

## Priorities Ranked on Parkland Sites

By Stephen Williams

A list of proposed parkland sites for acquisition by Suffolk County has been issued by a team of county park and planning department officials. The team recommended purchase of 14 sites, further review of four more and the dropping of eight other sites.

Recommended for priority purchase were 29 acres at Carll's River, Babylon; 299 acres on the Terrell River in Brookhaven; Camp Wauwepex, 439 acres in Riverhead; Long Pond, 1,070 acres in Southampton; Barcelona Neck, 355 acres in East Hampton, and 300 acres now part of Pilgrim State Psychiatric Center in Huntington and Babylon towns.

The reviewers said that "acquisition should take priority over development of lands now held in the Parks [department] inventory." Legis. Joyce Burland (D-Sagaponack), chairman of the county legislature parks committee and a member of the team, said

the report will be formally presented to her committee March 24.

The total cost of the 14 priority sites would be more than \$46 million, as estimated in the report. The team, which has been meeting since January, undertook the review "to determine priorities . . . in this difficult time of fiscal restraints," the report said.

Each site was designated as "A," "B" or "C" priority. In the "drop" category are "those acquisitions we feel have no real justification in the overall planning for open-space preservation," the report stated.

The Long Pond and Pilgrim State acquisitions are on the "A" list. Long Pond, which would be part of a greenbelt from Sag Harbor to Bridgehampton in the Town of Southampton, "comprises a fragile network of ponds and some of the most beautiful and irreplaceable land in Suffolk County," says the report. Its cost is estimated at \$4 million to \$6 million.

The Pilgrim State site, estimated to cost \$3.5 million, was designated top priority "only on the condition that the state virtually grant the acreage to Suffolk County." It would be used for recreation, including ball parks and picnic grounds.

The purchase of 300 acres of undeveloped private property around Lake Ronkonkoma was listed last on the "C" list. "The evaluation of this purchase (estimated cost: \$6 million) is enormously complex due to multiple town use, pollution of the lake, pollution sources and high maintenance costs . . . [we] suggest a comprehensive study . . . to determine if county purchase is advisable."

The Lake Ronkonkoma property, which is in the towns of Smithtown, Islip and Brookhaven, has been a source of controversy since last summer, when the Islip and Brookhaven beaches were closed for nearly two weeks because of lake pollution.