



Save the Sound®

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Save the Sound returns to Sunken Meadow State Park for marsh restoration

Multi-year project is strengthening ecosystem and bolstering coastal resiliency

Smithtown, N.Y.—Save the Sound has launched the latest phase of its multi-year marsh restoration effort Sunken Meadow State Park. This new project comes as part of the larger **Sunken Meadow Comprehensive Resilience and Restoration Plan**, a multi-million-dollar effort to restore the park's long-compromised marsh ecosystem.

The latest restoration effort began in early March with the removal of *Phragmites*, an invasive freshwater wetland reed, and end with the planting of 20,000 new native cordgrass seedlings across two acres of recovering saltwater marshland. Thanks to its dense root systems and limited regional predators, *Phragmites* out-competes native plants—such as the cordgrass *Spartina*—which better provide wildlife habitat and stabilize coastline against storms. Construction partners SumCo Eco-Contracting will use low-impact excavation equipment to remove the *Phragmites* from two acres of recovering salt marsh. After a brief adjustment period allowing for tidal flushing, Save the Sound will return to the marsh this spring to plant 20,000 *Spartina* seedlings and native shrubs with help from local volunteers.

“The recovery this salt marsh has already shown is an incredible display of nature’s resilience,” **said Gwen Macdonald, director of green projects for Save the Sound.** “It’s amazing to see the return of saltwater plants and wildlife that have been absent from large portions of the marsh for years. Our ability to give nature a gentle boost will speed up the recovery process and benefit not only the local ecosystem but also nearby communities that depend on a hearty coastline for protection from storms and sea rise.”

Sunken Meadow Creek and adjoining saltwater wetlands were cut off from the tidal flow of Long Island Sound in the 1950s by a man-made barrier, turning the area into a freshwater marsh. This caused marsh die-off while drastically altering its ecosystem and species composition. After Hurricane Sandy breached the barrier and re-opened the channel to saltwater flow in 2012, Save the Sound began work to aid the marsh in its recovery, with support from federal grants.

Since the start of Save the Sound's marsh restoration efforts in 2015, more than 500 volunteers have assisted in planting thousands of *Spartina* plugs. The latest planting will reintroduce a variety of native coastal plants to intertidal and upper marsh areas, including *Spartina* seedlings grown at a Connecticut greenhouse from seeds collected at Sunken Meadow under the federal government's Seeds of Success program.

The Sunken Meadow Comprehensive Restoration and Resiliency Plan is funded by federal grant dollars from the Department of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

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More information on the Sunken Meadow Comprehensive Resilience and Restoration Plan:

- <https://greencitiesbluewaters.wordpress.com/2015/02/09/resiliency-restoration-at-sunken-meadow-park/>
- <https://greencitiesbluewaters.wordpress.com/2015/02/13/resiliency-restoration-at-sunken-meadow-park-part-ii/>

past volunteer efforts:

- <https://greencitiesbluewaters.wordpress.com/2015/07/02/photo-journal-sunken-meadow-state-park-marsh-planting/>
- <https://greencitiesbluewaters.wordpress.com/2016/06/15/sunken-meadow-restoration-saga-continues/>

and educational programming:

- <https://greencitiesbluewaters.wordpress.com/2017/11/03/fridays-in-the-field-my-time-at-sunken-meadow-state-park/>