



LONG ISLAND
PINE BARRENS
SOCIETY

the pine barrens

today

RIVERHEAD AT WAR WITH BARRENS

PRESERVATION: NOW OR NEVER

The Town, The Court & The Owl

Credit: Elina Alayeva

Ten major environmental and civic groups charge that the Town of Riverhead has “gone to war with the environment” as the result of mega-development plans for town-owned land in the Calverton Pine Barrens. They say that two lawsuits, attempted alteration of Peconic River protection boundaries as well as indifference toward endangered species at Riverhead’s Enterprise Park at Calverton (EPCAL) are undermining protection of drinking water and preservation of critical habitat, while the town seeks to avoid laws designed to protect a regional resource.

In January, State Supreme Court Justice Paul J. Baisley, Jr. ruled in a case brought by Riverhead against the New York State Pine Barrens Commission, that the Commission lacked jurisdiction to review any of the ambitious projects proposed for EPCAL. The Pine Barrens Society’s motion to intervene in that case was denied. Both matters are being appealed. This is the first time a government agency has sued under the landmark Pine Barrens Protection Act of 1993 which protects drinking water and habitat in Long Island’s premier ecosystem.

More concerns soon followed. Complaints include town efforts to take environmental review away from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for a project to construct a combination Water-ski Park and ATV track in a state-designated Special Groundwater Protection Area. Riverhead is also under contract to sell 300 acres to Reckson Equity Partners and recently sold (for \$155 million), 755 acres of land at EPCAL for construction of facilities such as a 350-foot indoor ski mountain, a 90-acre artificial lake, eight resort complexes, a 100,000-square foot convention center, 2,000 hotel rooms and 3,500 timeshare units. The deal also entitles the town to share in the project’s proceeds.

The Long Island Pine Barrens Society has demanded regional review of all proposed development at the Enterprise Park at Calverton, the Riverhead Town-owned property formerly owned by the Navy and operated by the Grumman Corporation. The Society has named the New York State Pine Barrens Commission and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as the appropriate reviewers of several mega-development projects charging that “Riverhead’s obvious monetary interests are identical to that of the developers,” in the words of PBS Executive Director, Richard Amper.



BATTLEGROUND: 2900 acres of Pine Barrens at Calverton are targeted for intense development. Environmentalists seek regional environmental review.

“There’s no way a town which owned the land, chose the purchaser and which shares in the project’s profits can unilaterally conduct the environmental review of a project in which it has significant financial interest,” said Amper. “An independent environmental analysis must be conducted by a regional government agency such as the Pine Barrens Commission, the state D.E.C., or both,” he added.

Then there’s the matter of Riverhead’s efforts to alter the boundaries of the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act along the Peconic River to allow for still more development at EPCAL. Additionally, Riverhead has denied the existence of endangered Tiger Salamanders and the short-eared owl, both documented on the EPCAL property for many years. “There’s no reason why Riverhead cannot sensibly develop the Calverton tract while protecting natural resources at the same time,” Amper said.

BROOKHAVEN PRESERVATION: Slightly Delayed

A 24-referendum winning streak ended for environmentalists in November with the defeat of the Brookhaven Community Preservation

Credit: Photography Art of Granville Fairchild



IMPERILED: Natural Treasures such as these are in danger of development in the wake of defeat of the Brookhaven Community Preservation Fund.

Fund. The buyer-paid real estate transfer tax has generated \$500 million and saved some 7,000 acres in the five East End towns, since 1999.

An aggressive, anti-tax disinformation campaign by real estate interests and developers defeated the proposition 60-40 percent in the wake of the sub-prime mortgage crisis, decline in consumer confidence and increased rebellion against high taxes.

Ironically, defeat of the Brookhaven Community Preservation Fund will increase taxes as land—some 5,000 acres—which would have been preserved had the CPF been approved, are instead developed. With an average of two children per household and the cost of educating

them about \$12,500 each per year, the cost for this government service alone will increase taxes by \$125 million.

Environmentalists quickly re-grouped to advance a plan for \$30 million in interim funding from the Brookhaven Town Board to cover the cost of acquisitions already in the pipeline. They are also advocating a \$100 million Open Space Bond Act for this November’s ballot of the kind approved by Brookhaven voters in 2004.

