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# As season opens, LI beaches ready

Originally published: May 28, 2011 7:21 PM  
Updated: May 28, 2011 7:35 PM  
By WILL VAN SANT will.vansant@newsday.com



Photo credit: Newsday/Alejandra\_Villa | Beach goers enjoy the Jones Beach. (May 28, 2011)

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The Best Beach in the

LONG ISLAND'S world-class beaches are open for business.

A winter of storms, nor'easters and beach erosion will not stop town and state parks officials from opening beaches to the public as the summer season kicks off this [Memorial Day](#).

Jay Tanski, a coastal specialist with the New York State Sea Grant Extension Program, says the erosion over the winter was moderate.

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"Overall, we did not have too bad of a storm season," he said.

Sand replenishment has helped with some of the erosion in places such as Field 5 at [Robert Moses State Park](#), where 30,000 cubic yards of sand was spread across the beach at a cost of \$250,000. In other areas along the South Shore, the natural cycle of wind and tide is piling sand back on the beaches. State parks officials readying for [Memorial Day](#) said Long Island's marquee beaches are generally robust.

It's welcome news for the Island's state parks, where attendance last year topped 19 million visitors.

Open beaches are one less worry for a state park system in transition.

Tighter budgets and a rash of retirements have led to sharp staff reductions at the state parks on Long Island. Ron Foley, regional director at the state office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, said he's lost about 100 employees Islandwide, with total permanent staff now about 330 compared with about 430 at the start of the season last year. Some who are gone were experienced managers who opted for an early retirement option given last year to state workers, he said. Fewer seasonal workers are also being hired.

Foley said restrooms may be cleaned and litter picked up less frequently this summer. But the parks and beaches are crowd-ready, and visitors should see no notable difference from past years, he said. After the season, it should be clearer how best to deploy his office's more limited resources in the future, he said.

Here's a look at the Island's waterfront state parks, plus [Fire Island National Seashore](#) and town and county beaches:

### Jones Beach State Park

This crown jewel of the park system, this gem of gems, will likely see 350,000 visitors over [Memorial Day](#) weekend, and the beach is in good shape. There was some erosion on the east end, which is not a swimming area. Like last year, the west end of the beach will be closed to swimmers, walkers and sunbathers, but fishing is allowed with a permit.

Like last year, there are no fireworks scheduled for Jones Beach.

This [Long Island Sound](#) beach is healthy. It was nourished last year by a [Suffolk County](#) dredging of the nearby [Nissequogue](#) River inlet.



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Went to the Jones Beach air show.

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## Wildwood State Park

Talk about a hidden great place! This narrow beach below wooded bluffs on the Sound has eroded each year, and the only remediation comes from nature. The beach may be skinnier this season than some remember, but it's comparable to last year. The woods above the beach are grand.

## Fire Island National Seashore

Dramatic, majestic-- what words adequately describe this natural wonder? Paula Valentine, a spokeswoman for the seashore, said the width of the beach is relatively normal for this time of year. With summer come gentler waves, she said, and sand will be returned to the beach gradually over the season.

"The thing to keep in mind is that a barrier island is a very dynamic landform, so it will always be shifting and changing," Valentine said. "Every day on the beach is different."

## The counties

[Nassau](#) County reports no erosion at Nickerson Beach Park.

In [Suffolk](#) County, [Smith Point County Park](#), [Cupsogue Beach](#) County Park and Meschutt Beach County Park all suffered some erosion. [Suffolk](#) emergency management commissioner [Joe Williams](#) said the county and local governments are seeking a combined \$4.3 million from the federal government to pay for remediation.

None of the damage to county beaches is so severe that visitors will be disappointed, officials said. Truth be told, it would be hard to be disappointed after a day at Cupsogue.

"We expect people to be able to enjoy their beaches after waiting anxiously over what felt like a long winter," county spokesman Dan Aug said.

## The towns

Most Long Island towns saw only moderate erosion at their public beaches, with only [Babylon](#) and [Huntington](#) reporting more serious damage.

In [Babylon](#), town spokesman Tim Ruggeri said the town portion at Gilgo Beach is "significantly narrower than usual" and that Overlook and Cedar beaches were also badly hit. Ruggeri said erosion at Gilgo will be obvious, but the beach should be able to handle its usual number of visitors.

In [Huntington](#), there's been "severe erosion" at the [Centerport](#), Hobart and West Neck beaches, said town spokesman A.J. Carter. He said the town is replacing sand at the beaches at a cost of \$58,000.

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"This year's was worse than in previous years," Carter said of the erosion, adding that no closures are planned and that plenty of beach remains available to summer visitors.

With Denise Bonilla and Deborah Morris

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"Foley said "restrooms may be cleaned and litter picked up less frequently this summer." But the parks and beaches are crowd-ready, and visitors should see no notable difference from past years, he said. Same ol' same old. ---->"We will clean less but there should be no notable difference." Classic political double-speak "

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