

# Protecting the Nature of the Place You Love



## 2020 NEWSLETTER

SUFFOLK COUNTY'S attempted raid on millions in open space fund  
PLUM ISLAND and ORIENT POINT land preservation  
OSPREY PLATFORMS built by students  
DOWNS FARM PRESERVE: People and pollinators  
PHRAGMITES kept at bay  
BEACH CLEANUPS and VIRTUAL PROGRAMS  
WISH LIST for children's education items and garden tools

# Dear Friends and Supporters,

On behalf of all of us here at Group for the East End, I hope that you and your loved ones are healthy and adjusting to the many changes that the pandemic has brought upon us.

As I have grappled with my own uncertainty and concerns about the future, I keep finding myself drawn back to the natural world. And as I take some time to get outside and walk along a woodland trail, watch the sunset from Orient Point or see the simple courtship of two tiny house wrens carefully inspecting an old weathered nest box where they will raise this year's young, I feel better—more positive, more hopeful and a little less consumed by the troubling news of the day.

Nearly 50 years ago, the founders of Group for the East End understood that the value of living at peace with nature was something worth fighting for. Thanks to this shared vision and support from people like you, we have fought to stop overdevelopment, preserve open space, and protect clean water.

Today, we are incredibly lucky to live in a place that is still defined more by its beaches and bays than by its highways and shopping malls. And at times like this, I am grateful for every inch of land that has been preserved, for every beach that I can walk, and for the starlight that continues to inspire me to look beyond myself for comfort and answers.

More than ever, I recognize the profound challenge of protecting this beautiful place that has become a safe harbor during the pandemic. Undoubtedly, people will continue flocking to nature preserves, beaches, parks, and their own backyards to breathe and find solace. **With this greater appreciation for nature comes the added responsibility to protect our already fragile environment. Together, with your support, I know we will rise to the task. Thank you.**

Sincerely,



Bob DeLuca  
President, Group for the East End



**“I am grateful for every inch of land that has been preserved, for every beach that I can walk, and for the starlight that continues to inspire me to look beyond myself for comfort and answers.”**

– Bob DeLuca

On the cover:  
The Birch Family picks up trash during Shelter Island beach cleanup. Thank you, Katherine, Marco, William and Annabelle!

# Getting Down and Dirty at Downs Farm Preserve

## GROUP STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TRANSFORM PROPERTY DURING COVID, POLLINATORS THRIVE

In normal times, thanks to your support, the Group would be leading full moon hikes, giving informative talks on native backyard plants and educating students on the importance of pollinators. When COVID hit and forced us to cancel our outdoor programs at Downs Farm Preserve in Cutchogue, we immediately switched gears. With approval from the Town of Southold, **we started digging, pruning and planting to enhance the experience not only for human visitors to the preserve, but for its flora and fauna.** A special effort was made to attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Many thanks to master apiarist Chris Kelly of Promised Land Apiaries, who tends the beehives at the preserve where he also offers programs on beekeeping.



Native goldenrod and common milkweed are making a comeback in the new pollinator garden and are already attracting monarch butterflies and bees!



Environmental Associate Stephanie Licciardi removes invasive species to make room for native plants that will provide diverse habitats and food sources for birds, butterflies and other wildlife.



**THANK YOU, SCOTT!** Volunteer Scott Hnetinka has played an integral role in the transformation of Downs Farm Preserve in 2020. He's been digging out invasive species, fixing the raised plant beds, helping design the new pollinator area and a lot more. A stalwart worker and all-around nice guy, Master Sergeant Scott Hnetinka has been in the armed forces for 17 years and currently serves as a crew chief with the 106th Rescue Wing in Westhampton Beach. We're grateful for his hard work at the preserve and for his military service.

# County Attempts Raid on Millions in Open Space Fund to Patch Budget Shortfalls

PROPOSAL IS  
DEFEATED AFTER  
THE GROUP,  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PARTNERS AND  
LEGISLATORS  
SPEAK OUT

If you set aside money for a specific reason, perhaps to pay for college or to buy a car, you hope nobody will try to take it away and use it for something else.



