

GROUP ACTION

THE NEWSLETTER OF GROUP FOR THE EAST END

Plum Island: Preservation or Development?

Please visit
GroupfortheEastEnd.org
for a list of
upcoming events!

- Housing Market Impacts Conservation Funding
- A New Partnership To Protect Beach-Nesting Birds
- Summer Programs: What Parents Are Saying

Photo: Doug Kuntz



Land Preservation Holds Economic Value in Tough Financial Times



Photo: Jessica Guadagno

Long Island's protected and undeveloped lands provide economic benefits of nearly \$2.75 billion annually to the region. That was the finding of a recent report authored by the Trust for Public

Land (*The Economic Benefits and Fiscal Impact of Parks and Open Space in Nassau and Suffolk County New York, 2010*). The widely-respected Rauch and Long Island Community Foundations funded this report.

A similar report, issued by the New York State Comptroller (*Economic Benefits of Open Space Preservation, 2010*), also quantified billions of dollars in economic value statewide related to land preservation. Financial benefits spanned a wide array of economic sectors ranging from agriculture and tourism, to recreation and municipal services.

Despite the conclusions of these reports, investment in environmental protection is still frequently perceived as a luxury that cannot be afforded in tough economic times.

Unfortunately, the consequences of this kind of thinking have begun to take a negative toll on some of our most widely-recognized environmental protection programs. The

overall impact will be significant.

For example, in the past year, some members of the Suffolk County Legislature have questioned the value of the county's renowned land preservation program. They argued in favor of stopping the program altogether, slowed the pace of land protection deals where funding was already available, and objected to the use of dedicated, voter-approved land protection funds, due to the county's unrelated, wider operating budget problems.

In dealing with its budget issues this spring, the county also sought to eliminate over twenty staff positions that were directly involved in programs to protect water quality, investigate toxic contamination, and inspect sewage treatment plants to determine water quality compliance.

At the same time environmental programs were struggling at the county, the Federal Government was preparing the required documentation to sell Plum Island. In a private sale, the region could lose hundreds of good jobs at Plum Island Laboratory, as well as the extensive natural and historic resources on this unique coastal island, which has been in the public domain since the early 1800s.

When these and similar challenges threaten to reverse decades of progress, the Group is working as your advocate to

improve environmental protection, explain the many economic values of conservation, and develop new ideas to sustain and enhance environmental protection programs, even in difficult economic times.

At this writing, I am pleased to report that our collaboration with conservation organizations from across the region has been successful. Nearly all of the Suffolk County water quality positions have been restored, and we are moving ahead with a regional campaign (involving organizations from both Connecticut and New York) to protect Plum Island as a new National Wildlife Refuge.

In an effort to sustain critical conservation work across the region, the Group is also providing direct technical assistance to government agencies to protect endangered species, educate community members about the need for water quality protection, and restore degraded ecosystems to prevent stormwater pollution.

Of course, none of this would be possible without your commitment to a sustainable future for the East End. On behalf of all of us here at the Group, we are exceedingly thankful for your generous support.

Sincerely,

Bob DeLuca, President

Plum Island: Preservation or Development?

When you hear about Plum Island, do you think of the national science laboratory and a place devoid of life except for the scientists and testing animals housed there? You are not alone. Many people do not know that over 80% of the 840-acres representing Plum Island is undeveloped, an unmatched treasure trove of nature and history about a mile away from Orient Point.

The federally threatened and New York State endangered Piping Plover, is one of nearly 200 bird species that depend on the island for breeding and as a safe stopover during migration. Grey and Harbor Seals cannot resist the beauty and safety of Plum Island either. The island is known as the most significant seal haul-out site in southern New England. Additionally, 40 rare and protected plants have been identified on the island.

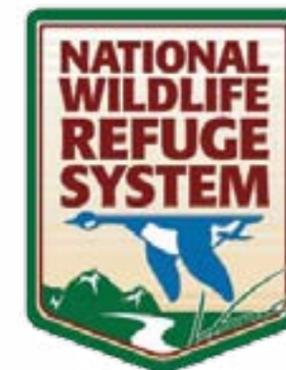
Largely under federal ownership since the 1800s (when it was Fort Terry), Plum Island

was slated for sale in 2008 with approval by congressional vote. The Federal Government is now considering the creation of a new National Agro-Defense Laboratory in another state to replace the Plum Island Lab, leaving the island at risk of development and its rich ecological and historical features at risk of destruction.

