

Innovation in Governance Awards 2026

Part 2: Long Beach Township's bay island preservation

Joseph Mancini, Mayor, and Angela Andersen, LBT Field Station Director, Long Beach Township

Last month we discussed Cape May's Winning effort for the 2025 Innovation in Governance Awards from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities. This month we cover Long Beach Township's winning entry.



The awards were presented as part of the Mayors' Lunch Briefing on Wednesday, November 19, during the Annual League Conference in Atlantic City.

The Township truck dropping shell at the LBT Field Station to be bagged for the oyster reef.

This award program was established to highlight exemplary local government programs that provide innovative and practical approaches to solving municipal problems and concerns.

Long Beach Township's winning submission by Mayor Joseph Mancini and Long Beach Township Field Station Director Angela Andersen highlighted the innovation and productivity of the Oyster Reefs for Bay Island Stabilization and Restoration project.

Prioritizing Bay Islands

This project is part of the innovative way that Long Beach Township prioritizes the bay islands at critical infrastructure for coastal resilience. The township is invested in safeguarding these islands to protect habitat, mitigate flooding

and minimize the impacts of increased storm waves and boat wake energy on our shorelines and our on-land properties and infrastructure.

Since 2017, Long Beach Township has been the only town in New Jersey to collect post-consumer oyster and clam shells from area restaurants for bay restoration projects. Up until 2022 the shell was used at the Tuckerton research oyster reefs in Little Egg Harbor Bay in collaboration with Stockton University. Since then, the shell is being used for bay island stabilization and restoration projects off of the township.

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Over the past few years, the Township has secured funding for data collection, design and permits for the installation of a hybrid oyster reef breakwater, an ongoing project that commenced construction in December 2025 and is utilizing 2023 and 2024 shell. This hybrid reef breakwater is an innovative design combining an oyster castle framework with loose and bagged oyster and clam shell within the structure. Various bagging materials are being tested to reduce plastic inputs to the ecosystem but still maintain the integrity of the outcomes.

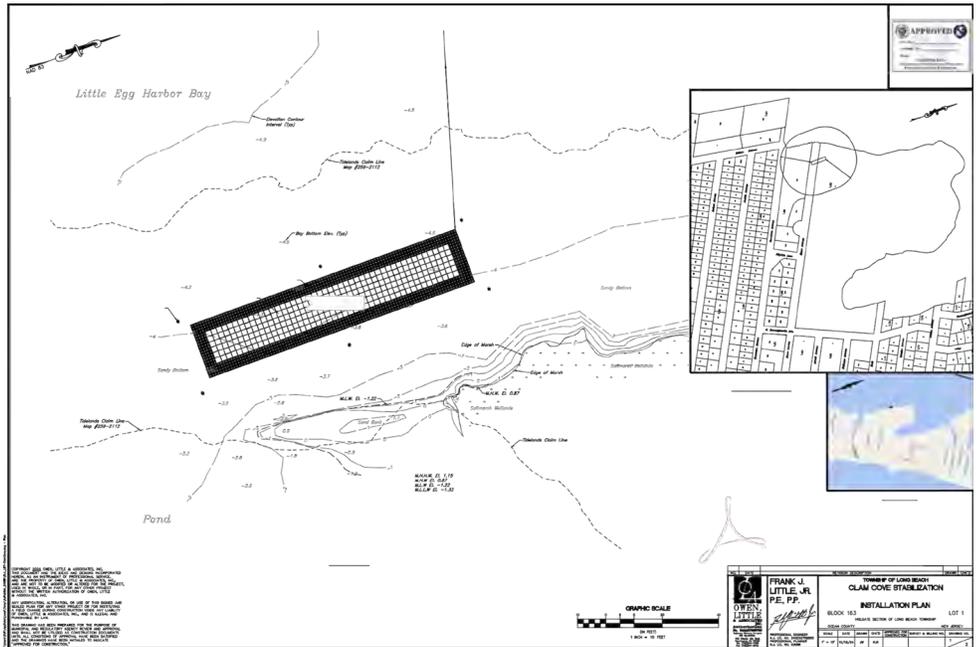
The reef is designed to stabilize the most vulnerable piece of the marsh project site and be the model to restore the full marsh shoreline of Clam Cove Reserve and additional bay island sites. The Clam Cove parcel was acquired by the township utilizing their open space trust in cost share with the Ocean County Natural Land Trust and is in the Holgate section of the township adjacent to the recently established Long Beach Township Marine Education Field Station.

A Hub for Resilience

The field station was established as a hub for the resilience and sustainability work that the township pioneers in the community. The vibrant health of Little Egg Harbor bay and surrounding oyster farms



The Long Beach Township Field Station.



Above: The approved design plan from the NJDEP GP 24 permit.

Below: The shoreline location of the reef off of Clam Cove Reserve in Holgate located in Little Egg Harbor Bay.



alongside neighboring restoration projects have provided an abundance of wild set oysters in the system and the more hard surface we can provide to capture this native species growth the better off the system and the communities will be.

The partnerships for this project, including Monmouth University Urban Coast Institute and Stockton University Coastal Research Center, stem from the township's leadership in the NJ Bay Islands Initiative and the NJ Coastal Resilience Collaborative. It is through these partnerships that they promote the transferability of these innovative strategies to other coastal townships. The funding and basis for these projects include workforce development within the township staff and resource capacity.

The township believes that a

strong and knowledgeable workforce is the foundation for implementing successful resilience projects. From the department of public works and municipal engineering to establishing a Resilience Project Manager on staff, this progressive look at innovative solutions to municipal governance is a standout model for all New Jersey communities.

The local, regional and statewide relationships that the township has been developing since Superstorm Sandy have created the tapestry of innovation and building blocks for making ideas become implementable and meaningful projects. These legacy projects are investments in community and coastal habitats whose benefits will be realized for the foreseeable future. Oyster reefs and bay islands...perfect together. 🌊