

# GROUP ACTION

THE NEWSLETTER OF GROUP FOR THE EAST END

## Conservation Victories One Fistful At A Time

- *Enough is Enough: Group Joins Anti-Plastic Straw Campaign*
- *Group Banned from Plum Island by Federal Government*
- *Test Results Confirm Contamination of Drinking Water Supply Below "Sand Land"*
  - *Southampton Rejects "The Hills" but Developers Fight On*
  - *Threatened Shorebirds Make Progress*
  - *Success! Sharper's Hill Preserved After Six-Year Battle*
  - *Group Leads New Nature Programs on North Fork*
  - *Group Launches Web Site to Highlight Plight of Wildlife*



# #StrawlessSummerELI Campaign a Success

## Group asks restaurants to please not serve plastic straws; broadening effort to local schools

This summer the Group teamed up with Surfrider's Eastern Long Island Chapter and Atlantic Marine Conservation Society to educate and inspire restaurants and individuals to join what has become a global movement.

Between two and four hundred million plastic straws are used every day in the U.S., usually for just a few minutes, but they can take centuries to break down. Straws and other single-use plastics end up in landfills and in our waters, where marine birds, fish, sea turtles, and scores of other wildlife regularly ingest or become entangled in this harmful debris, leading to injury or even death. According to a recent report by the World Economic Forum, if we keep producing and failing to properly dispose of single-use plastics, they will outweigh fish in the ocean, pound for pound, by 2050.



***Thank you to everyone who stopped using plastic straws on the East End this summer! It's a small but meaningful step in our fight to protect the marine environment, locally and globally.***

The #StrawlessSummerELI campaign included Q&A sessions and screenings of *Straws*, an award-winning documentary written by Linda Booker and narrated by Oscar winner Tim Robbins. By the end of the summer, over 50 restaurants on the East End took the pledge not to serve drinks with plastic straws.

This school year the Group will be working with East End districts to "go strawless." Stay tuned!

***Look for email updates and action alerts on plastics and beach cleanups. Sign up for our mailing list at [groupfortheeastend.org/](http://groupfortheeastend.org/) subscribe.***

Researchers from Texas A&M University found this sea turtle in Costa Rica with a 4-inch plastic straw stuck in her nostril. They weren't sure how it got there, but figured the turtle swallowed the straw (thinking it was food) and then tried to throw it back up. Hours away from a veterinarian and concerned the turtle would not survive, the researchers decided to remove it. The video went viral and helped spark the global anti-straw movement.



The sea turtle survived and was featured in the film, *Straws*.





# Federal Government Suddenly Bans Group and Other Visitors from Plum Island

## Group calls on Governor Cuomo to help prevent private sale of island

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has taken an increasingly hostile tone in its efforts to sell Plum Island to the highest bidder. By banning visitors, including organizations like the Group, the Audubon Society, and Save the Sound, independent scientific research on the island's unique natural habitat and ecological significance has been brought to a halt.

As a founding member of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition, the Group has been working for almost a decade to reverse the ill-advised federal decision to sell the island. While the

coalition of more than 100 organizations has succeeded in securing more protective zoning for the island, we have not managed to get a federal bill passed that would prevent the sale. (Several such bills were introduced and passed in the U.S. House of Representatives, but similar legislation never passed the Senate.)



Given the ongoing divisions in Washington, and the tendency for upcoming elections to slow things down even more than usual, we have reached out to Governor Cuomo. Even without Congress, New York State can play a critical role in preserving at least 80% of the island, which is a treasure trove of rare, threatened and endangered plants and animals.

