



**SEABROOK-HAMPTONS
ESTUARY ALLIANCE**

Public Visioning Survey Report

June 30, 2021

Prepared by Farrell Strategic Group

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Introduction

The residents and visitors to the Seabrook Hamptons Estuary region care deeply about the health and vitality of the estuary, ocean and lands. For respondents, the connectivity between their towns and the estuary are deeply intertwined. They have deep concerns about the current state and trajectory of the region in terms of development patterns and are supportive of change to protect natural resources and community character.

In June 2021, the Seabrook Hamptons Estuary Alliance (SHEA) with assistance from contractor Farrell Strategic Group (FSG) deployed a 30 question online Survey via Survey Monkey to residents and visitors of the communities of Hampton, Hampton Falls and Seabrook.

The survey set out to seek input on the following areas:

- Uses of the estuary;
- Values and personal connections to the estuary and region;
- Prioritization and importance of estuary services, uses, qualities and existence;
- Demographics;
- Future visioning and ideal scenario setting
- Concerns for the future.

The survey was deployed both digitally and through hard copy distribution (see appendix A for specific distribution channels). The survey was open for completion from 6/2/21 – 6/30/21 and garnered 104 completed responses. The survey was embedded on the SHEA website and the Survey Monkey weblink was shared wide and far.

The main themes coming out of the completed surveys are enlightening and underpin the necessity to move forward on an estuary management plan that lays out specific tactics for maintaining and in some cases improving estuary health and community character. Main themes include:

- Respondents have a strong personal connection to the ocean and marsh. There was deep interconnectedness between community values and natural resource values. It was clear the identity of the region is marked by its proximity to the estuary and the ocean.
- Respondents partake in a large variety of activities in the estuary with walking/jogging and beach going being among the most popular.
- There is confusion and lack of knowledge among respondents about local recreational access points, regulations around building, and overall safety.
- There is high support for protection of habitat and species, increased water quality, estuary services, and conservation land/open space.
- There is a significant amount of concern surrounding increasing or over development, loss of public access, infringement on the marsh, public safety, and housing affordability.
- There is a persistent concern around increased pollution and litter as well as moderate mention of climate change impacts.
- The local vs. tourist issue was risen and mentioned multiple times.
- There is acknowledgement of building codes and styles needing to change.
- Overall, respondents say change needs to happen and that it will be positive for people, species and the estuary.

Snippets & Quotes

“

Better/clearer understanding of all the available trails and open space available for public use.

- in response to "What is something you'd like to do in the estuary that you can't do now?"

”

“

No meaningful action to reduce climate change. Addressing sea level rise through studies is commendable but see minimal remediation. Almost impossible for lower income families to find affordable housing.

- in response to Q13 statement

”

“

Preservation of the natural resource while maintaining reasonable access to all for recreation.

