



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
New York District

## **Elders Point, Jamaica Bay Salt Marsh Islands, NY**

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### **PROJECT FACTS**

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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 Corps 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.

Jamaica Bay is recognized by the United States 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, an 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 mudflat.

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 more than 700,000 plants on Elders East and replanting more than 200,000 plants on Elders West. On Elders East, *Spartina alterniflora* (saltmarsh cordgrass) will be planted throughout the low marsh zone of the site. A mixture of *Spartina alterniflora* (saltmarsh cordgrass), *Spartina patens* (salt hay), and *Distichis spicata* (spike grass) 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 cordgrass 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, N.J., Beltsville, M.D., Lansing, M.I. and Alderson, W.V.

In March 2006, the Corps 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-contour Elders Island, the Corps 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.

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