*Learn more at [preserveplumisland.org](http://preserveplumisland.org).*

*Look for email updates and action alerts on Plum Island. Sign up at [groupfortheeastend.org/subscribe](http://groupfortheeastend.org/subscribe).*

**In a recent letter to Governor Cuomo, Group President Bob DeLuca called upon the Governor to use the powers vested in the state's Coastal Zone Management Program to achieve three goals:**

- (1) Prevent a private sale of the island, which is located in New York State coastal waters
- (2) Assure a complete clean-up of the site's historic and ongoing operations
- (3) Develop a future conservation and management plan for the island

▶ *Have questions on Plum Island? Email [bdeluca@eastendenvironment.org](mailto:bdeluca@eastendenvironment.org)*

## SOME GOOD NEWS...MAYBE!

As this newsletter was going to print, we were notified that the federal government has apparently agreed to conduct a supplemental environmental study of Plum Island. The need for this study was one of the key issues that compelled the Group and our partners to file a lawsuit against the government. The consideration of additional environmental data could be critical in achieving a conservation outcome for the island.

Although this decision is a clear victory for those of us who challenged the adequacy of the existing environmental review, it does not indicate that the government has changed its plans to sell the island. In fact, not allowing access to conservation groups will result in no new (critical) data being collected and limit the value of the newly proposed study.

Time will tell.

As the campaign for preservation continues, we will keep you posted on our progress, and what you can do to help.



# Suffolk County Test Results Confirm Contamination of Drinking Water Supply Below “Sand Land”

## Group demands action as sand mine continues waste-processing operations

After pushing for nearly a decade for a government investigation into the water quality at a 50-acre sand mine in Bridgehampton, the Group—together with local residents, civic groups and elected officials—finally succeeded in getting Sand Land’s groundwater tested this year.



That investigation started in 2015, but the mine’s owners refused to cooperate. It took a court order late last year for the Suffolk County Department of Health Services to be given access to the site and perform the testing.

The results show that the drinking water supply below Sand Land has high concentrations of heavy metals, nitrates and

even radioactivity. Sadly, we were not surprised, knowing that surface waters at the mine had tested positive for contamination and that contaminated groundwater had been found at similar mining and waste-processing facilities on Long Island.

The county’s comprehensive report confirms that the manganese contamination level is 100 times the drinking water standard, and iron is 200 times the standard. The nitrate level—a common byproduct of vegetative waste, livestock waste and sewage—is nearly double the drinking water standard. The elevated level of radioactivity is also well above the standard.

Incredibly, the disturbing water quality results have not affected Sand Land’s waste-processing operations. A steady flow of trucks arrives throughout the day and dumps construction, demolition and landscaping debris, **none of which is inspected.** Especially troubling, the sand mine, just off Millstone Road, is located in Southampton Town’s special groundwater protection area.



Group for the East End president Bob DeLuca and Noyac Civil Council president Elena Loretto address water quality questions from concerned residents.

**“Despite Sand Land’s claim to the contrary, the groundwater below the mine is significantly contaminated, and may be moving toward private wells. We must act now to protect our drinking water on the East End.”**

— Bob DeLuca, President, Group for the East End







It's time for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to do its job and prohibit this type of land use in areas where our drinking water is put at risk. Our fragile water supply for the North and South forks and Shelter Island is already under too much pressure.

The struggle to protect our drinking water on the East End is far from over. It is only through your generous support that the Group is able to continue this critically important fight.

*Look for updates and email action alerts on Sand Land and other pressing water contamination issues. Sign up at [groupfortheeastend.org/subscribe](http://groupfortheeastend.org/subscribe).*

➤ *Have questions on Sand Land?  
Email [bdeluca@eastendenvironment.org](mailto:bdeluca@eastendenvironment.org)*

**The Group, together with our partners, is calling on the State of New York to:**

1. Prohibit any more waste processing at Sand Land
2. Deny renewal of Sand Land's sand mining permit, scheduled for fall of 2018
3. Formally reject Sand Land's pending application to expand the mine  
*(The Group has been arguing against the mine's expansion for years.)*



# Developer Sues for \$100 Million after Southampton Town Rejects “The Hills”

## Town concluded project was too expansive and put drinking water at risk

Thanks to your support, the Group and our partners were successful in preventing the controversial planned development district (PDD) proposal, known as “The Hills,” from moving forward. After a five-year battle over the future of this important 600-acre parcel in the Pine Barrens—including the drinking water it protects—the application was voted down by the Southampton Town Board late last year.

