



## Natural Resources

From back-crowned night herons to Atlantic sturgeon, to salt marshes, New York Harbor is 650 square miles of rich, diverse habitat supporting hundreds of species of finfish, shellfish and birds. Freshwater marshes and swamp forests serve as home or resting places along the Atlantic flyway for thousands of birds, while harbor seals frolic in the outer harbor and an occasional dolphin finds its way to the summer-warmed waters. The harbor abounds with natural resources. Unfortunately, human activity has placed tremendous stress on this complex, bio-diverse system. Yet it survives and is slowly being preserved and restored, as a result of recent intervention by the public and private sectors. And the harbor remains a precious natural, aesthetic, recreational and commercial resource for the 20 million citizens who live in close proximity.

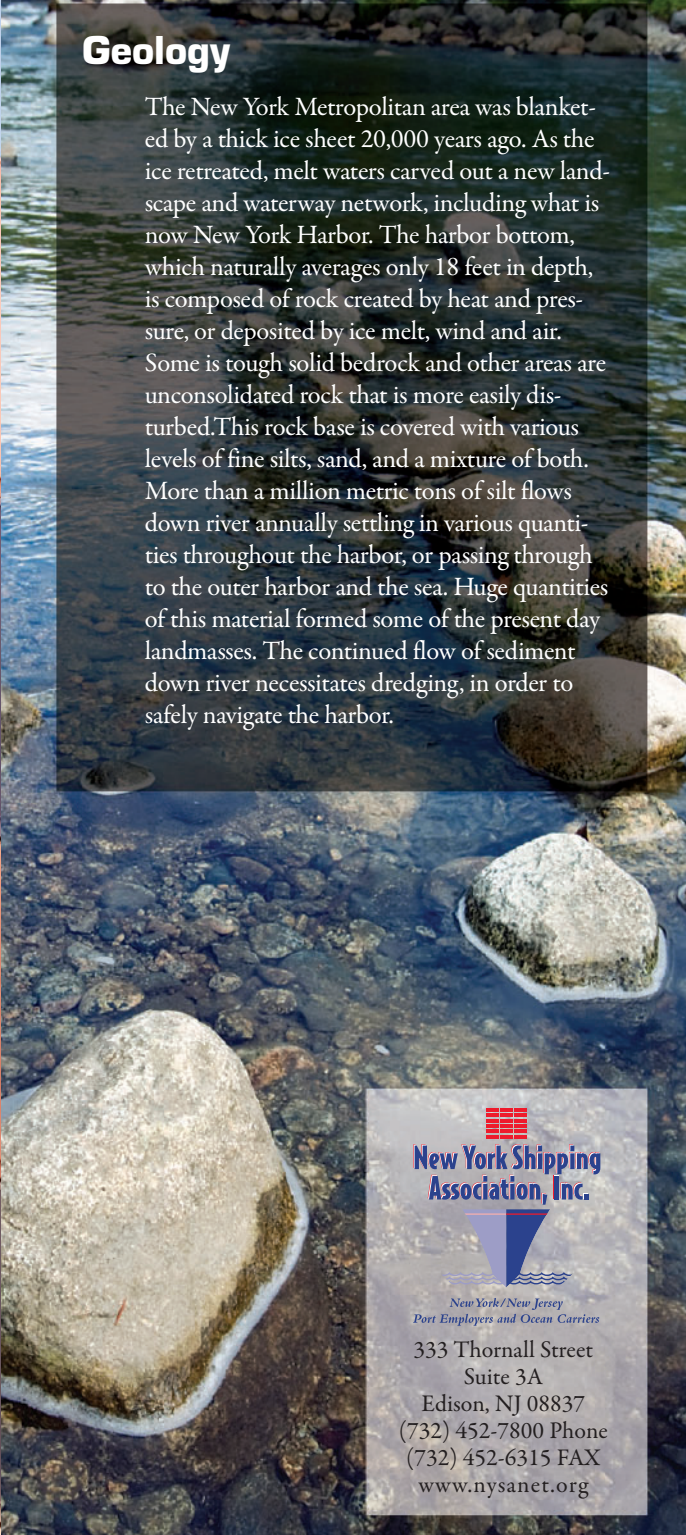
## Economic Resource

Located in New York Harbor, the Port of New York and New Jersey serves 35% of the entire United States' population, moving nearly \$166 billion in consumer goods, food products, petroleum and manufactured materials into and out of the region annually. The Port supports 413,000 jobs nationally, 229,000 jobs locally, and contributes more than \$16 billion to the region's gross domestic product. It is the nation's largest coffee, automobile and finished petroleum product port. 5,000 or more vessels call at the port each year and cruise ships carry more than 600,000 passengers to and from the region each season.