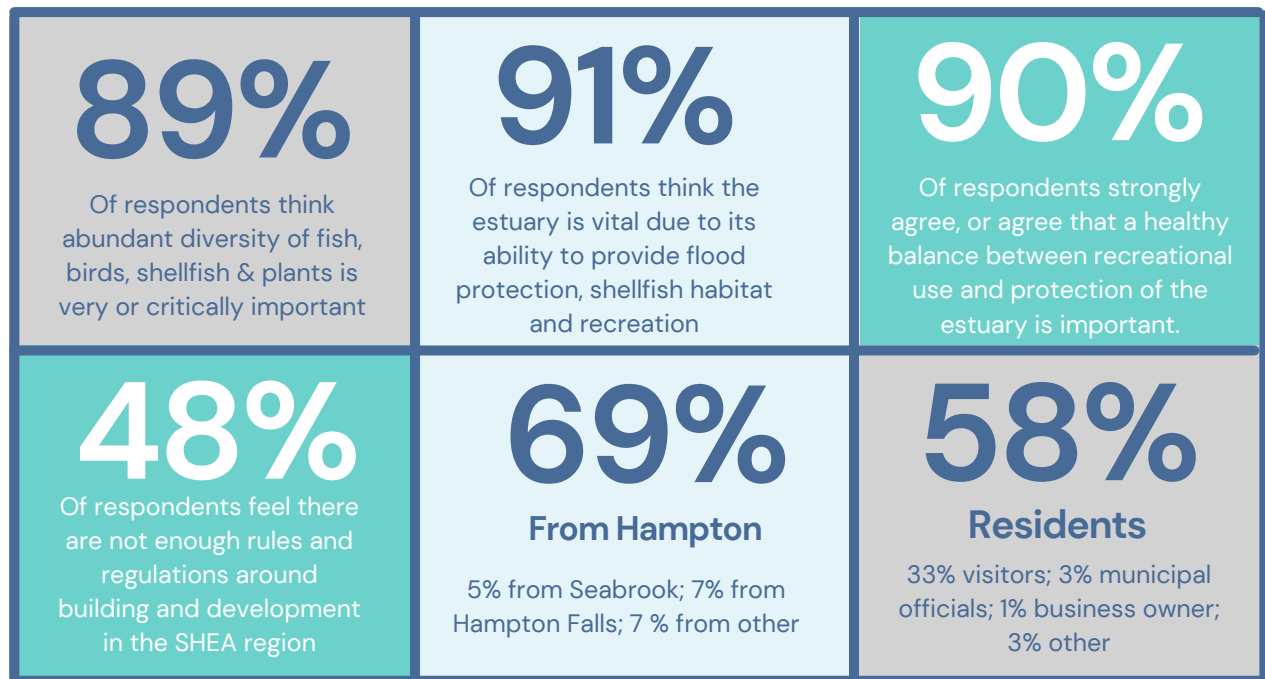
- in response to "As the area changes into the future what attributes should always be preserved?"

”

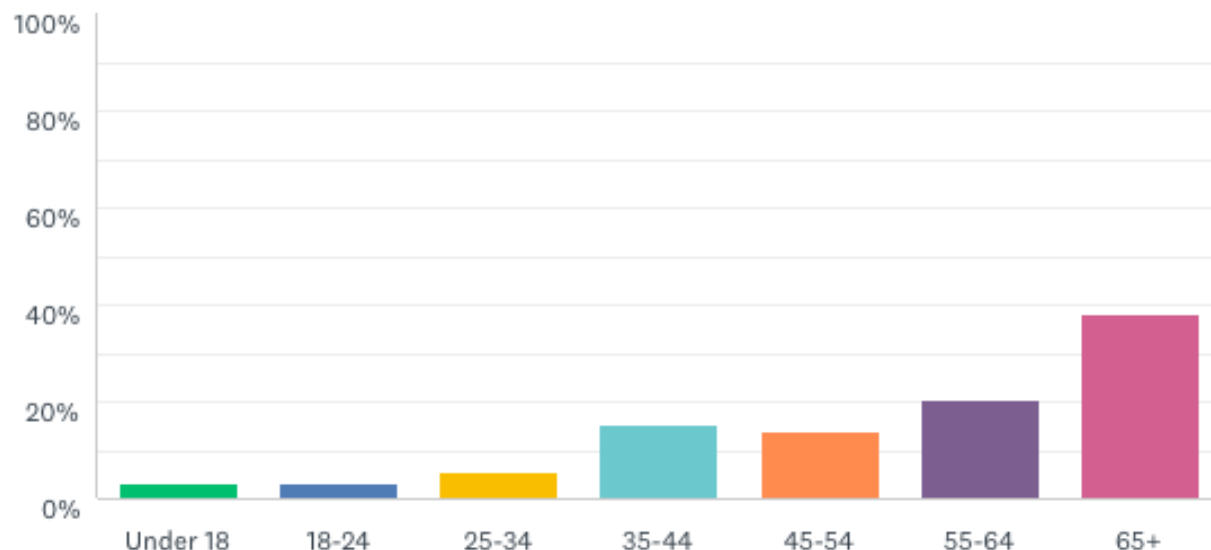
"Seabrook-Hampton Estuary is the healthiest in the world."