The East Quogue proposal included a change-of-zone to allow for the construction of a private, luxury golf resort with 118 residential units, sprawling clubhouse, underground parking, and numerous other resort amenities. As the property is located in the town’s aquifer protection overlay district, the Group has argued from the beginning that this type of high-density, intensive use of land cannot be allowed. The residential zoning within the district was specifically designed to minimize development, preserve the quality of the town’s drinking water, and protect its unique pine barren habitat and the wildlife who live there.

Of course, the Group has always supported full preservation of the property. However, during the very contentious review of the project, the law required alternative development designs be considered. As a result, we enlisted eastern Long Island’s leading planners and land-use designers to demonstrate that there were sound, environmentally-responsible alternatives to the applicant’s proposal. (These alternatives should be required for any development in this watershed protection area.)

➔ **Have questions on the latest proposal for this East Quogue property? Email [bdeluca@eastendenvironment.org](mailto:bdeluca@eastendenvironment.org)**



Unsatisfied with the alternatives and unwilling to take no for an answer, the developer decided to sue the town for \$100 million. This lawsuit—with its claim of such extraordinary damages over a speculative zone-change application—is highly irresponsible, and designed solely to intimidate. Sadly, it demonstrates the extreme tactics some developers will use to get approvals.

**“The developer’s \$100 million lawsuit would bankrupt Southampton Town and destroy the livelihoods of its employees. The chances for success are small, but bullying Town officials and instilling this type of fear could actually end up shaping important policy decisions that compromise the public interest.”**

**- Bob DeLuca, Group for the East End President**

At the same time, Discovery Land presented another proposal—nearly identical to the original PDD application—which it claims falls under the existing zoning for the site. We reviewed the proposal, retained counsel to validate our assessment, and do not see any provision in the town code that would allow for the construction of a “mixed-use” golf resort in the most protected residential zone in Southampton Town.

This latest proposal, known as the Lewis Road Planned Residential Development, is currently in the hands of the Southampton Town Zoning Board of Appeals. The ZBA must decide if Discovery Land can build a “mixed-use” development on the same fragile site as the defeated “Hills” proposal.

If the ZBA votes yes, the Town of Southampton will have failed its residents and destroyed its reputation as one of the region’s leaders in land and water protection.

**Look for email updates and action alerts on this critically important proposal and the Group’s other environmental advocacy campaigns. Sign up at [groupfortheeastend.org](http://groupfortheeastend.org)/subscribe.**

Discovery Land Company’s proposed development is located in Southampton Town’s aquifer protection overlay district, which was specifically designed to protect the town’s drinking water.



# Great News for Threatened Shorebirds on North Fork

Data show conservation efforts are working; success varies among species



The Group documented that 23 piping plovers had fledged from North Fork beaches this summer.



Volunteer Zach White digs a trench for an enclosure to protect a piping plover nest on the beach.

Since our Atlantic populations of piping plovers and least terns were added as threatened species to the Endangered Species Act in 1986, concentrated efforts were put in place to protect them. Hundreds of dedicated stewards and volunteers up and down the East Coast administer critical programs for these birds every year, which has resulted in a nearly doubling of the plover population. Least tern populations have not fared as well, seeing declining numbers even as recently as 2014, highlighting both the successes of the work and the challenges yet to be overcome.

This season on the North Fork, stewardship coordinators from the Group administered the shorebird protection program, monitoring 22 total beaches. Group staff and volunteers reported that 23 young piping plovers and approximately 150 young least terns were successfully “fledged,” or sent off into the world. Considering that the worldwide population of piping plovers is approximately 8,400—including 1,000 in New York—our 23 fledglings is impressive! Worldwide least tern numbers are approximately 60-80,000, with about 7,000 in New York.

***We are extremely thankful for our bird-loving volunteers and the homeowners who worked with us this summer to allow fencing on private property. Until next year!***

# Success! Sharper's Hill Preserved After Six-Year Battle

Group joined Jamesport community effort to protect 44 acres

In 2012, the Group partnered with civic and environmental organizations to fight against an oversized and highly controversial commercial development in the heart of historic Jamesport.

