



January 18, 2013

Commissioner Joseph Martens
Executive Offices
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12207

Dear Commissioner Martens,

I am sending this letter to support the position that the new inlet at “Old Inlet” located in the Otis Pike High Dune Wilderness area on Fire Island be allowed to remain open.

To briefly state my background, I have a BS in Geological and Geophysical Sciences from Princeton University and a MS in Marine Science from SUNY Stony Brook. I have worked as a consultant for the last 30 years with an emphasis on marine and environmental projects. I have been particularly interested in the geology of barrier beaches and I have prepared various studies, reports and articles on barrier beaches and bays over the last 30 years. I have also been involved in studies of Great South Bay, including the Hard Clam Restoration Plan prepared by The Nature Conservancy and Suffolk County last year, in which FINS had a key role. I also own a waterfront home where I have lived since 1986.

Based on both my scientific and personal knowledge, I believe that the new inlet at Old Inlet will have a beneficial effect on bay ecology. The added circulation will improve water quality and localized circulation, to the benefit of the hard clam and other shellfish. Historically the openings of inlets have spurred shellfish survival and growth, and I anticipate the same effect now. The present deteriorated condition of the clam resource should benefit from the improved water quality. Improvements in water clarity and moderation of water temperatures may help to reverse the severe decline in eelgrass beds in eastern Great South Bay. Improvements in water quality as indicated by clarity appear to already have occurred.

It also appears that the new inlet will improve habitat for fish and create more recreational fishing opportunities for eastern Great South Bay, where there has been little such activity in recent history.

I recognize that the inlet will serve as a restriction to access to the barrier beach from the east, but this will actually enhance the wilderness aspect of the FINS Wilderness Area. The excessive four-wheel vehicle traffic detracts from the beach environment and is not necessary, considering that alternative access is provided by barge and ferry, as well as vehicular access from the west.

It is important to note, as I am sure you are aware, that the function of inlets and overwash events are critical to the very survival of the barrier beach system. The bay side of Fire Island has been starved for sand, resulting in the severe bayside erosion and narrowing of the barrier. This function is even more vital in times of rising sea level. Superstorm Sandy did provide the geologic function

of moving sand from the ocean side to the bay, a very important function for the long-term integrity of the barrier.

As a waterfront property owner, I also do not anticipate any significant change in water levels in the bay that would be detrimental to the mainland. A small inlet such as the one at Old Inlet does not appear to provide enough exchange to significant raise water levels in most areas. In fact, the inlet could serve to provide an escape route for water which could actually pile up in the eastern portion of the bay during certain wind conditions. Over the past months since the inlet formed, I have not noticed any detectable levels in the high tide at my waterfront property.

I support FINS position to monitor the new inlet, and I would support the policy that the inlet can be allowed to remain at Old Inlet, where an inlet has existed naturally for much of the last several hundred years.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance with this issue.

Very truly yours,
CASHIN ASSOCIATES, P.C.



Gregory T. Greene
Director, Environmental Programs
Cashin Associates, P.C.
Phone: 631-348-7600
Fax: 631-348-7601
www.cashinassociates.com

CC: Superintendent K. Chris Soller, Fire Island National Seashore