- in response to "What is an example of a headline you want to see in the future?"

By the Numbers



Age Range of Respondents



Deep Dive Question 1

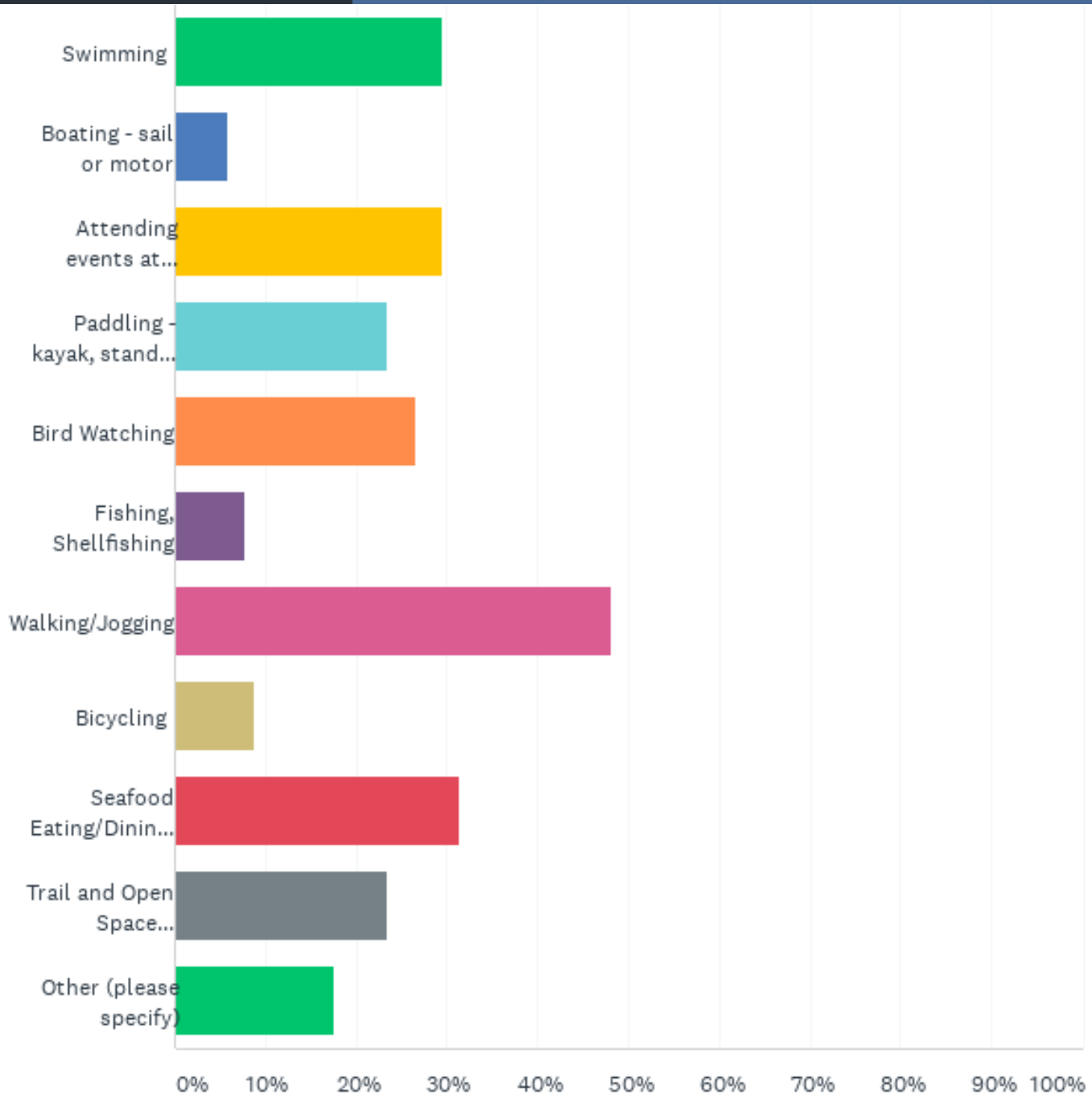
Share ONE WORD, only one, that describes why you love living/visiting Hampton, Seabrook, Hampton Falls.