“We think history will judge the defeat of the Brookhaven CPF as a serious mistake,” said PBS President Alan Singer, “but it needn’t be a fatal blow to land preservation in Long Island’s largest town if alternate funding is quickly secured.”

the thicket

Spring in the Barrens

by Robert McGrath

Mr. McGrath is a co-founder of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society

The natural world that surrounds us offers thousands of simple pleasures – the splendor of fall foliage, the subtle fragrance of Trailing Arbutus, the tranquil song of the Wood Thrush, the uncanny rhythm of nature's breadth and grandeur – if only we take the time to stop, listen, and reflect. For me, enjoying nature's pleasures is a natural and harmonious choice, and there is no better time to slow down and take in all that the natural world has to offer than the onset of spring in our Pine Barrens.

Spring for me doesn't simply arrive (as it officially did this year when the clock strikes 1:48 AM on March 20th) with one single event, but rather with a series of events like the first soaking rains of the New Year. This year, that occurred in January and with them came the first sign that spring was in the air — the emergence of Tiger Salamanders. Those who have ever trekked-out into the night in search of these mys-

terious denizens know full well the feeling of renewed spirits that comes over you when you watch as the spatula tailed males court females by conducting what could best be described as a water ballet. Tigers are not the only mole salamander to go through such elaborate courtship rituals;



"Hello old friend, it's really good to see you once again."

—Eric Clapton

SPRING SIGHT: Birdsfoot Violet in the Pine Barrens.

in fact, two other of Long Island's four mole salamander species (the Spotted and Blue-spotted) have similar breeding habits. Yet it is the Tiger that makes its emergence first, often before the ice has melted from their breeding ponds and often before any of us is really thinking about the onset of spring.

On many of these journeys, I have often encountered another sure sign that spring is on its way, the territorial calling of our largest resident owl, the Great Horned. Like Tiger Salamanders, Great Horned Owls begin breeding early in the season, often setting up territories in early January and incubating eggs by mid-February throughout not only our Pine Barrens but in mixed deciduous forests as well. Just last week I happened upon a female as she sat hunkered down in an old gray squirrel's nest almost certainly incubating this year's clutch of eggs. She is actually somewhat late, I thought to myself, as she leered intently at me.

As we move through March, another delightful sign that spring is indeed in the air in our Pine Barrens is the arrival of Pine Warblers. One of a good number of warbler species that calls the Pine Barrens home, the Pine is first to arrive from its wintering grounds in the southern United States. For me their subtle trill can warm even the chilliest March morning as they search the tops of Pitch Pines looking for winter moths to feed upon.

A walk through the Pine Barrens in spring also brings with it numerous wildflowers that if you do not get out early to see, will be gone until next year. Although not considered true ephemerals (species that capitalize on early spring sunlight by blooming in profusion, setting seed and dieing back, often by mid June) species such as Bearberry, Trailing Arbutus, and Birdsfoot Violet are just a few of the wildflowers that one can encounter. The first of these to bloom is Bearberry, the ubiquitous ground-cover found throughout the Pine Barrens. Bearberry is actually an evergreen shrub that many people do not even realize has a flower as they begin to make their appearance in late March and early April, long before most other species begin to stir. A member of the Blueberry family, Bearberry has a small white, bell-like flower that is often laced with delicate hues of pink. As it is one of the first flowers to appear in spring, it is often host to many of the Pine Barrens early spring species of butterflies, such as the Brown Elfin and Spring Azure Blue. If you are looking to enjoy the beauty of Bearberry, the coming weeks is the time to do so.

Yes, spring in the Pine Barrens truly is a time for rekindled spirits. To me, it's the chorus of Spring Peepers, the first calls of Whippoorwills in mid-April, Eastern Bluebirds returning to nesting boxes in Calverton, and the "peenting" of American Woodcocks in the secondary fields of Connetquot River State Park. It is a cold spring shower, a gathering of Tree Swallows on a coastal plain pond, the tranquil sunset over the Manorville Hills. Spring in the Pine Barrens is like an old friend. It is the renewal that I look forward to each year to revisit the Oak Brush Plains I hiked through with two good friends as a teenager, the Dwarf Pine Plains I fell in love with as a teacher in the eighties, and the vernal ponds I have spent countless hours in during the middle of the night looking for signs that the Tiger Salamanders have emerged once again.