Group for the East End's history with Plum Island spans back to 2004, when Bob DeLuca first visited the island and began advocating for additional public outreach and security at the laboratory. Since that time, significant progress has been made, millions have been invested in improving safety and security, and public meetings are now scheduled a few times each year to report progress to the wider East End community. Unfortunately, upgrades to the lab and significant communications improvements have become irrelevant in

the wake of the congressional decision to sell the island.

Along with the Preserve Plum Island Coalition (www.preserveplumisland.org), we are now advocating for the island to be protected as a National Wildlife Refuge. Preservation would sustain the valuable natural features of the island while allowing for future public recreational or educational use, opportunities that would be lost in the event of a sale to the highest bidder.



Many people do not know that over 80% of the 840-acres representing Plum Island is undeveloped, an unmatched treasure trove of nature and history about a mile away from Orient Point.

➤ Get involved

Please join us in sending a message to Congress that East Enders would like to see Plum Island preserved as a National Wildlife Refuge. Please also urge the Southold Town Board to act quickly and restrict zoning on the island, which would reduce development potential if it were sold.

See the "Action Alerts" section of our website ([What We Do > Advocacy > Action Alerts](#)) to take action today. Visit GroupfortheEastEnd.org.

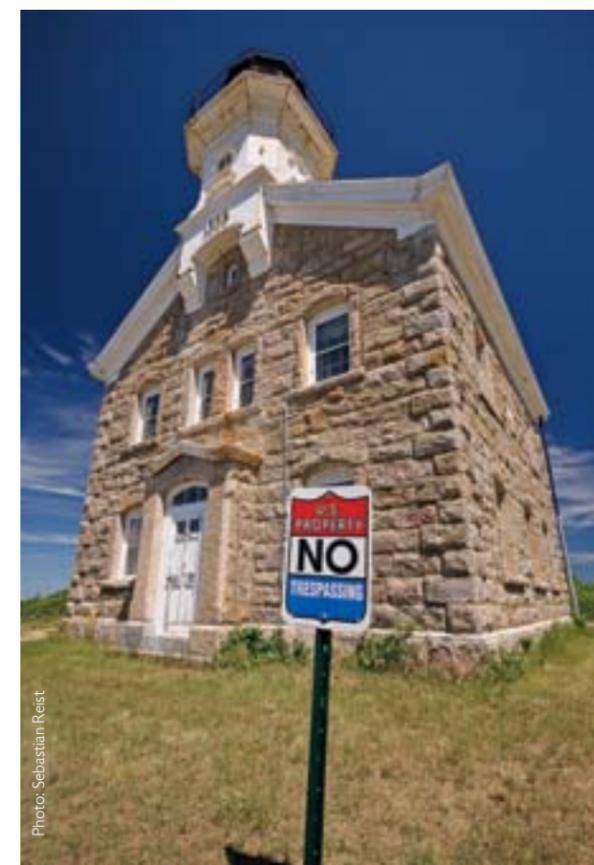


Photo: Sebastian Reist

Photo: Joel Milton



East End Preservation Trends in Today's Economy

On the East End, land preservation depends largely on town funding, along with New York State and Suffolk County partnerships. Back in 1999, after nearly a decade of sustained advocacy, Group for the East End and a diverse community-based coalition created a voter-approved Community Preservation Fund (CPF) to protect some of the region's most vulnerable natural resources.