But that's exactly what's been happening for decades with Suffolk County's Drinking Water Protection Program (DWPP) and 2020 is no exception. In fact, the county wanted to include a ballot proposition this year that would allow tens of millions of dollars to be taken from the program for the sole purpose of patching holes in the county's operating budget. **The DWPP is broken down into specific funding initiatives and in this case, the entire balance of the open space acquisition fund would be wiped out for three years.**

Thanks to your support, Group President Bob DeLuca campaigned successfully with a county-wide coalition of environmental and civic organizations to defeat the proposal. In his testimony before the Suffolk County Legislature, Bob pointed out that the raid would eliminate millions of dollars from the one fund that has been critically important over the years in protecting open space across the East End and throughout Suffolk County.

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**“At a time when more people than ever before are using our parks and protected lands, the idea of the county raiding the one fund solely dedicated to land protection is extremely short-sighted, threatens the integrity of a program, and runs contrary to the public’s strong commitment to defending our land and water.”**

– Bob DeLuca, President, Group for the East End

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**The Group was a leading advocate for the voter-approved DWWP (and its dedicated fund for open space acquisition) when it was established in 1987.** Sadly, we have had to work diligently since then to guard those funds and prevent them from being raided by the county.

In addition to our civic and environmental partners, we are grateful to Suffolk County's East End legislators Al Krupski and Bridget Fleming for their help in preventing the loss of this vital environmental funding.

# Students Build Osprey Platforms

THE GROUP PARTNERS WITH SHELTER ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL



When Shelter Island High School teacher Lynne Colligan told the Group she was looking for a hands-on community project for a small class of industrious students, we said, "How about building some Osprey nesting platforms?"

Ms. Colligan, the students and technology-shop teacher Chris Conrardy embraced the idea and thanks to Riverhead Building Supply, the lumber and hardware were provided. **Together they assembled ten platforms, just in time for the Ospreys' annual return from South America and other warm climes.**

On a chilly February morning, our friends at Mashomack Preserve harvested black locust trees to be used as poles, which the Shelter Island Highway Department delivered to the designated sites. The Group's Vice President Aaron Virgin enlisted the students to dig deep holes in the sand, fasten the platforms safely to the locust poles and then, with all hands on, raise the poles and secure them with braces.

**Many thanks to all our partners on Shelter Island, and to supporters like you, who make it possible for the Group to turn ideas into action.**

**TAKE A BOW, Shelter Island students.**

**"Through a wonderful collaboration with Group for the East End, the students learned that Osprey platforms have played a significant role in the comeback of the iconic bird that was once on the brink of extinction from eastern Long Island."**

— Lynne Colligan, Shelter Island High School Teacher

Photos by Eleanor P. Labrozzi Photography



Photo: Jim Colligan

# The Group Advocates for Stricter Zoning in Orient Point to Protect Plum Island



As a founding member of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition, the Group is committed to protecting the island as a nature preserve.

## | SOUTHOLD TOWN ACTS TO LIMIT DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

**Thanks to your past support, the Group is a founding member of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition (PPIC) and has partnered with more than 100 organizations from the tri-state area to prevent the federal government from selling Plum Island to the highest bidder.** This unique 840-acre treasure trove of natural beauty and historic significance lies just off the tip of Orient Point on the North Fork.

The coalition seeks to protect Plum Island as a nature preserve, while promoting viable research opportunities at the existing laboratory facilities. We have been fortunate to have the support of our local, state and federal representatives who are working to repeal the federal legislation that originally authorized the sale of the island. Although progress has been made, the proposed sale remains on track.

**To help protect Plum Island from overdevelopment if sold to a private party, the Group and PPIC advocated for stricter zoning requirements** and in 2013, the Town of Southold adopted those requirements. While critical in addressing the future land uses that would be permitted on the island, these zoning laws did not extend to the 9-acre parcel in Orient Point that includes the Plum

Island ferry terminal. If the Orient property was purchased by a private party, there would be enormous potential for expansive development on the waterfront.

Recognizing this potential, the Group and PPIC raised the issue with the Town of Southold, which prompted local officials to develop a new zoning classification for the Orient parcel. Known as Marine

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**“The Group’s expertise in local government and zoning was critical in bringing the ferry parcel re-zoning matter back before the Southold Town Board. Their partnership helped deliver a big win that works in favor of protecting Plum Island.”**

– Louise Harrison, Save the Sound

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Photo: Robert Lorenz Photography

III zoning, it limits the site to ferry service exclusively to and from Plum Island, minor accessory uses, and possible conservation or educational facility uses in the future.

