§ 25-0301. Program and cooperative agreements for the protection of tidal wetlands.

1. Upon completion of the inventory with respect to tidal wetlands, the commissioner shall confer with the local government officials involved to establish a program for the protection of such tidal wetlands.

2. The commissioner may enter into cooperative agreements with any village, town, city or county, or with any one or more of them, for the purpose of preserving, maintaining and enhancing, in accordance with the policies of this act, those tidal wetlands included within the boundaries of such villages, towns, cities and counties.

3. A cooperative agreement with any such village, town, city or county may provide for the development by personnel and facilities of the department of environmental conservation, or the payment out of funds appropriated for the purpose, of the cost of preserving, maintaining or enhancing such tidal wetlands in accordance with the policies of this act, and for the furnishing of such personnel, facilities or funds as may be agreed upon within the cooperative agreement.

4. The cooperative agreement shall provide that the tidal wetlands be preserved and maintained in their natural or enhanced state, provided, however, that a reservation in any such agreement by a village, town, city or county of the right to operate or lease for operation shellfish beds lying within the area, and a reservation of the income from such operation or lease for the village, town, city or county shall be allowed and not considered a violation of preservation and maintenance of a natural state.

5. This section shall not prevent any tidal wetlands from being designated as portions of the state's natural and historic preserves, nor shall it prevent the dedication of any such lands as state parks. The office of parks and recreation shall outline to the commissioner its plans to preserve tidal wetlands in parklands as soon as practicable.