ELDERS POINT, JAMAICA BAY
SALT MARSH ISLANDS, NY

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS **BUILDING STRONG**

DESCRIPTION

The Marsh Islands ecosystem is an integral part of Jamaica Bay, which has been targeted for restoration by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, National Park Service (Gateway) (NPS). New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP), New York State Department of environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the State of New York and the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program (HEP). The restoration effort is being led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and will be monitored by the agencies to ensure that this and future restoration efforts in Jamaica Bay provide long-term environmental benefits to the estuary.

The marsh islands ecosystem is a home for a variety of wildlife. Salt marshes provide valuable habitat for fish and shellfish, are an important food source for native and migratory birds, and also help improve water quality by removing nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphates.

Jamaica Bay is recognized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFW) as a coastal habitat deserving preservation and restoration of habitats, which contribute to sustaining and expanding the region's native living resources. Jamaica Bay is a highly productive habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species. These species breed and use the area as a nursery for juvenile, migratory birds that reside in the area during winter and migratory birds that stop-over in the area during fall and spring migrations.

The NYSDEC estimates that approximately 1,400 acres of tidal salt marsh have been lost from the marsh islands alone since 1924, with the system wide rate of loss rapidly increasing in recent years. Between 1994 and 1999, as estimated 220 acres of salt marsh were lost at an alarming rate of 44 acres per year (NPS, 2001). Further, it is estimated if this trend continues, all remaining salt marsh on the islands will be lost over the next three decades.

Elders Point is comprised of two separate islands, Elders Point East and Elders Point West that total approximately 21 vegetated acres. Originally one island comprised of approximately 132 acres, the loss of marsh in the center portion severed the two ends, resulting in two separate islands connected by mudflats.

The restoration plan for Elders East and Elders West includes restoring the existing vegetated areas and the sheltered and exposed mudflats by placing fill material up to an elevation that is suitable for low marsh growth. This includes hand planting over 700,000 plants on Elders East and replanting more than 200,000 plants on Elders West.

On Elders East, saltmarsh codgrass (spartina alterniflora) will be planted throughout the low marsh zone of the site. A mixture of saltmarsh codgrass (spartina alterniflora), salt hay (spartina patens), and spike grass (distichis spicata) will be planted in the elevation zones between the low marsh and upland. Fill material will be placed between the existing vegetation in such a manner as to avoid damage to the existing vegetation. A no-planting area covering approximately five acres on the southeast side of Elders West will be established to evaluate project progress. Saltmarsh codgrass will be planted throughout the remainder of the site.

In 2006, seed for the replanting was collected, processed and stored in facilities operated by the NRCS. The seed was germinated and grown and planting has begun at Elders Point East. To facilitate planting at Elders Point West, additional seed is currently being collected, processed and stored for planting next spring. The NRCS is overseeing

the growing at their Plant Materials Centers in Cape May, New Jersey; Beltsville, Maryland; Lansing, Michigan; and Alderson West Virginia.

In March 2006, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded a $13 million contract for the Elders Point East Island Restoration in Jamaica Bay, N.Y., to Galvin Brothers of Great Neck, N.Y. To re-countour Elders Island, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is pumping more than 300,000 cubic yards of sand that was dredged from various channels in the harbor. Once tidal flow to the areas has been reestablished, water and sediment quality will be improved, promoting the return of native fish and wildlife.

STATUS
In September 2009 the U.S. Army Corps signed an interagency project partnership agreement to restore the Elders West salt marsh. Partner agencies are The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey; U.S. National Park Service, the State of New York Department of Environmental Conservation, and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. Construction began in November 2009.

The project will beneficially utilize about 200,000 cubic yards of clean sand from the ongoing New York-New Jersey Harbor 50 ft. deepening project to restore about 35 acres of low and high marsh habitat in Jamaica Bay.

COST
Elders West Salt Marsh: It is expected to cost $11.5 million, with 65 percent of the cost borne by the federal government and 35 percent divided between the State of New York and the City of New York. Included in the federal cost share are about $3.9 million in federal stimulus funds.
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CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

District	Representative
NY-06	Rep. Gregory Meeks
NY-09	Rep. Anthony Weiner