**The Marine III zoning classification was adopted unanimously by the Southold Town Board in November of 2019 and officially applied to the Orient parcel on September 4, 2020.**

PPIC has also been working on "Envision Plum Island," a report that details specific plans and future opportunities for using Plum Island in the public interest and conservation.

**For more information visit [PreservePlumIsland.org](http://PreservePlumIsland.org)**

# Efforts to Protect South Fork's Water Quality Head Back to Court

## THE GROUP FIGHTS EXPANSION OF SAND MINE WITH DOCUMENTED WATER CONTAMINATION

On the heels of a recent lower court ruling that inexplicably allowed the continued expansion of the Sand Land mine in Bridgehampton—despite significant groundwater and surface water contamination—the Group joined with neighbors, civic organizations, Southampton Town, and Assemblyman Fred Thiele in further challenging the decision before an appellate court.

### **Our challenge to the appellate court points out that the lower court:**

- **Set aside critical data from investigations** conducted by a Suffolk County grand jury and the Suffolk County Health Department
- **Relied heavily on the affidavit of one New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) staffer** who had never submitted any prior evidence or testimony to the underlying record, as required by law
- **Ignored NYSDEC's own previous denial**—based on groundwater concerns—of a nearly identical application for expansion
- **Ignored the fact that state mining laws give Southampton Town the authority to prohibit any new mining** at facilities where groundwater is at risk for contamination

The appellate court is scheduled to consider this case in late October. Stay tuned for news about the outcome.



# The Group Advocates for Preservation of Mattituck’s “Last Green Corner”

## | SOUTHOLD TOWN MOVES TO ACQUIRE AND PRESERVE THE PROPERTY

If you’ve been on the North Fork lately, there are more cars, more people and more development.

Over the past decade, community members and stakeholders in Mattituck have been particularly concerned with the future of a woodland parcel at the intersection of New Suffolk Avenue and NYS Route 25. Known by local residents as Mattituck’s “Last Green Corner,” the property has been identified as the perfect location for a small hamlet park. The park would help distinguish Mattituck’s historic business district—centered around the charming street Love Lane—from the more conventional business developments on the highway to the west.

Concerns were realized when a development proposal for the site, which included two large commercial retail buildings, was received by the

Town of Southold. **If approved, the greenspace envisioned for the property would be eliminated.**

When those wanting to develop the site brought litigation against the town—seeking to advance the development proposal—the Group reviewed the proposal and joined civic leaders in their support for the town to acquire the property via its power of eminent domain.

In the Group’s testimony before the town board, we noted numerous community stakeholders calling for preservation over the last 15 years. We also included the planning recommendations made in both the town’s 2020 comprehensive plan update and its Mattituck Hamlet Study.

**On September 8, 2020, the Town of Southold agreed to move forward with the acquisition of this property.**



**“The Group applauds the efforts of Mattituck community stakeholders and the Town of Southold to maintain the rural character of the North Fork.”**

– Aaron Virgin, Vice President,  
Group for the East End



# Native Plants and Wildlife Return to Great Pond

## THE GROUP AND CIVIC ASSOCIATION PARTNER TO REMOVE INVASIVE SPECIES

If you haven't heard of Phragmites, there's a good chance you've seen it—lots of it. "Phrag" is all over the East End, wreaking havoc on salt-water and freshwater wetlands.

**For years, the tall aggressive grass has been choking 33-acre Great Pond in Southold.** Also known as common reed, this invasive species has prevented native plants from growing and displacing native wildlife.

Thanks to the Kenney's-McCabe's Beach Civic Association and a grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Group hired SOLitude Lake Management to remove the water-based Phragmites, while staff and volunteers cut down the land-based invasive plants. Residents have started replacing the Phragmites with native plants such as swamp milkweed, blue flag iris and sweet pepperbush, and the results have been extraordinary.

The Group is grateful to partner with civic associations across the East End. Together we protect the nature of the place we love.

**"Our formerly Phragmites-infested pond front has surprised us all year. As the Group planted natives to help stave off returning Phragmites, many of those same native plants also appeared naturally from the soil. Swamp loosestrife is thriving everywhere, and the swamp milkweed blooms have attracted a bounty of monarchs to the pond."**

— Bridget Rymer, Kenney's-McCabe's Beach Civic Association

**RIGHT:** Great Pond resident Bridget Rymer had never seen the native plant swamp loosestrife on her property until it was given the space to flourish on its own.