The proposed development, which included retail stores and the possibility of a sand-mining operation, would have permanently changed the rural character of Jamesport and significantly increased traffic on already congested Main Road. The property has over 30 acres of productive agricultural land and is known to possess significant archeological artifacts dating back 8,000 to 10,000 years.

A passionate, united, and organized community effort, together with financial problems faced by the developer, provided an opportunity for Suffolk County Legislator Al Krupski to introduce a bill that supported full protection of the property.



In May 2018—after nearly four years of negotiations with the owner—the Suffolk County Legislature approved a deal to purchase the development rights of the site's agricultural acreage and to buy the non-agricultural portion outright. The Town of Riverhead agreed to manage the nonagricultural section of the property.

The success of this effort is due in large part to the dedication and leadership of our partners at the Long Island Indigenous People Museum & Research Institute, the Greater Jamesport Civic Association, Save Main Road, the North Fork Environmental Council, the owner of the property, Legislator Krupski, and, of course, the Group's members, who make all our work possible.





# Group Leads Six New Nature Outings on North Fork

This summer the Group's Director of Environmental Education, Steve Biasetti, introduced kids and their families to the natural treasures at Orient Beach State Park and the new Hallock State Park Preserve.



They explored the shoreline, examined horseshoe crabs and other critters, learned about bird watching, and lots more. Funding was provided through the New York State Connect Kids to Parks initiative, a program of the Environmental Protection Fund. Hey Steve, nice hat!



## Like to Plant?

Join us at a Group planting event this fall, and help restore natural habitats.

[Learn more at groupfortheeastend.org/events.](http://groupfortheeastend.org/events)



## WHOA!!

Thank you to the Hampton Classic Jump for Charity Program. The Group was delighted to be included and THRILLED when "our" rider, Shane Sweetnam, and his horse Indra, won the Grand Prix Qualifier! The Group's vice president Aaron Virgin, his wife Jessica Guadagno, and Shane were all smiles holding the big check!





# Group Launches Website to Highlight Plight of Local Wildlife

## New York State Wildlife Action Plan

In response to New York State's alarming report on the decline of local wildlife species to critically low levels, the Group created the New York State Wildlife Action Plan website. Its purpose is to raise awareness about the challenges wildlife are facing right here on Long Island, and to focus attention on the state's primary management goals, including the protection of wildlife habitats.

In addition to current restoration projects and details on "High-Priority Species of Greatest Conservation Need," the site provides information on where to see wildlife, what to do with injured wildlife, and how your backyard can play an important role for wildlife.

[nyswap.org](http://nyswap.org)  
Check it out! 

The Group announced the launch of the site at the new Hallock State Park Preserve, and was joined by New York State Senator LaValle and Assemblyman Fred Thiele, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Atlantic Marine Conservation Society, Long Island Nature Organization, Save the Sound, Long Island Pine Barrens Society, and The Nature Conservancy.



Thank you to the Long Island Community Foundation for providing the lead grant to create the NYSWAP web site!



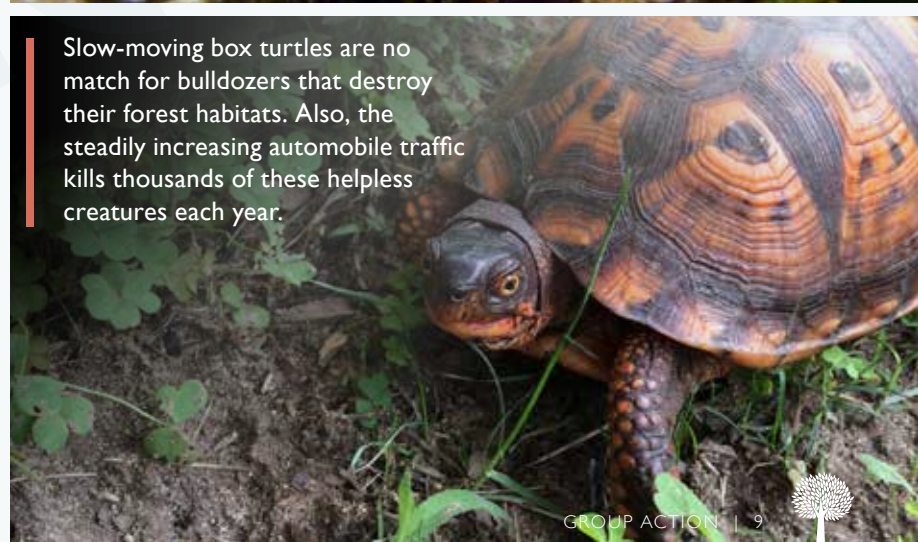
The conversion of farmland to housing developments has eliminated old barns, water towers and dead trees — prime nesting places for barn owls — and has taken away countless feeding areas.



