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An Assessment of Maritime Infrastructure and Water-Dependent Uses in the New York City Metropolitan Area

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Anecdotal evidence suggests that recent waterfront development trends are resulting in the loss of maritime infrastructure and water-dependent uses in coastal areas nationwide. In the New York City metropolitan area, maritime and water-dependent facilities include a range of uses, from large-scale industrial infrastructure supporting the Port of New York, to small-scale fishing piers and marinas in the surrounding suburbs. In this paper, we describe research supporting the efforts of Regional Plan Association (RPA), a non-profit planning and advocacy organization, to assess the status of maritime infrastructure and water-dependent uses in waterfront areas of the 31-county tri-state region (encompassing New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut). First, we assess the current state of maritime and water-dependent uses in the region through primary research and through interviews with coastal managers, land use planners, industry representatives, and other key informants. The research catalogs the major threats to these industries and documents the trends that have led to its decline. This assessment is augmented by select case studies that provide insight into the range of maritime uses and issues characterizing this complex region. Next, we describe efforts by RPA to convene stakeholders for a meeting to explore these issues, share best management practices and develop policy perspectives. We then draw upon this research to determine how the private sector and local, state, and federal government can best facilitate stewardship of these waterfront uses. We conclude with discussion of how this research can inform other regions' efforts to protect maritime infrastructure and water-dependent uses.

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