**BELOW:** Armed with clippers and a brush cutter, Bridget Rymer and the Group's Vice President Aaron Virgin take a quick break from cutting down the stubborn Phragmites.



**ABOVE:** Once a rarity on Great Pond, monarch caterpillars can now be seen feasting on the native swamp milkweed that the Group planted.

**BELOW:** Sweet pepperbush is showy when other blooms are not present. It attracts wildlife and pollinators. People enjoy its sweet, spicy fragrance through September.





# September Beach Cleanups

## HALLOCK STATE PARK AND SHELTER ISLAND BEACHES SHED SOME TRASH

On September 19, the Group teamed up with Atlantic Marine Conservation Society to participate in this year's International Coastal Cleanup at Hallock State Park Preserve in Jamesport. It's a day when communities around the world rally together with the common goal of collecting and documenting the trash littering their coastline.

A week later, the Shelter Island community—ranging from small children to octogenarians—came out in force for an island-wide beach cleanup organized by the Group and Everest Wein of No Germ Club. **Many thanks to Everest, all the participants, prize donors and the Shelter Island Highway Department, who carted away 290 pounds of trash collected from five beaches.**



Participants were greeted at the drive-thru check-in at the Shelter Island School parking lot and received eco-gloves, trash bags and pickers. They returned with trunks full of trash.



**Please support our work!**  
**Donate online at**  
**[GroupfortheEastEnd.org](http://GroupfortheEastEnd.org)**

# 600-acre Golf Resort Proposal Faces Stiff Opposition

PINE BARRENS COMMISSION HEARS TESTIMONY FROM THE GROUP AND OTHERS



Photo: John-Brandauer



As we await the outcome of two pending lawsuits filed against the Southampton Town planning and zoning boards, the Lewis Road Planned Residential Development application has moved to a review before the Pine Barrens Commission. The suits are related to the arbitrary decisions made by the planning and zoning boards to approve the application, which was previously denied by the Southampton Town Board when submitted as the nearly identical The Hills Planned Development District.

During virtual public meetings and hearings held this summer, the commission heard extensive testimony from opponents including the Group and New York State Assemblyman Steve Englebright, who chairs the New

York State Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee and was a sponsor of the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act. **Together with East Quogue residents, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society and the Southampton Town Civic Coalition, we made the case that the proposed development—which includes 130 residential units, a championship golf course, and extensive resort amenities—was far too intensive for the fragile pine barrens habitat and watershed.**

The Group's President Bob DeLuca explained that while full preservation of the site was preferred, a far better land-use plan for the property could and should be considered. He noted that generous offers have been made to purchase the land.

To this end, the Group hired the renowned conservation design firm of Dodson & Flinker to develop an alternative plan that would have far less impact on habitat and water resources. That design plan was given

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**The Group's President Bob DeLuca explained that while full preservation of the site was preferred, a far better land-use plan for the property could and should be considered.**

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to Southampton Town and the Pine Barrens Commission, which resolved to further review the project and postpone making a decision until January 2021.

**More than 25 years ago, the Group was a key advocate in the effort to pass the Pine Barrens Protection Act and we will continue the fight to protect this unique ecosystem that is vital to our drinking water supply.**

# Our Work Continues During COVID, Thanks to Your Support



## WHEN THE PANDEMIC HIT, THE GROUP QUICKLY REORGANIZED STAFF TO ADAPT TO THE RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD AROUND US

▲ In the spring, Director of Environmental Education **Steve Biasetti** would normally be conducting in-class sessions and outdoor field trips with local schools. Instead, he and **Anita Wright**, the Group's Assistant Director of Environmental Education, pivoted seamlessly into their **new roles tracking New York State-threatened and -endangered shorebirds, thanks to our partnership with the Town of Southold**. In addition to scouting out birds and eggs, compiling and recording their data, they put up (and took down!) over 100 steel posts with string fencing around sections of beach where piping plovers and least terns mate and nest.





▲ **Taralynn Reynolds** also made a smooth transition within her usual role as the Group's Outreach and Education Manager. Instead of leading nature outings and giving talks on flora and fauna in person, typically at Downs Farm Preserve, **she conducted programs virtually.** Some programs had Q&A sessions with over 160 participants! People definitely seemed to enjoy bringing nature into their homes via their computer screens.