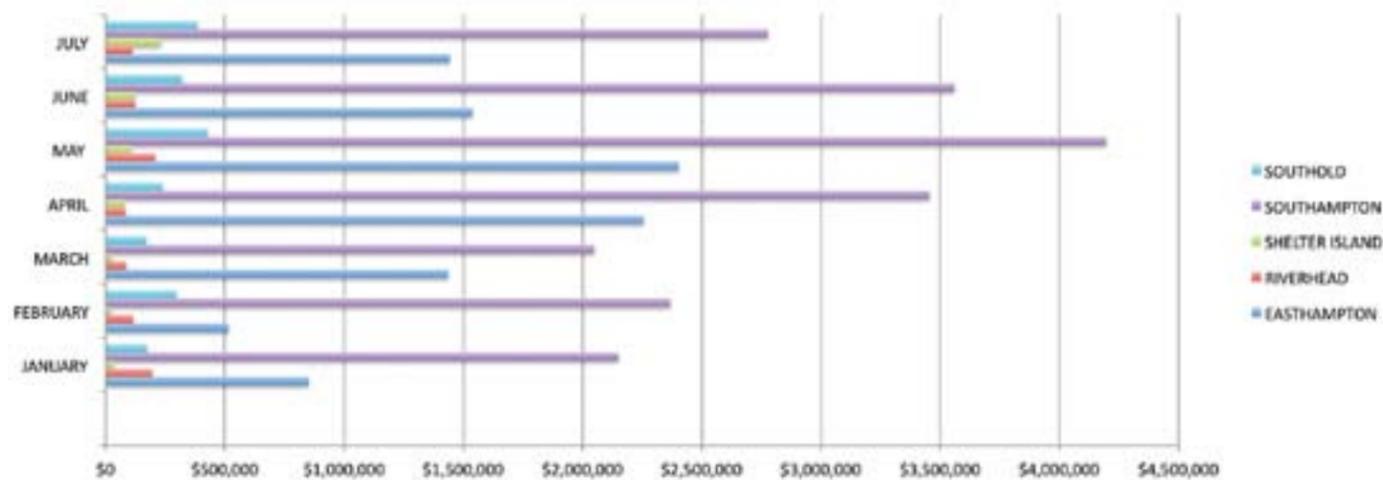
The CPF invests the proceeds of a 2% real estate transaction fee, and the money stays in the town where the fee is paid. The program has been enormously successful. To date, it has raised nearly \$1 billion and protected about 10,000 acres of critical watersheds, wetlands, farmlands and wildlife habitats across the region.

By design, the CPF reached its financial peak during the region's development boom between 2005 and 2007. In 2007, the CPF raised nearly \$100 million, with \$54 million coming from Southampton Town alone. The CPF dollars were also leveraged to develop funding partnerships with state and county governments, which fostered even more land protection.

In the past several years of declining economic and real estate conditions, East End land preservation funds have experienced declining revenues, obstructing each town's ability to protect land. In Southampton alone, CPF revenue dropped from \$54 million in 2007 to just over \$24 million in 2009 – a 44% decline in just two years. In fact, the total CPF revenue from all East End towns was nearly \$20 million lower in 2011 than what the Town of Southampton raised alone in 2007.

Fortunately, over the past year, the effects of falling interest rates, and what *The New York Times* recently described as a buyers' market in the Hamptons and the North Fork, have begun to improve the fortune of our local land protection funds. While real estate prices have declined overall, the increased sales activity of the last few years has had a positive effect.

CPF Monthly Income by Town (2012)



In 2011, total regional CPF revenue had come back to just under \$60 million – a far cry from the \$100 million days of 2007, but a solid increase nonetheless. In 2012, the trend toward a \$60 million dollar regional total for the year seems to be on track, but underlying instability in the economy continues to make long-term projections difficult.

Unfortunately, Suffolk County's long-standing land protection funding has also run dry and its elected leadership suggests that reinvestment in the program will be a significant challenge. The loss of this program in Suffolk County is particularly difficult for towns like Riverhead, Southold, and Shelter Island. Their combined CPF revenues are usually less than 25% of those raised on the South Fork, where real estate transactions and property values are substantially higher.

Clearly, lost revenue has limited nearly every town's ability to take advantage of the lower prices dominating the real estate market for the last several years. Current trends suggest that land values are likely to rise in the months ahead, and robust funding will be critical to the continued success of the region's land preservation efforts.

Group for the East End and its conservation partners are working to restore elected leaders' commitment to land preservation by devising new financial strategies that will compensate for these very challenging fiscal times. Commitment from these town, county, and state leaders is critical to the future of land preservation in our region.

Please stay tuned to our printed and e-mail alerts. You can help us call attention to the importance of land protection. Remind your elected leaders of the countless economic and environmental benefits of preservation in a region whose future is dependent upon our beautiful environment and our tourist and second home economy.

➤ For more information on this issue, please contact Bob DeLuca at 631-765-6450, ext. 213 or bdeluca@eastendenvironment.org

A New Partnership to Protect Endangered and Threatened Birds

This summer, Group for the East End entered a partnership with the North Fork Audubon Society (NFAS) and Southold Town to monitor and protect two species of beach-nesting birds, Piping Plovers and Least Terns. NFAS volunteers initiated this program over 15 years ago, when their "Plover Patrollers" first began searching for and protecting federally threatened and locally endangered birds.

