



# On-the-Ground Projects

**Spotlight on** Seagrass Conservation Moorings in Coecles Harbor, Shelter Island, New York

## Project Partners

New York State  
Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

The Nature  
Conservancy

Peconic Estuary  
Program

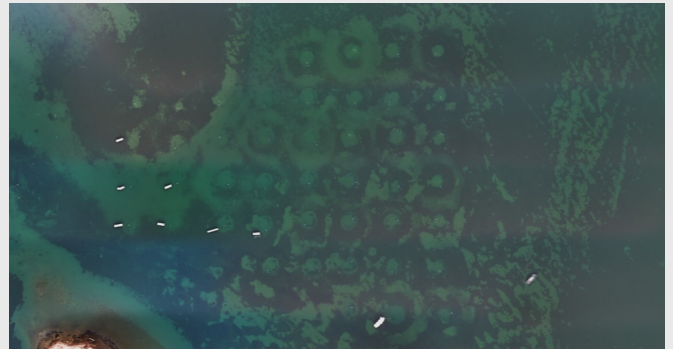
National Oceanic  
and Atmospheric  
Administration

US Fish and Wildlife  
Service

Atlantic Coastal Fish  
Habitat Partnership

The most substantial eelgrass bed remaining in any New York harbor is located in Coecles Harbor, Shelter Island. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is working to improve the extent and quality of this habitat by reducing the impact of tradition boat moorings on the remaining eelgrass. Traditional boat moorings use a block and chain design, which creates scour, removes eelgrass, and fragments and degrades habitat and water quality. Some of these moorings will be removed and replaced with conservation moorings, whose bungee-like design reduces impact to the bottom, allowing for eelgrass recovery and increased resiliency.

Eelgrass provides habitat for numerous species in New York estuaries, including bay scallop, fluke, puffers, river herring, American eel, and striped bass. Unfortunately, eelgrass has been declining across coastal New York, particularly in the Peconic Estuary, where Shelter Island is located.



**Aerial view of Coecles Harbor**

The New York State DEC will use this project as an opportunity to demonstrate to local mooring users, marina operators, and town committees that conservation moorings are a reliable alternative that reduces destruction of their unique eelgrass meadow, an Essential Fish Habitat in the Mid-Atlantic region.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership with conservation dollars to partially fund the construction portion of the project. Pre-project monitoring in Coecles Harbor started in 2017, and will continually annually for three years after the project is completed.

Project text and photos provided by the Division of Marine Resources, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

**For more information on the Partnership visit us at: [www.atlanticfishhabitat.org](http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org)**