Deep Dive

Question 2

Select YOUR FAVORITE ACTIVITY to do in the Seabrook Hamptons estuary/watershed/beach. Select up to three.



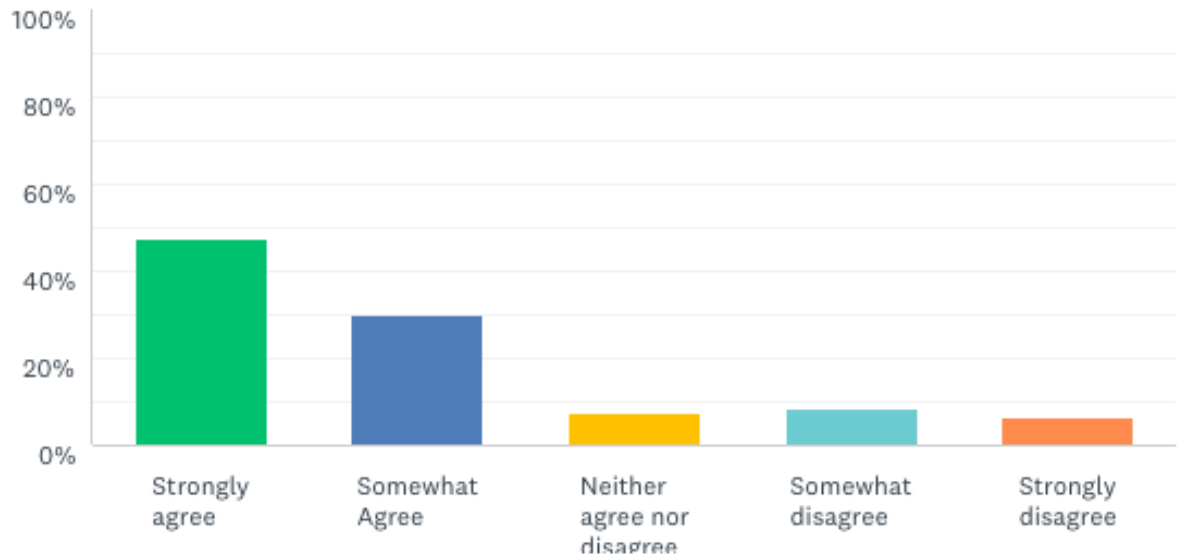
Other responses: sunbathing, picking periwinkles, surfing, swimming, Watching sunsets, photography, walking around, State Park, Looking for shells, starfish and crabs, People watching, walking in the ocean, sitting on the beach, watching birds and sealife, Sitting on Seabrook Beach, bottle digging, Sunrise/Sunset, Walking my Dog, Kite Surfing

Deep Dive

Question 13

How do you feel about this statement:
Seabrook-Hamptons estuary region remains
a small Seacoast community and thriving
year-round destination, known for its natural
beauty, outdoor recreation, working
waterfront, and welcoming community spirit.
It is a friendly, safe, resilient, and healthy
place where people of all ages and economic
levels live, work, play, and visit.

Answered: 93 Skipped: 11



Comments:

- But access to use the beaches needs to be by fees or property tax
- Not so sure about the last part of this statement
- Access for those with mobility impairments are non existent.
- I agree with the ideal, but am not sure whether the current reality reflects it.
- Make it more family friendly.
- And the ocean is clean!
- I would hate to see this area behind another Virginia Beach full of concrete and high rises.
- Not all respect the natural resources here.
- Too much development, not enough concern for nature
- I would say that is what it used to be but not any more. People do not care about their surroundings, I live on the marsh in this area and I know this first hand!
- I agree with the spirit of this statement, but it's not always friendly, clean or safe.
- I believe this area is at risk from human factors.