Working closely with veteran plover steward Tom Damiani of NFAS, the Group's Stewardship Coordinator Juliana Duryea visited several sites each week to monitor the birds and install protective fencing around their nests. Our partnership was very positive, resulting in successful public outreach, few conflicts with beachgoers and neighbors near nesting areas, and additional media coverage. Among Juliana's observations this summer was a particularly touching incident described here:

On the hot, summer afternoon of July 12, 2012, at around 3:30 p.m., I observed (through my beloved binoculars) one Piping Plover sitting at the high tide line watching two chicks (about one day old) foraging on the upper beach within the string-fence area. Two beachgoers were fast asleep on the beach just outside the area, with a glass of cold water sitting in the sand nearby. Without hesitation, the two chicks made their way down the beach toward the snoozers. One chick behind the other, each ventured to the glass of water, sipping condensation from the cool glass. Once refreshed, one chick nibbled at the unaware sleeper's leg, both now making their way down to the water where they met up with two of their siblings and the second adult. Now all together, the four chicks foraged at the water's edge, every so often all completely being taken out by a wave, tossing and somersaulting in the incoming water, only to get up unscathed and continue on their way along the shoreline as if this were a normal routine.

In total, 11 pairs of Piping Plovers made nesting attempts at 7 active sites. There were 9 successful nests, which hatched 1-4 young. Four pairs lost all of their young and 11 piping plovers fledged successfully. As you can see, life for beach-nesting birds is treacherous. Predators, beach drivers, unusually high tides, vandalism and unleashed dogs pose threats to these birds.

String fencing and nesting enclosures (to keep danger away) help to increase the survival rate of both Piping Plovers and Least Terns. This work could not be completed without dedicated volunteers. The 2012 crew included: Barbara Butterworth, Carol and Ed Coakley, Bob and Carol Gelling, Rick and Linda Kedenburg, Bob Maddalena, Mary Mulcahy, Bev Prentice and John Sepenoski. Thank you all very much!

Photo: Brian Kushner, Dreamstime.com



NOT-FOR-PROFITS: VERY PROFITABLE RELATIONSHIPS

Sure, American Express underwrites the Tribeca Film festival, and Visa underwrites the Olympics, but let's say your business is slightly smaller. Is underwriting an event and getting involved with local charities and arts organizations doable and worth it?

In a word, YES!

Why partner with local not-for-profits?

1. It raises your visibility with an audience you've chosen.
2. It's good for the community. There's less public sector money for charity, so we all need to pick up the slack.
3. Your clients will appreciate it, the charity will promote you, and you'll build a relationship that can only help your business.

You're probably thinking, "It's too expensive. I don't have time. It's not worth it." Partnering with a not-for-profit is easier than you think.

For as little as \$50 you can become a Coastal Partner of Group for the East End. Spend \$250 and you'll get your logo and web link on their website.

The point is, if your company wants to reach a specific target market, building an alliance with a not-for-profit is a great way to do it. So support the arts, the animals, the environment or whichever group resonates with you and your prospects. Give and ye shall receive.

Read the full blog post at blumenfeldandfleming.com/blog



Lynn Blumenfeld is a principal at blumenfeld + fleming, the leading marketing, advertising and design firm in the Hamptons with worldwide headquarters in Montauk, NY.



Field Ecology Program Puts Kids in Touch with Nature



Photo: Kate Fullam

For some children, a summer on the East End is incomplete until they have attended one of our field ecology sessions. During the 2012 summer season, we completed five sessions of children's field ecology with a total of 94 participants, who learned about the East End environment through hands-on learning and fun.

These four-day sessions for children ages 8 to 13 years old included such highlights as: exploring the Walking Dunes and Laurel Lake, feeding chickadees at Morton National Wildlife Refuge, kayaking in Accabonac Harbor and Dam Pond, biking through Barcelona Neck Conservation Area and Indian Island County Park, and celebrating with barbecues at Cedar Point County Park and Orient Beach State Park.

Preserved natural locations on the East End provide a unique opportunity for children and adults to observe nature and learn through exploration. Memorable wildlife sightings this summer included such live mollusks as Transverse Ark, Atlantic Jackknife Clam, and Common Eastern Chiton, interesting fish like Naked Goby, Oyster Toadfish, Pinfish and Scamp, a Mourning Cloak butterfly recently emerging from its chrysalis, a jelly-like mass of invertebrates known as Bryozoans, a Ribbon Snake, and a Box Turtle.



