible on clear days, belied by the rectilinear patterns of various shades of green.

8.5.23 Flanders and Hubbard County Parks, Southampton Town Red Creek Parkland

These lands and waters (some are currently restricted) offer rural scenes blending land and water, with elements of former hunting lodges and fields visible. Goose, Birch, Mill and Hubbard Creek provide scenic coastal views from, and of, the waters of Flanders Bay. Penny Pond, Red Creek Pond and (some distance further east) Squires Pond also provide water vistas and scenes frequented by wildlife. Historical resources include the hunting and fishing clubs noted under the Flanders Road corridor entry above.

8.5.24 Quogue Wildlife Refuge

Views of Ice Pond, North Pond, and portions of the southerly extent of the dwarf pine barrens are some of the scenic views. Southerly portions of the refuge offer views of Quantuck Creek proper, into which the ponds feed. A careful tour of the site reveals many historical clues to the ice-harvesting practices of years back.

8.5.25 Peconic River from Connecticut Ave east to Riverhead hamlet and Flanders Bay

Views of, and from, the Peconic River include a mixture of lightly and partly developed shorelines. The majority of the western portion, from Connecticut Ave to approximately the LILCO gas storage facility on West Main Street in Riverhead, is lightly developed, with long stretches on forested shoreline, even within populated areas. This area includes Peconic Lake, a portion of the Peconic River which widens considerably west of Forge Road. Several fishing access sites also offer scenic glimpses in addition to their basic purpose. Historical and cultural resources are abundant here, both in the structures and land use patterns visible from the river, as well as in the system of dams, embankments and other shoreline alterations introduced over time.

8.5.26 Paumanok Path (Pine Barrens Trail portion) from Rocky Point south, southeast,

and east to Sears Bellows County Park, the Red Creek region, and outside the Central Pine Barrens towards Montauk Point

The path offers viewpoints for scenes of pitch pine and oak forests, fallow and active agricultural fields, terminal moraines, kettleholes, freshwater lakes and wetlands, ridges, dwarf pine barrens,

high points ranging up to 200+ feet, glacial outwash plains, and many of the features listed for other inventory entries.

Many of the preceding inventory entries for parks, preserves and undeveloped areas are threaded together by the Paumanok Path. Connecting trails provide access to the Peconic Bay system, Brookhaven State Park, Westhampton, and other locations. Throughout its extent, the path has been consciously designed to expose the walker to both natural and cultural resources embedded in the landscape.

8.5.27 Wildwood Lake south of Riverhead hamlet

A scenic, broad freshwater lake offering scenic views of, and from, the water. Portions of the lake's shoreline are developed residentially, with the southerly portion partly protected as county parkland and offering wide views from atop a steep shoreline bluff. Wildwood Lake is also visible from the CR 63 scenic road corridor (*see above*).

8.5.28 Artist Lake immediately south of Middle Country Road in Middle Island

Artist Lake has a mostly developed shoreline (contemporary structures), with residential units on the east and south, and Middle Country road along the northerly side. Some undeveloped property along the west side, and a town-run public access point along the roadway, provide some scenic visual respite from the commercial land use pattern along that portion of Middle Country Road.

8.5.29 Lake Panamoka approximately one mile north of Middle Country Road, between Ridge and Calverton

Lake Panamoka has a densely developed shoreline (much of the area formerly seasonally-occupied bungalows or cottages) along the west, south and southeast shore, with some town-owned open space along the northeasterly shore. The size and extent of the open water provide a scenic view from those few viewpoints accessible to the public.

8.6 Scenic Resources Issues Analysis

Several observations can be made as a consequence of the scenic resources inventory. They are summarized here in brief in an attempt to infer practical principles for future management efforts.

Scenic road corridors in general are either vistas, providing a panoramic view that may stretch a mile or more, or closer, more visually intimate corridors, which providing a continuous exposure of forest, water views, or rural scenery to the traveler. These two significantly different types of scenic road corridors require very different strategies for their protection.

Additionally, the majority of the scenic road corridors above have several design attributes or incidental characteristics in common. These attributes include limited numbers of intersections,

traffic signals, curb cuts, adjacent land uses which are discordant with their surroundings and signs (both public and private). Roadside vegetation (native, street trees, ornamental, etc.) can contribute to, or detract from, scenic qualities as well.

However, generalizations are difficult, and each road corridor must be analyzed individually. Such a difficulty is exemplified by Sunrise Highway. Its scenic qualities derive, in part, from the associated clearing. Yet, clearing to such an extent in current highway designs is not likely to occur, and therefore does not necessarily provide a lesson to be applied to the other corridors. Conversely, scenic corridors which incorporate close, intimate forested areas may not be easily replicated in other corridors, due to established land use patterns, safety considerations or other factors.

Water views from road corridors listed above vary widely, and are difficult to categorize succinctly. Water views obtained from road corridors are dependent upon maintenance of a visual opening from the roadway, and are sometimes associated with official or unofficial vehicle pull-off spots.

These openings or turn-off parking spots are sometimes associated with actual water access sites for fishing, small boat launching or other activities. Such accesses generally help maintain scenic views. In other situations in the inventory, it appears to be the case that some of the scenic road views are present only because there was roadside clearing for some other purpose (e.g., homes or businesses, highway shoulders, etc.). In still other cases, the view was already present and the concomitant pull-offs, parking areas, and other clearing naturally followed. Cause and effect are not always easily distinguished for scenic road corridors involving water views.

Vista points other than those on road corridors are generally found in interior lands, and only sometimes occur on trail systems. A significant number of views are away from any trails (marked or unmarked).

Interestingly, some of the views available to past Long Island generations are less available to the current generation, as the vegetative cover along a slope immediately below a viewpoint rises or changes species composition, and selective clearing to maintain the views is not practiced. Paradoxically, in other situations, unpredictable (and sometimes unauthorized) clearing due to a variety of causes can actually destroy an interior scenic view, by removing the very elements which constitute the originally scenic qualities. The maintenance of scenic resources is not currently a management focus.

Architecture and site design play a major role in those scenic views or road corridors where existing land use patterns actually contribute to a scenic resource. Identification of the design factors which cause this is beyond this document's scope, but is an important question for management of such scenic resources.

Roadside management policies may influence scenic qualities through such techniques as use of native plants and trees, mowing or planting strategies, installation or omission of curbs and sidewalks (e.g., "country lane" specifications), types of signs (public and private) permitted, provision of scenic pull-offs which may be combined with fishing, boat access, trailheads,

control of roadside litter (a problematic topic at best), consideration of alternatives to pavement, etc.

Interior views are obviously related to topography and trail layouts. Generally, better views and overall scenic impressions are obtained when trail systems conform to topographic changes in elevation. Appropriate design techniques (switchbacks, etc.) contribute to both erosion control and scenic vista maintenance.

Historical and contemporary scenic vistas may change, or be lost entirely, over time.

Restoration and maintenance of historical panoramas, using selective forestry practices, may be required to protect both historical and scenic vistas. previous inventory is not based upon a standardized set of specific criteria for identifying and valuing scenic resources. A set of assessment criteria should be considered for inclusion in the land use plan standards section or future rules and regulations for plan implementation. Suggested standardized criteria based upon established methods for identifying scenic resources are included in Appendix 4-1.