Eye to the future...

Exploring the
Visioning Section

As the area changes into the future what attributes should always be preserved?

“

Communities working together.

Wetlands, coastline, forests, wildlife preservation (land/sea), etc.

“

Marine & Mammal Habitat

Open spaces, balanced recreational opportunities on and near the water.

”

“

The existing marsh. To combat climate change it needs to stay healthy.

Access to water, limit pollution & environmental hazards.

”

“

The health of our wildlife and ecosystem. As well as public and private access to beaches & trails.

”

Eye to the future...

Exploring the
Visioning Section

What makes you the most excited about the future of this region?

“

Conservancy.

Great access to wild areas.

There's more attention to preserving & maintaining what we have

“

That people are finally paying more attention to preservation of the estuary.

We can make it a better place going forward!

”

“

A place to commune with nature.

My grandchildren being able to keep enjoying and appreciating the natural spaces.

”

“

Limiting development that may harm the wetlands.

Coastal resiliency.

”

Eye to the future...

Exploring the
Visioning Section

What's your biggest concern about the future?



The Future Coastline

Exploring the
Visioning Section

Here's what most respondents
thought the coastline would like in
the future...



50% of respondents see houses built
differently



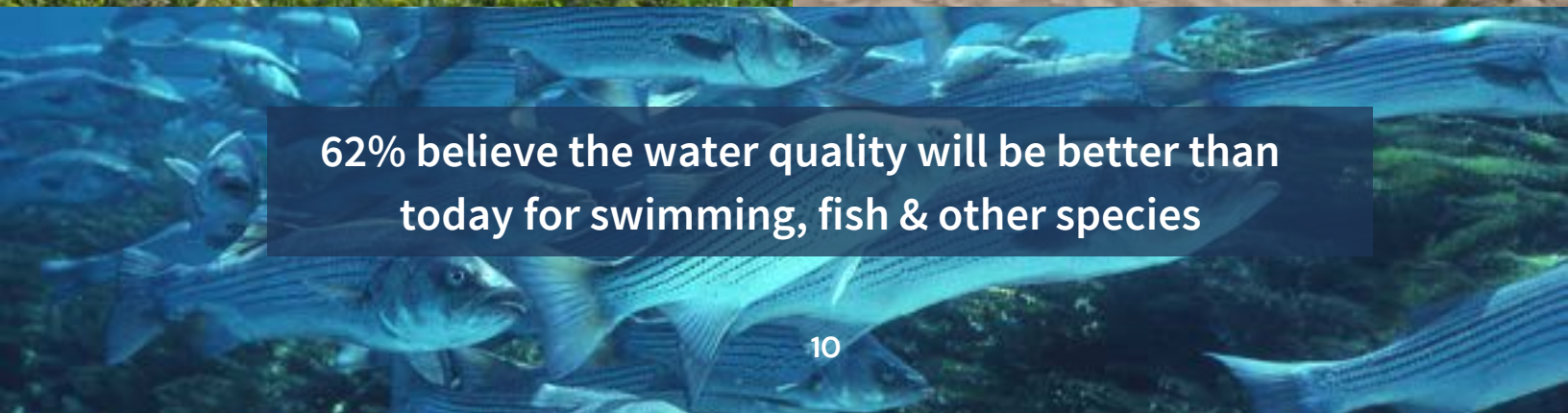
50% see fewer buildings along
the coastline



54% see more open space and
conservation land



66% believe people will be more
aware of their impact on the estuary



62% believe the water quality will be better than
today for swimming, fish & other species

Crafting a Vision



Based on survey results here are the considerations when forming a vision for the estuary.

1

Respondents are hopeful.

Overall there was a marked feeling of hopefulness in the respondents answers and sentiments. They do believe progress has been made and that there is hope for achieving good environmental and economic outcomes for the region as a whole. They believe the region is special and worthy of protection in perpetuity. They hold out hope that things will improve in the region, not get worse and they do feel their fellow residents (not as much the visitors or newcomers) care. There was a strong sense of the need to act sooner than later to preserve what we have.