It's been arriving now for weeks, if we only take the time to stop, listen, and reflect.

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS NOTES

Seek State Land Dollars

The Pine Barrens Society is leading a campaign to obtain increased New York State funding for Long Island land purchases. The Society is gathering signatures from dozens of Long Island leaders on a letter requesting \$100 million from the recently increased state Environmental Protection Fund. Once, Long Island obtained as much as \$36 million for land purchases. A year ago, only \$500,000 was spent.

Addressed to every member of the New York State Senate and Assembly delegations, the letter explains the importance of land preservation to tourism and farming, as well as quality-of-life in the region. It goes on to explain why Long Island deserves a larger share of the EPF. The letter says, "Our region has a compelling argument for allocation of disproportionate support by New York State inasmuch as Long Island provides locally-produced matching funds in amounts unmatched anywhere else in the state and because the urgency for preservation is greater in this region than in any other because final build-out of the Island is projected by planners to occur within the next decade. Land not preserved immediately will be lost forever to development."

Credit: Jennifer Garvey



AN EARLY TASTE OF VICTORY: Leo Burke, 8, of Rocky Point denounces the Broadwater Liquefied Natural Gas factory proposed for the Long Island Sound at a March 20 demonstration. Inset, April 10, Leo thanks Governor Paterson following his announcement rejecting Broadwater. He said, "Broadwater is not what Long Island needs."

Oppose Parkland Alienation

Working with the Long Island Greenbelt Trails Conference and other Long Island environmental groups, the Society is working to block the Town of Islip from winning state legislative approval to remove several acres of land in Hidden Pond Park in Hauppauge from preserved status for the construction of a proposed library. Under state law, it takes the acts of two sessions of the state legislature to take land acquired for parks or preserves out of protected status.

In this case, the library board acknowledges that it has not actively explored private land or non-preserved property owned by the state, county or school district. Instead, they have chosen to clear and construct a new library at Hidden Pond Park in an area of Hauppauge where planners say a public library is least appropriate. The site is next to a Suffolk County Water Authority well and no environmental review of the proposed project has been conducted. In addition, there are larger libraries in both Smithtown and Islip which effectively served the community before 2000. Finally, there is no set budget for this project and nothing to indicate that bonding for this project would be approved.

Environmentalists are asking state legislators to advise the library board that they will not consider alienation, so that an alternate location may be pursued.



The President's Point of View

A Step in the Right Direction

By Alan Singer

One year ago, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society published a White Paper on the history and status of Long Island's efforts to preserve open space and farmland. Entitled, "On Course for Failure: A Call to Action on Land Preservation," the 67-page analysis was extremely well received by the Long Island Community.

The report is an outgrowth of the Pine Barrens Society's five year-old "Preservation: Now or Never," campaign which seeks to preserve 25,000 acres of open space and 10,000 acres of farmland before final build-out of Long Island projected for 2015. Failure to obtain the goals would have significant adverse environmental and economic consequences.

A year later, Long Island's preservation remains "On Course for Failure." Open space acquisition and purchase of farmland development rights have increased in some areas but declined in others. Monetary resources have been continued by some,

lost by others and the appraisal and negotiation process takes longer. So, while the number of acres preserved by all of Long Island's land preservation agents increased from 1,569 in 2006 to 2,005 in 2007, the preservation rate is far below that required to meet the preservation objective.

"A year later, Long Island's preservation remains 'On Course for Failure.'"

The good news: Voters in both counties and in two towns approved continued funding for the preservation of open space and farmland in 2007

producing nearly \$500 million for land purchases. The bad news: Defeat of the Community Preservation Fund in Brookhaven lost an equal amount. In all 1,300 acres of open space and 705 of farmland were protected in 2007.

There is no evidence that funding for land preservation is growing relative to the needs enumerated in last year's White Paper, or that procedures for saving land are improving commensurate with the need to preserve 35,000 additional acres. Government has not borrowed at the rates necessary to meet annual goals nor to assure that the identified land is acquired before its cost increases or it is lost to development. And ineffectual policies and procedures for continued outreach to landowners and prioritization of purchases, as well as inadequate staffing, will doom the preservation effort without immediate reforms.