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#### Popular virtual programs included:

- **Setting Up Beehives**  
Master Apiarist Chris Kelly
- **Hurdles for Turtles**  
Turtle Rescue of the Hamptons
- **Meet the Animals**  
Quogue Wildlife Refuge
- **Native Plant Gardening**  
Long Island Native Plant Initiative and Peconic Estuary Partnership

◀ In addition to getting her hands dirty at Downs Farm Preserve, Environmental Associate **Stephanie Licciardi** posted educational videos on social media about pollinators, gardening and a slew of other nature-related topics.

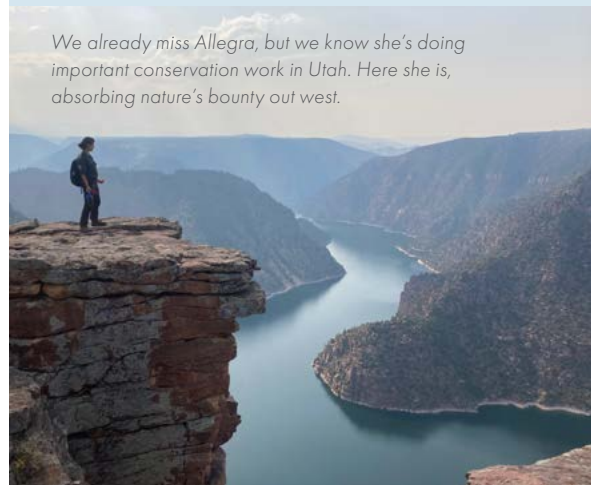


## Our Summer Intern

Yale graduate **Allegra Brogard** joined the Group this summer as an intern after half a semester of virtual classes and an online commencement ceremony, eager to help in any way possible. When she wasn't cutting down invasive species or representing the Group at a conservation-related town hearing via Zoom, Allegra, an accomplished writer and graphic designer, was posting on the Group's blog page. Following is an excerpt of her piece, **What is Environmental Justice?**

*When we pillage Earth, we disproportionately devastate its most vulnerable and marginalized communities. In his recent Op-ed, Sierra Club's Hop Hopkins stated: "You can't have climate change without sacrifice zones, and you can't have sacrifice zones without disposable people, and you can't have disposable people without racism." Hopkins' words underpin the crucial importance of an intersectional approach to environmentalism, one in which justice for Black lives and ecological healing are approached not as separate causes, but rather, as deeply connected.*

*We already miss Allegra, but we know she's doing important conservation work in Utah. Here she is, absorbing nature's bounty out west.*



**Environmental justice, zero-waste car kits, and bald eagles** are just a few of the interesting topics covered on our blog page. Check it out at [groupfortheeastend.org/blog](https://groupfortheeastend.org/blog)

# Teen Thanks the Group for Protecting Threatened Shorebirds



TOMMY MCKEON  
MAKES THE BEST OF  
SUMMER OF 2020  
AND PAYS IT FORWARD

Tom McKeon and his 13-year old son Tommy showed up at the Group's Southold office one day in August to present a check for \$550 to President Bob DeLuca.

Tommy had decided to make a donation to the Group with proceeds from his new apparel company, and his father was happy to explain how it all happened (see letter at right).



ABOVE: Least tern  
TOP RIGHT: Piping plover

**THANK YOU Tommy!**  
We are extremely grateful for your generous gift, which will help us protect threatened shorebirds that live and nest on our local beaches.

Dear Group for the East End,

When it was warm enough this spring, Tommy, my wife Maureen and I came out earlier than usual to our Cutchogue house. Like everyone else, all of Tommy's activities stopped in March due to Covid. Not only did his schooling switch to part-time/on-line, but Boy Scouts and his travel soccer team also stopped.

We thought it was going to be a long difficult summer, so we asked Tommy to come up with ideas of things he could do. He wanted a new bike, but wasn't old enough to get a job, so we helped him come up with ideas to make money. He also continued working towards his Boy Scout Eagle.

I've been summering on Nassau Point since the mid 70's and Tommy's been here since he's a baby. A family friend suggested "Nassau Point" apparel (t-shirts, sweatshirts, water shirts, etc.). So we helped Tommy contact a local retailer who worked with him on a logo and website, and we worked with him on marketing and a business plan.

As part of the plan, we told him he should identify a local charity to donate to, as a way to give back to the Nassau Point community that would be buying his merchandise. We often walk on Meadow Beach to get a glimpse of the birds and nests that are protected in the sanctuary that's set up there. We often wondered who maintains that area. After some research, he was led to Group for the East End, and that's how he decided who he wanted to donate to.