2

Respondents are widely supportive of efforts to protect and preserve natural resources.

Many respondents spoke to increased oversight on building developments, stronger enforcement, increased focus on preservation and protection of the marsh and open space/conservation land. There were many calls for protection of natural resources and species, especially marine related species. They see the impacts of pollution and overcrowding and are willing to make change to reverse those effects.

3

Respondents are concerned about development and sea level rise.

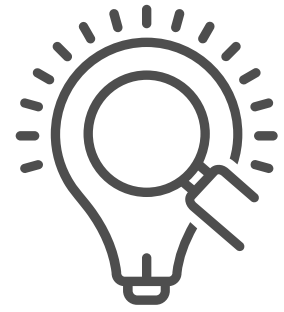
Respondents spoke a lot to the impact of development, overdevelopment, crowding and human induced pollution. They felt the region was changing quickly and unless controls are put in place they will lose the balance between nature and the built environment that they currently cherish. They showed concern for increases in the cost of living and the size and scale of new development. Additionally, they worried about sea level rise and the impacts to buildings, beaches and marshes.

4

Respondents love where they live and wish to preserve it.

There was an overwhelming sense of pride of place from most respondents. They love where they live and point to the natural landscapes and abundant opportunities to recreate as essential to their happiness. Most are willing to accept an increase in regulations and rules if it means the natural spaces will be preserved and healthy. They had some nostalgia for the way things were and there is inevitably a resistance to change overall but balance between new and old, built and natural is paramount.

Challenges & Lessons Learned



1

Lack of municipal engagement

The project team reached out to 9 municipal officials (see appendix A) via email twice inviting them to take the survey and to engage with a 10-minute follow up phone call with the FSG contractor. No municipal official responded via email while 3 did complete the first part of the survey (see Appendix F). There are many potential factors contributing to this lack of engagement including busy start of summer schedules, lack of staffing support, post-Covid 19 bandwidth and perhaps reluctance to engage with an outside contractor.

2

Offline distribution and engagement was lacking

In the attempt to engage residents offline we identified public libraries as a spot to distribute hard copy surveys. We only received one returned. It is believed that the post-Covid 19 circumstances led to less foot traffic through the library. Additionally, senior programming is still on hold so therefore there wasn't as many seniors coming to the library to engage. In the future posting a person with a table at the library on Saturday morning might garner more survey engagement.

3

Hampton Falls and Seabrook were underrepresented.

With 69% of respondents associating with Hampton it's clear penetration into Hampton Falls and Seabrook was lacking. This could be attributed to the Facebook groups targeted, as well as, SHEA members' and FSG's own connections. Additionally, the visitors surveyed connected with Hampton as it is the primary source of tourist and economic activity. In the future it would be advisable to have identified people in Seabrook and Hampton Falls who are responsible for distribution to those communities in hard copy and online. Also paying for targeted advertising could help.

4

Spreading outside 'the choir' was challenging.

A majority of responses do seem to align to ideals and values of environmentally minded, regulatory friendly folks. There is concern that we did not reach the fiscally conservative, free market, pro development type of resident. In addition, it seems we may haven't penetrated the commercial fishing community enough. It is worth noting that the responses we did get were representative of the general voting behaviors for the region.

APPENDICES

(ALL APPENDICES ARE FOUND [IN THE GOOGLE PROJECT FOLDER](#) AND LINKED BELOW)

- **Appendix A**: Identified outreach channels, lists and people for Survey Deployment developed by FSG & SHEA
- **Appendix B**: SHEA Outreach and Marketing Plan with identified personas prepared by FSG
- **Appendix C**: All social media assets created for survey respondent recruitment prepared by FSG
- **Appendix D**: Complete Survey Monkey Online Survey
- **Appendix E**: All respondent data, tables, comments in PDF and in EXCEL
- **Appendix F**: Municipal Official subset of responses in PDF and in EXCEL.

SEABROOK-HAMPTONS ESTUARY ALLIANCE

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