Wayne Grothe
Interview by Nancy Solomon
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Side A

23 years working on the bay. Works on South Shore and Peconic Bay Estuary. Inlets widened. Increase in predators – mud crabs, blue crabs, sand crabs, conch and horseshoe crabs. Shinnecock Inlet widened and stabilized recently. Dredged over 25 years. Raised salinity level – endangered shellfish growth. Major change is development – homes on the shoreline. More road runoff – state roads worse than county roads. Not as bad on unpaved roads – water seeps into the ground. Catch basins help.

1986 – first brown tide outbreak. Scalloped September – March before brown tide. Quantic Bay is barren. Different types of grass – cabbage, eel grass. Water quality is "being degraded every year." Flanders Bay, Cow Yard (Northwest Harbor), Sag Harbor were good scallop areas.

Cesspools are worse than sewage treatment plants. Development – need up zoning. Cumulative impact, no specific project. Two creeks open in Peconic Bay – Cold Spring, Red Creek, Sag harbor cove, West Creek, Flanders Bay, Sebonac and Mill Creek are closed. North Sea in summer. Quarter inch of rain closes creek for 7 days.

Harvests hard clams, oysters, scallops. Quantic Bay was good. Shinnecock is good for clams. Oysters were plentiful in Mecox, West Flanders Bay (east of Riverhead) and Peconic River. Red Cedar Point was good for scallops. More homes on Mecox. Bad flushing in Shinnecock inlet. Homeowners complained of flooding in late 1970s so engineers lowered the table which led to less flushing. No salinity readings then. Costs money to open inlet. Used to open 6 – 7 times per year. Declined to 4 -5 times per year. Oyster ponds in East Hampton.

Flanders Bay – marinas, duck processing plant had no effect. Marese Bay. County parkland. Closed now. Opened in 1970s. More boat traffic.

Side B

Dredging – benefits –f lushing happens which is good. Cons – if you dredge a depression, seaweed falls in and shellfish cannot live there. Dredge spoils are dumped on beach. 1995 – County dumped on shellfish grounds at Shinnecock Bay near Southampton College. Minimal damage. North Sea – 4-foot creek dredged for larger boat access – immature shellfish lived there such as clams.

Grew up on the water. Methods for harvesting – rakes. Not many tongers left. No dredging allowed by law. Went treading with feet. If there was a lot of grass, treading was popular. Peconic Bay – scratch rakes. Held by boat – rested on shoulder. Quantic Bay improving recently. Brown tide – color of water. 1986 appeared. Shellfish attach to eel grass, cabbage because it protected them from predators. Absence of grass – no sunlight because of brown tide. Grass died.

Bulkheading with CCA treated lumber. 1960s bulkheading became more common. Wetlands filled in. Factors to bay's decline – CCA treated lumber, road runoff, removal of native plants. Water seen as indestructible by planners. Does not know of sabotage efforts besides people stealing traps. West bay – slow moving, does not flush often.

Suggests buffer zones between sod lawns and water. Use natural vegetation.

End