## Geology

The New York Metropolitan area was blanketed by a thick ice sheet 20,000 years ago. As the ice retreated, melt waters carved out a new landscape and waterway network, including what is now New York Harbor. The harbor bottom, which naturally averages only 18 feet in depth, is composed of rock created by heat and pressure, or deposited by ice melt, wind and air. Some is tough solid bedrock and other areas are unconsolidated rock that is more easily disturbed. This rock base is covered with various levels of fine silts, sand, and a mixture of both. More than a million metric tons of silt flows down river annually settling in various quantities throughout the harbor, or passing through to the outer harbor and the sea. Huge quantities of this material formed some of the present day landmasses. The continued flow of sediment down river necessitates dredging, in order to safely navigate the harbor.



# New York Harbor

A Living Resource.  
A Resource for Living.

  
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## Recreation

Kayaks, canoes, jet skies, cigarette boats, even swimmers, characterize life along the harbor's edge. Sailing clubs operate out of multiple marinas in Manhattan and on the Jersey side of the river. OpSail parades some of the most beautiful tall ships in the world. Fleet Week brings the United States Navy and its allies to the harbor. Campers paddle up the Hudson along the Hudson River trail. Full-time boaters motor up the river to Canada, the Great Lakes and down to the Mississippi. Residents rock, sometimes not so gently, in their marina-based floating homes. Dozens of marinas, tour boat operators, even float plane operations dot the shore. Tourists and residents alike flash across the waters visiting Ellis Island, Lady Liberty, historic military sites from Sandy Hook to Fort Hamilton, and places of interest from the Battery to the George Washington Bridge. There is simply no limit to the recreational opportunities afforded by this great harbor.



## Transportation

The waters of New York Harbor sustain a rapidly growing fleet of ferries, excursion vessels, water taxis and barge services. While cargo on ships and barges moves up several navigable rivers that feed the harbor, tens of thousands of commuters and tourists board hundreds of smaller watercraft to travel to work, sail in the moonlight, or visit the many historic sites in and around the harbor. In the summer many eschew the roads for ferry trips to and from the national parks that dot the shoreline. More than 1.5 million passenger trips are recorded each month. The vast majority of these trips are daily trips to and from work along the shores of the Hudson and East Rivers. The harbor also serves as the starting point or destination for thousands of tons of liquid, containerized and bulk cargo barged north to Boston or as far south as Miami. The harbor is nature's regional transportation hub.

## Commercial

Long before the first Europeans stepped ashore in the "New World," the indigenous population of the northeast recognized the value of the abundant wildlife inhabiting the tributaries, shorelines and depths of New York Harbor. When the Europeans landed, trade in beaver pelts, fish and farm products ferried down the rivers, gave birth to the port of New Amsterdam. But long after the rise of what is now the Port of New York and New Jersey, the natural resources of the harbor remain an important commercial enterprise. The harbor yields extensive commercial and recreational fisheries. American eel, bluefish, striped bass, blue crab, perch, catfish and other species support commercial, subsistence and recreational fishing. Spawning and bait-fish are endemic to the harbor's waters, however human consumption restrictions are necessary due to past industrial practices. Still, recent water quality improvements have helped to protect viable populations of all of the region's historical indigenous aquatic species.



# History

*Three hundred years ago, the first European settlers in our region realized that the natural harbor between the colonies of New Jersey and New York was their greatest commercial treasure. Commercial activity in the harbor started with fishing and fur trading; progressed to inland farmers bringing their produce down the rivers to the port for shipment; and was solidified during and after the revolution when the military made New York its primary naval and militia headquarters. Before there were paved streets and schoolhouses in the New World, there were docks. Soon the harbor became the North American gateway for passengers and cargo; and, within a century, half of all the trade in the new United States moved through the harbor. While the port no longer occupies the predominant position, it is America's third largest, dominates several commodities, and serves the largest and richest consumer region in the world.*