



Foundation Document Overview

Fire Island National Seashore

New York



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of FIRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE is to conserve, preserve, and protect Fire Island's larger landscape including its relatively undeveloped beaches, dunes, and other natural features and processes, and its marine environment; to conserve, preserve, and protect the historic structures, cultural landscapes, museum collections, and archeological resources associated with the Seashore including the Fire Island Light Station and the William Floyd Estate; and to preserve the primitive and natural character of the Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness and protect its wilderness character.



Significance

Significance statements express why Fire Island National Seashore resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Fire Island National Seashore is part of a dynamic barrier island system within close proximity to the largest population concentration of any national seashore in the United States.
- The barrier island environment of Fire Island has attracted and influenced a variety of human uses over hundreds of years. It has also been shaped by this continuum of human involvement, giving rise to a distinctive relationship and collaboration between the Fire Island communities and the Seashore.
- Fire Island's old-growth maritime forest ecosystem running from Davis Park to Point O'Woods, as exemplified by Sunken Forest just west of Sailors Haven, is globally rare. This 250- to 300-year-old American holly-shadblow-sassafras maritime forest is one of only two such forests known in the world.



Significance



- Fire Island National Seashore provides important habitat for marine and terrestrial plants and animals, including a number of rare, threatened, and endangered species. Additionally, it is an important part of the Atlantic flyway and provides shelter for more than 330 migratory, over-wintering, and resident bird species.
- The Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness (Fire Island Wilderness), the only federally designated wilderness in New York State, offers a rare opportunity for a broad spectrum of the American public to experience wilderness.
- Continuously owned and occupied by the Floyd family from 1720 to 1976, the William Floyd Estate was the home of General William Floyd, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The family's multigenerational tenure on the property not only tells their story but also reflects the dynamic social, economic, and political changes that took place over time on Long Island and throughout the nation.
- Since 1826, Fire Island has served as a site for aids to navigation for oceangoing vessels. The current Fire Island Lighthouse was constructed in 1858 and has served as a critical navigation aid for the port of New York for more than 150 years.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **A Shared Resource**
- **Barrier Island / Coastal Processes**
- **Dynamic Natural Systems (terrestrial habitats and the marine environment)**
- **Cultural Resources**
- **Fire Island Wilderness**
- **Seashore Experience**

Fire Island National Seashore contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Carrington House and Cottage**



Description

Fire Island National Seashore (the Seashore) lies along the south shore of Long Island in Suffolk County, New York. The Seashore encompasses 19,580 acres of upland, tidal, and submerged lands along a 26-mile stretch of the 32-mile barrier island, part of a much larger system of barrier islands and bluffs stretching from New York City to the very eastern end of Long Island at Montauk Point. Easily accessed on Fire Island are nearly 1,400 acres of federally designated wilderness that include an extensive dune system, centuries-old maritime forests, solitary beaches, and the Fire Island Lighthouse. Nearby on Long Island, adjacent to the Village of Mastic Beach, the 613-acre William Floyd Estate preserves more than 250 years of history. The park maintains the historic house, cultural landscape, and archival collection that include items that pertain to both the estate and the Seashore.

Interspersed among the federal lands within the Seashore on Fire Island are 17 residential communities that predate the Seashore's authorization. Resort development on Fire Island began as early as 1855, and a number of the island's communities were established prior to the 1930s. The Seashore's enabling legislation includes provisions for private land to be retained and developed if zoning requirements are met. No hard-surfaced roads connect the communities, either to each other or to the mainland of Long Island. Communities are accessible mainly by passenger ferry or private boat. Vehicle use is restricted within the boundary of the Seashore. Without paved roads and with limited traffic, the communities have retained much of their original character. Some of the communities have hotels or facilities for overnight guests, while others are strictly residential. There are approximately 4,200 developed properties on Fire Island, with approximately 300 residents living on the island year-round.

The number of year-round residents has slowly and steadily declined in recent years. Vehicle access is limited for year-round residents, contractors, and other service providers (telephone, fuel, garbage, etc.) because all vehicles crossing federal lands must have a National Park Service driving permit.

The population of Fire Island swells to approximately 30,000 during the summer season, with a total of 2 to 3 million visitors each year. In 2016, recreational visitation to sites and facilities owned or managed by the Seashore was 389,075. The primary visitor facilities on Fire Island are the Fire Island Lighthouse, Sailors Haven, Watch Hill, Talisman, and the Wilderness Visitor Center. Fire Island Lighthouse is maintained and operated by the Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society, an NPS cooperating association that offers tours and other visitor programming. Concessioners operate the marina at Sailors Haven, as well as the marina and campground at Watch Hill. The Seashore offers lifeguard-protected swimming areas at Sailors Haven, Talisman/Barrett Beach and Watch Hill. Also on Fire Island are ranger stations, visitor contact facilities, maintenance facilities, and several units of park housing. At either end of Fire Island are major state and county beaches that receive sizable visitation and are accessible by vehicle.

On Long Island, the Seashore's headquarters are in Patchogue and include administrative offices, a maintenance facility, and a ferry terminal. The William Floyd Estate in Mastic includes the Old Mastic House, several outbuildings and structures, a cemetery, curatorial storage facility, preservation and maintenance shop, and other natural and cultural resources.

