§ 961-a. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature hereby finds that the tidal waters located between the southern shore of Long Island and the coastal barrier beaches constitute a maritime region of statewide importance, referred to as the South Shore Estuary.

The legislature finds that within the South Shore Estuary and the associated lands and water bodies that discharge into or affect the South Shore Estuary, that the federal, state and local governments own and manage significant interdependent properties in the form of parks, preserves, historic sites, open space and underwater lands, which help to sustain biological productivity and diversity, economic viability and recreational enjoyment.

The legislature also finds that the South Shore Estuary System contains and supports many unique marine habitats and locally significant populations and a diversity of rare, threatened and endangered species of plants and animals and the protection of their habitats is in the best interest of the people of New York.

The legislature further finds that the South Shore Estuary system contains numerous streams that flow into the bays; freshwater and tidal wetlands that serve as a breeding ground, source of primary production for the food chain and a natural filter media; and productive clam fisheries that are mutually supportive and ultimately dependent upon the maintenance of the hydrologic and ecologic integrity of the region.

The legislature, in addition, finds that the South Shore Estuary is of tremendous economic and social importance to the state, containing the largest concentration of recreational and commercial vessels, marinas and other water dependent businesses, supporting hundreds of baymen with a livelihood harvesting clams, finfish and other marine organisms and providing recreation opportunities to millions of residents and tourists each year.

The legislature finds that there is a multitude of governmental entities and agencies that share responsibility for the regulation, management, and protection of the Estuary and its resources and which

govern private and public land use and activities; and despite existing programs, the water quality and productivity of the South Shore Estuary have declined due to the intensity and variety of land uses in a highly developed suburban setting which produce point and nonpoint source of pollution.

The legislature finds that this region, in which there are private and public water and land uses which depend upon the health and productivity of the South Shore Estuary, could better be protected and managed through the development of a comprehensive management plan.

Therefore, the legislature finds that the purpose of this article is to provide a means for public and private interests to act collectively and pool resources and expertise to: integrate and coordinate existing programs and studies; identify and make recommendations to mitigate pollution sources in order to maintain or enhance water quality, maximize natural productivity and improve management of shellfish harvest areas to insure economic viability and minimize health risk; make recommendations on policies designed to balance the preservation of natural resources while providing adequate access and use of resources for the public as well as stability for water dependent businesses and tourism; make recommendations on methods to protect the value of existing public and private investment that has already been made in the region; and provide direction for state and local governments to protect, preserve and properly manage the unique natural resources of the South Shore estuary for the benefit of existing and future generations.

However, it is not the legislature's intent for this article or the management plan created pursuant to this article to be construed to require or to be used as a basis for requiring a cumulative analysis or a generic environmental impact statement pursuant to article eight of the environmental conservation law from any applicant, owner of property, the state, its political subdivision or any agencies thereof as a precondition for the approval of any proposed development, action or alteration of the same proposed to be undertaken within the geographic area designated as the Long Island South Shore Estuary

Reserve, unless otherwise required by law.