



TOWN OF BROOKHAVEN

COUNCILMAN STEVE FIORE-ROSENFELD

1ST DISTRICT (THREE VILLAGE & GREATER PORT JEFFERSON COMMUNITIES)

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Horseshoe Crab Sanctuary Declared at West Meadow Beach

May 6 Marks First Day Historic Protection Is in Effect via Advocacy of Brookhaven Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld and Regulation of NYS DEC

May 6, 2007, will mark the first day horseshoe crabs will receive special protection at our beloved West Meadow Beach in Stony Brook. This is an historic measure as it is the first time such a new regulation is in operation anywhere along the New York State coastline.

“Horseshoe crabs are captivating creatures with pre-historic roots in our community. If we don’t protect this species, we will lose one of our most ancient connections to the land and sea,” stated Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld. “Horseshoe crab eggs are a vital food source for migrating shorebirds. The birds depend upon these eggs to ‘fuel’ their spring migration. This regulation is a no-nonsense measure which helps preserve an integral part of the fabric which makes West Meadow Beach the natural wonder it truly is.”

This “no-take zone” closure of WMB to horseshoe crab “harvesting” was pursuant to a December 5, 2006, Town of Brookhaven resolution introduced by Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld. The resolution requested prohibition of horseshoe crab harvesting at West Meadow Beach under a newly adopted NYS DEC regulation that the Town had strongly advocated. Implementation of this measure will provide horseshoe crabs with a refuge where they are protected from harvesting and where they can lay their eggs—some of which will grow to maturity but many which will provide food for migrating shorebirds.

“The timing of this new protection couldn’t be better, right at the start of the mating season for horseshoe crabs at West Meadow Beach—a time when they are most vulnerable to harvesting. I want to especially thank John Turner, the Director of our Department of

Environmental Protection, for his advocacy as well as Assemblyman Steven Englebright and the Regional Commissioner of the NYS DEC, Peter Scully.

"Horseshoe crabs are fascinating animals and an important part of Long Island's natural history heritage," said John Turner. "They are an easily observable species at West Meadow Beach, where each year in May and June visitors can watch adult crabs come ashore to mate and lay their eggs. We are pleased that no harvest of horseshoe crabs will be allowed at West Meadow Beach and commend the Department of Environmental Conservation in supporting the Town's request to prohibit the harvest of horseshoe crabs at this important and popular public park."

Wendy Fidao, Director of the Friends of Flax Pond, strongly supported this ban. She explained, "Horseshoe crabs are one of our oldest living life forms, dating back 350,000 years to the time of the dinosaurs, yet facing extinction due to over use for bait. They exist in the world today only along the eastern seaboard of the United States, from Maine to Florida, with a few species remaining around Indonesia. Their eggs are invaluable to our migrating shore birds as food and equally invaluable to our medical industry where their extracted blood is the only accepted substance for determining the sterility of surgical instruments and medical products. They are both givers and protectors of life."

West Meadow Beach fulfilled the two determining factors presented by the DEC that would allow for closing an area to crab harvesting: 1) where there is documented evidence the area receives significant use by spawning horseshoe crabs and numerous shorebird species which feed upon horseshoe crab eggs; and 2) when the area is under the jurisdiction of a federal, state, or local, agency as public recreation area and such agency has requested the Department to restrict crab harvest.

The DEC directive states, "the Town of Brookhaven West Meadow Beach, Stony Brook, is closed to hand harvest of horseshoe crabs on May 6, 2007, at 0100 hours. This closure will remain in effect until further notice."

The prohibited area for the hand harvest of horseshoe crabs at West Meadow Beach includes:

1. All of the West Meadow Beach landward of the mean high tide line; and
2. Continuing 3000 feet seaward from the mean high tide line at the north end of the West Meadow Beach parking lot, then a line at a 90-degree angle south toward the channel, ending at the channel (as far as the 3rd groin).

Hand harvest is defined as any method of harvest where the permit holder uses his or her hand or any device attached to his or her hand. This includes, but is not limited to, dip net, spear, and gig.

Individuals interested in volunteering to participate in the annual horseshoe crab count along West Meadow Beach and Flax Pond should contact the Friends of Flax Pond at flaxpondfriends@gmail.com for further information.

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