Photo: Anita Wright



2012 Atlantic Jackknife Clam
Group for the East End
130 views

➤ To see a video of the live Atlantic Jackknife Clam, visit our YouTube page: youtube.com/groupfortheeastend

WHAT PARENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT SUMMER FIELD ECOLOGY

"You are a wonderfully enthusiastic group and the fun and knowledge you give is wonderful. Keep up the great work!"
– Louise Corish



Photo: Anita Wright

"Our lives are so busy and it is difficult to compete with computers, cellphones, PS3, Wii, etc... I want my children to appreciate and respect our environment and all the creatures in it. I think the program you created was versatile and extremely interesting for both my children and help[ed] them be connected to the beautiful place we live." – Leah Sullivan

"We think you folks are wonderful! Living 'land locked' [in] Garden City, Liam has zero opportunity to explore nature the way he does with [Group for the East End]. Thanks a million for keeping Liam's interest in nature alive."
– Jeannie Wilson



Photo: Missy Weiss



Photo: Missy Weiss

"Emma and Ally loved everything about the program. They learned a lot and were excited to go to camp everyday." – Lili Ervin

EDUCATION NEWSLETTER COMING THIS FALL

Group for the East End's education staff is excited to launch a new education newsletter this September! *Group Educators in Action* aims to build enthusiasm and awareness about environmental education and conservation among its readers, including teachers, administrators, students, field ecology participants, exploration attendees, and interested community members.

This newsletter will provide a forum for Group educators to inform readers about their many interesting classroom and field lessons, opportunities to participate in local environmental events, and a chance to learn about local ecosystems. *Group Educators in Action* will publish several regularly featured articles, including: Photos in the Field, Teacher Feature, and What's That?

Newsletter distribution is available in electronic and hard copy form for your convenience. If you are interested in receiving *Group Educators in Action*, please contact Steve Bissetti at 631-765-6450, ext. 205 or sbissetti@eastendenvironment.org.



Post Office Box 569
Bridgehampton, NY 11932

CHAIRMAN
William S. McChesney, Jr.

VICE CHAIRMAN
Katherine Leahy Birch

BOARD MEMBERS
Harris A. Barer, W. Marco Birch,
Mark Burchill, Andrew Goldstein,
Mark A. Hissey, Gregory Hoogkamp,
Jennifer James, Sandra Meyer, Karen Oh,
William Ryall, Peter Schellbach,
John Shea, John Waddell, Mary Walker
and Donna Winston

PROFESSIONAL STAFF
631-765-6450 • 631-537-1400

PRESIDENT
Bob DeLuca, ext. 213
bdeluca@eastendenvironment.org

VICE PRESIDENT
Aaron Virgin, ext. 218
acvirgin@eastendenvironment.org

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES
Jenn Hartnagel, ext. 211
jhartnagel@eastendenvironment.org

Jennifer Skilbred, ext. 212
jskilbred@eastendenvironment.org

DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
Steve Biasetti, ext. 205
sbiasetti@eastendenvironment.org

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
Anita C. Wright, ext. 206
acwright@eastendenvironment.org

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR
Missy Weiss, ext. 219
mweiss@eastendenvironment.org

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT
Judy Christrup, ext. 215
jchristrup@eastendenvironment.org

DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY
Eleanor Roper, ext. 217
eroper@eastendenvironment.org

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH
Kate Fullam, ext. 208
kfullam@eastendenvironment.org

OFFICE AND DATA SYSTEMS MANAGER
Kristina Lange, ext. 216
klange@eastendenvironment.org

GROUP ACTION
Editor, Kate Fullam
Design Concept, blumenfeld+fleming
Design & Production, Searles Graphics



Group Action

is the printed newsletter of Group for the East End, a not-for-profit organization that protects and restores the environment of eastern Long Island through education, citizen action and advocacy. The Group inspires people to embrace a conservation ethic.

Through Earth Share of New York's workplace giving program, part of each paycheck can be automatically deducted to support the Group. Sign up at EarthShareNY.org



Support Group for the East End every time you search the Internet at GoodSearch.com.



This newsletter was printed on Rolland Enviro™ 100 Print.
• Contains FSC certified 100% post-consumer fiber
• Certified EcoLogo, Processed Chlorine Free and FSC Recycled
• Manufactured using biogas energy



Support the Group

When you support the Group, you're supporting education, advocacy and keeping the East End beautiful.

Join us

Become a member and sign up for our monthly e-newsletter.

Get involved

Volunteer, make a difference, show up and make yourself heard.

Please visit

GroupfortheEastEnd.org

Contact us

info@eastendenvironment.org