Since 1980, scallop harvests have declined by more than 90%, mostly because of poor water quality conditions and the loss of eelgrass beds.



Tiger salamanders suffer from habitat fragmentation, which eliminates access to breeding ponds.



Slow-moving box turtles are no match for bulldozers that destroy their forest habitats. Also, the steadily increasing automobile traffic kills thousands of these helpless creatures each year.





# Thank You, Paddle Diva and SusanSweats!

Many thanks to Susan Harrison and Gina Bradley for hosting a Land & Sea Wellness Morning, consisting of a standup paddle board and waterside workout in East Hampton. Kim Smith Spacek (in stripes), Amelie Lonergan (in red) and Munir Dauhajre (in blue) joined the fun and helped raise over \$2,000 to protect our bays and harbors. Thank you to all who paddled and worked out!



## A Fun Way to Clean Up our Beaches

### Voila! Walk 'N Rosé

This summer the Group teamed up with Jacques Azoulay, owner of Gabriella Wines, for a series of Walk 'N Rosé beach cleanups. A native of France, Jacques (fourth from left) has been picking up plastic and enjoying wine on both sides of the Atlantic! Over July 4 Weekend, entire families showed up at Long Beach in Sag Harbor to collect trash, and the adults finished with a refreshing glass of rosé at a nearby restaurant, including Group Board of Directors Chair Katherine Birch (far right). Walk 'N Rosé volunteers also cleaned up Coopers Beach in Southampton.



### Want to be a volunteer?

Want to help the Group? Join us!  
You can volunteer in the field,  
from home, or in our office.

Contact Aaron Virgin  
at 631-765-6450, ext. 218, or  
[acvirgin@eastendenvironment.org](mailto:acvirgin@eastendenvironment.org).







## Swing into Summer Benefit at The Bridge, June 9, 2018

A big thank you to our hosts, Stéphane Samuel & Robert M. Rubin, co-chairs Katherine & Marco Birch, Graciela & Munir Dauhajre, Amelie & Simon Lonergan, and Genevieve & Rob Lynch, and everyone who supported this year's event. You helped raise nearly 50% of the Group's annual budget, which allows us to offer free environmental education programs to the public and to press forward with our critical advocacy and conservation work.

Please join us next June!

Contact Kristina Lange at [klange@eastendenvironment.org](mailto:klange@eastendenvironment.org) for details about supporting the Group and next year's benefit.

Photos by Rob Rich, SocietyAllure.com

1. Steel Impressions Band
2. Graciela Dauhajre, Mona Aboelnaga, Donna Poyiadjis
3. Aleksandra Cragg, Marisa van Bokhorst, Gigi Stone
4. Lydia Fenet, Auctioneer, Christie's
5. Amelie & Simon Lonergan
6. Harold Rubin, Ali Rubin, Stéphane Samuel, Robert M. Rubin
7. Paige Boller & Jacques Azoulay
8. Marco & Katherine Birch
9. Women who support the East End environment!
10. Robert & Carolina Siegel
11. West Robins Oyster Company
12. Yusi Gurrera, Munir Dauhajre
13. Darin & John Eydenberg





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## Protect the East End Environment for Future Generations

### Remember the Group in your financial planning

• **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.

• **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.

• **Bequest**

Please consider naming Group for the East End 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:**

Aaron Virgin, Vice President 631-765-6450 x218 or acvirgin@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 education and professional advocacy, and by inspiring people to embrace a conservation ethic and take action. The Group is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.