Tommy's project was successful. He bought a new bike, made a donation, and put money in his savings account. We believe everyone was happy with their Nassau Point apparel, and he's already received requests for next summer.

Sincerely,  
Tom McKeon



Photo: Jim Colligan

# Robust Osprey Population in 2020

## EAST END OSPREYS

In 2020, nearly 600 sites were visited by Group staff, volunteers or project partners to view current or past nest sites.

### THE NUMBERS:

Total Sites: 481  
Active Nests: 354  
Nest Occupancy: 74%  
Chicks: 579

### NEST LOCATIONS:

Poles/Platforms: 246  
Trees: 34  
Light Poles: 7  
Chimneys/Houses: 7  
Buoys/Boulders/Docks: 8  
Utility Poles: 34  
Telecom Towers: 18

Learn more about the Ospreys' recovery and maintaining healthy populations at [Groupfortheeastend.org/conservation](http://Groupfortheeastend.org/conservation).

# Wish List

If you own any of these items or something very similar and they are in good working order, we would gladly accept them.

**Please see current list with links to purchase and shipping information:**  
[groupfortheeastend.org/wishlist](http://groupfortheeastend.org/wishlist)

## ► CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

### Nature-Themed Books

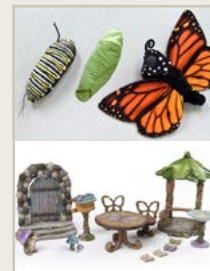
We need lots of children's nature books! If you would like to purchase them new or donate your gently used children's nature books, we would be happy to have them.

*Owling: Enter the World of the Mysterious Birds of the Night*, by Mark Wilson  
*Greta and the Giants*, by Zoe Tucker



### Nature-Themed Puppets, Figurines and Fairy Garden Supplies

- Great Horned Owl Puppet (1)
- Chickadee Puppet (1)
- Robin Puppet (1)
- Monarch Life Cycle Puppet (1)
- Monarch Life Cycle Figurine (1)
- Backyard Bird TOOB Figurines (1 Set)
- Fairy Garden Benches & Tree Stumps (1 Set)
- Fairy Garden Picks (1)
- Fairy Garden Hidden Doorway (1)



### Environmental Science Supplies

- Heavy Duty Nets (10)
- Handheld Magnifying Lenses (10)
- Glue Guns (5)
- Fish Tank (1-2)
- Recycled Plastic Buckets (15-20)



## ► LAND STEWARDSHIP

- Loppers (2)
- Power Lever Loppers (1)
- Hose Wheel Cart (1)



## ► ADMINISTRATIVE

- HP LaserJet Enterprise Printer M507x (1PV88A)



**CONTACTLESS DROPOFF – Items can be brought to our office:**  
Group for the East End, 54895 Route 25, Southold, NY 11971.  
Due to staggered schedules, **please email Kristina Lange at [klange@eastendenvironment.org](mailto:klange@eastendenvironment.org) to arrange a dropoff time.**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# Protect the East End for Future Generations

## REMEMBER THE GROUP IN YOUR FINANCIAL PLANNING

### • GIFT OF SECURITIES

You can reduce or even eliminate capital gains tax. Any publicly traded stock that has increased in value that you have owned for more than a year can provide greater tax benefits than giving cash.

### • CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION FROM AN IRA

If you're at least 70½, you can take a distribution from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA), make a donation to Group for the East End and exclude it from your income of up to \$100,000 per person.

### • BEQUEST

Please consider naming the Group as a beneficiary in your estate plans. Whether through your will, a trust or insurance policy, you can plan for the future, pass on your values, and make a lasting impact on the East End's environment.

### For more information:

Kristina Lange • 631-765-6450 x216 or [klange@eastendenvironment.org](mailto:klange@eastendenvironment.org).

All calls and emails are confidential. Group for the East End does not offer financial or tax advice.



### OUR MISSION:

Group for the East End protects and restores the environment of eastern Long Island through professional advocacy and education, and by inspiring people to embrace a conservation ethic and take action. The Group is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

### Group for the East End

P.O. Box 1792  
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631.765.6450

Learn more about our work at  
[GroupfortheEastEnd.org](http://GroupfortheEastEnd.org)