The release of this year's White Paper Update will remain "A Call to Action on Land Preservation."

The Pine Barrens Society at 30!

More than 300 Long Island leaders, environmentalists and friends celebrated the Society's 30th anniversary at Oheka Castle, October 17. New York State Assemblyman Steven Englebright received PBS's award for "Outstanding Contribution to Long Island's Environment," and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Regional Director for Long Island, Peter Scully, received the group's "Environmental Achievement Award." The event was chaired

by Kathleen Giamo of the Giamo Group; Richie Kessel, former Chairman of LIPA and Gary Melius, owner of Oheka.

The gala celebration featured comedy videos, the music of the Denice Given Band and theme musical performances by theatrical artist Amanda Passanante. The event raised more than \$300,000 to support the Society's programs of environmental education and advocacy.



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS: PBS co-founder Robert McGrath and wife Denise enjoy Anniversary Awards Gala October 17 at Oheka Castle.



GREAT SUPPORTERS: Michael Pascucci and David Feinblatt of WLNY-TV 10/55 were major sponsors of the Society's 2007 awards gala.



ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDS: New York State Assemblyman Steven Englebright and Peter Scully of state D.E.C. were this year's honorees.



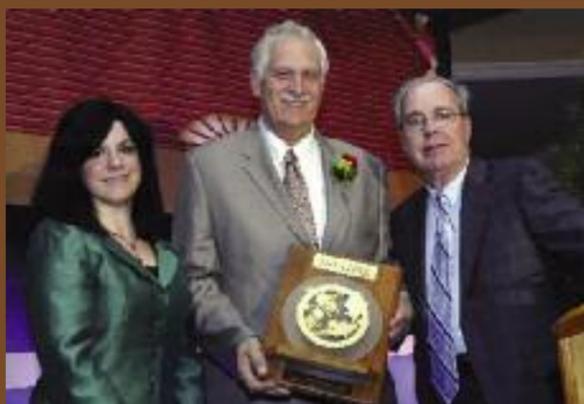
APPRECIATED: Peter Scully, Regional D.E.C. Director calls for Pine Barrens advocacy in award acceptance speech as PBS Director looks on.



SOCIETY LEADERSHIP: Pine Barrens Society President Alan Singer and wife Jeannie enjoyed the evening with more than 300 PBS friends.



TOUGH ADVOCATES: Adrienne Esposito of Citizens Campaign for the Environment and PBS Director Dick Amper are ready for next challenge.



HONORED: State Assemblyman Steve Englebright receives award from PBS Television Show co-host Kathleen Nasta and Dick Amper.



ALL SMILES: Patsy Randolph of the Rauch Foundation, Lisa Ott from the North Shore Land Alliance and Amper enjoy the big event.



PUTTING IT TOGETHER: Songstress Amanda Passanante and her theatre troupe perform theme song for 30th Anniversary Environmental Awards Gala.

Credit: Nancy Epstein



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A copy of the last annual report filed with the New York State Department of Law may be obtained by writing to NYS Attorney General's Charities Bureau, Attn: FOIL Officer, 120 Broadway, New York, NY, 10271 or may be obtained directly from the Long Island Pine Barrens Society, 547 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY 11901

Credit: Jakob Sigurdsson



WISE GUY: The New York State endangered short-eared owl was recently photographed at the Riverhead Town-owned Enterprise Park at Calverton in the Pine Barrens. The documentation complicates proposed mega-development at the site and has flamed conflict over who has jurisdiction to review projects at the site.

The Pine Barrens Society's television program airs on Cablevision Channel 20 in the following areas. If your region is not listed here, please call our office at 631-369-3300 to find out how you can help us get it aired on your local Cablevision network. The program can also be viewed on the Society's web site, www.pinebarrens.org by selecting TV Show on the home page.

Town of East Hampton
Wednesdays 6:00pm
Thursdays 9:00pm
Fridays 3:30pm

Town of Riverhead, Town of Southold
and Town of Southampton
Sundays 10:00am
Fridays 8:00pm

Town of Brookhaven, Town of Smithtown
and portions of Town of Islip
Mondays 12:00pm
Saturdays 1:30pm

Town of Babylon, Town of Huntington,
portions of Town of Islip, and
all of Nassau County
Sundays 11:00am
Mondays 11:30am