

Crab Meadow Watershed

Preserve, Protect and Enjoy!

Welcome to the Crab Meadow Watershed

The Crab Meadow Watershed encompasses an area of approximately 3,560 square acres of land that drains directly to Crab Meadow Beach and the surrounding salt marshes and intertidal beaches, subsequently draining into the Long Island Sound.

Within the Crab Meadow Watershed there exists a collection of diverse habitats and wildlife that depend on its natural resources for food, water and shelter. People value a watershed as an economic, ecological and recreational resource. It is important to understand the hydrological processes that are continually shaping the Crab Meadow Watershed along with the impact the actions of those who live, work and recreate within its boundaries have on the health of the Watershed.



Dynamic Hydrological Processes shaping the Watershed

Shaped by a combination of natural and human influences, the Crab Meadow Watershed is a dynamic system that is constantly changing. The salt marshes of the Crab Meadow Watershed play an important role as filters and receptor areas. Beds of dense vegetation are essential to the stability of the coastline in trapping and binding sediments. They provide coastal protection from damaging intertidal influences as well as filtration of harmful contaminants from human activity.

An anticipated rise in sea level could potentially impact many of the watershed's environments, particularly those along the shore, changing the shape of the coastline, and moving the fresh-salt water interfaces.

Run-off from storms and human activity are common causes of erosion within the watershed. Run-off loosens sediment, transporting and depositing it further downstream. Erosion and sedimentation influence the flow of the channels linking the upland and coastal zones and manipulate the topography of an area, subsequently influencing the drainage basin.

The slope and shape of a drainage basin can have a tremendous effect on the way stormwater runoff moves through a watershed as well. Areas with a steeper slope will see elevated rates of flow, as will areas of increased development due to a reduction in permeable surfaces for water to penetrate.

Wildlife and Habitat

The Crab Meadow Watershed includes several ecological habitats. The predominant habitats include hardwood and deciduous Forest, Salt Marsh, Sandy Beach and Freshwater/Brackish Ponds

The sections of hardwood forest, composed of oaks (white, black, scarlet), pines, birches and maple provide shelter and food for woodpeckers, a variety of songbirds, owls, red tail hawk, whitetail deer, raccoons, opossum, squirrels and chipmunks. The nuts that drop from the trees provide forage for many species, sustaining them through the winter.

A few small freshwater and brackish ponds exist within the watershed thus providing habitat and food for many species of animals including egrets, herons, frogs (leopard, green), turtles (box, painted), snakes (ribbon, garter), toads, trout, bass, etc.

Crab Meadow Beach and its surrounding salt marsh and estuaries are important habitat for osprey, diamond-back terrapin, migrating/over-wintering waterfowl and shorebirds, and a variety of local marine invertebrates and fish. Estuaries often serve as a nursery for most saltwater fish and shellfish. Crab Meadow Beach has been a significant ecological spawning area for Horseshoe Crabs.

Ways you can help protect and preserve the Crab Meadow Watershed

Everything we do on land affects our streams, ponds and bays. When water runs off land it takes pollutants and debris with it, carrying them through storm water drain systems to the nearest body of water. There are some simple actions you can take to help prevent pollution to our waters:

- 1. KNOW YOUR WATERSHED:** Having knowledge of a watershed's boundaries can help increase awareness and understanding of how our actions on land affect water quality.
- 2. HAZARDOUS WASTE:** Do not pour toxic chemicals or outdoor chemicals down drains. It's better to take them to a collection center instead.
- 3. SEPTIC MAINTENANCE:** If you have a septic system, make sure it's properly maintained. It is important to have it pumped every 3-5 years to avoid polluting local ground water.
- 4. LAWN CARE:** Try using hardy plants or rain gardens that require little or no watering, fertilizers or pesticides. If you must fertilize, consider using organic or slow release and try to reduce use. Always follow the directions and never use before rain or watering the lawn, unless directed. Rain barrels are a great way to conserve rainwater on your property.
- 5. DRIVE LESS:** Walk or bike to avoid pollutants from car exhaust or leaks.
- 6. CAR CARE:** Regularly check cars for leaks that may be harmful to wildlife. Dispose of hazardous wastes at a gas station or recycling center.
- 7. CAR WASH:** Take your car to a car wash that filters the wastewater or wash your car in a grassy area, rather than on a paved surface. The soap will drain into the soil rather than the storm drains.
- 8. GIVE WATER A PLACE TO GO:** Use permeable materials like wood, brick or gravel for decks, patios, driveways and walkways. They'll allow rain to soak in, rather than run off.
- 9. SCOOP UP POOP:** Animal waste contains harmful bacteria. Pick up after your pets to keep rainwater from carrying the waste to our waters.
- 10. TAKE ACTION:** Organize a clean-up to help educate others about watershed maintenance!

<http://huntingtonny.gov/crab-meadow-watershed>



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
of Suffolk County