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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, 2042 North Country Rd, Ste 103 Wading River, NY 11792



Credit: Travis Cutter



**THE SCENIC CARMANS RIVER: Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge.**

**Pine Barrens TV**

The Pine Barrens Society's television program airs on Cablevision/Altice Public Access. October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024.

The program can also be viewed on the Society's YouTube page at [www.youtube.com/lipinebarrenssociety](http://www.youtube.com/lipinebarrenssociety).



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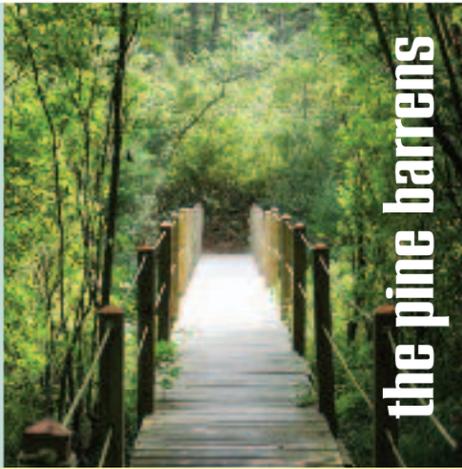
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**Towns of Babylon, Brookhaven, Huntington, Islip, Riverhead, Smithtown, Southampton & Southold Channel 20:**

Saturdays at 9:00 AM  
Mondays at 8:00 PM  
Wednesdays at 9:30 PM

**Town of East Hampton:**

Wednesdays at 6:30 PM  
Thursdays at 9:00 PM  
Fridays at 3:30 PM



# Today

## Job #1 for Suffolk Legislature Redux: Let Voters Decide the Clean Water Future of Suffolk County

Last summer, despite support from numerous environmental groups, business and industry representatives and the New York State government, the Suffolk County Legislature refused to let voters decide whether clean water was worth a very slight sales tax increase. Officials did agree to look at the proposed legislation again in 2024.

Fast forward to May 2024. The New York State Legislature and Governor have approved the Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act which will permit Suffolk County to put a referendum on the ballot in November. The referendum will ask Suffolk voters to approve a small percentage sales tax hike — 0.125% or 12.5 cents per \$100 — to create and fund a countywide wastewater treatment district; provide grants for sewers and upgraded septic systems; support water re-use projects; and fund continued land preservation.

There is little more important than maintaining a clean water supply — it is essential to Long Island's future. In fact, clean water should be Long Island's top priority. Preservationists and business leaders rank water quality as Long Island's most significant area for government investment. Our fresh water supply — our aquifer — is our only source of clean drinking water. Therefore, we must limit its contamination; human contamination, with its heavy nitrogen concentration, is a major culprit. Similarly, our surface waters — rivers, streams, ponds, bays — continue to suffer from this nitrogen loading, which, in turn, affects shellfish and our world-renowned beaches.

Expanding and implementing sewer systems are important for keeping our aquifers and surface waters free of human and other forms of contamination. However, most of Suffolk County is

suburban and rural in character, rather than urban/suburban. Open space, bountiful tree cover, including our precious Pine Barrens, and abundant flora and fauna make this region, especially the East End, the treasure that it is, both for residents and visitors.

Unfortunately, Suffolk County has mostly single-family residences, each with their own aging and failing septic systems — approximately 360,000 of them, some close to 100 years old! These 20th century technologies alone cannot solve our contamination problem here; it is fiscally impractical, if not impossible, to do so.

Suffolk County has a program — the Septic Improvement Program (SIP) — for homeowners replacing failing systems with innovative/alternative (IA) wastewater systems that remove most of the nitrogen. Grants of up to \$20,000 to defray the cost of IA systems are available to eligible homeowners while funding is available. Implementation of this 21st century solution requires funding that will be available through the passage of the November referendum.

In addition, funding for land preservation will protect our aquifer through replenishment. Support of water re-use projects will reduce water withdrawal from the aquifer.

Long Island government leaders must take the responsibility for assuring protection of our waters. Drinking water contamination, failing sewers and indifference to drinking water protection will surely

degrade our East End treasures and our way of life. By allowing the referendum to be placed on the November 2024 ballot, those responsible for protecting our waters will let voters decide how much they value our natural resources. After all, we will all benefit from clean water.

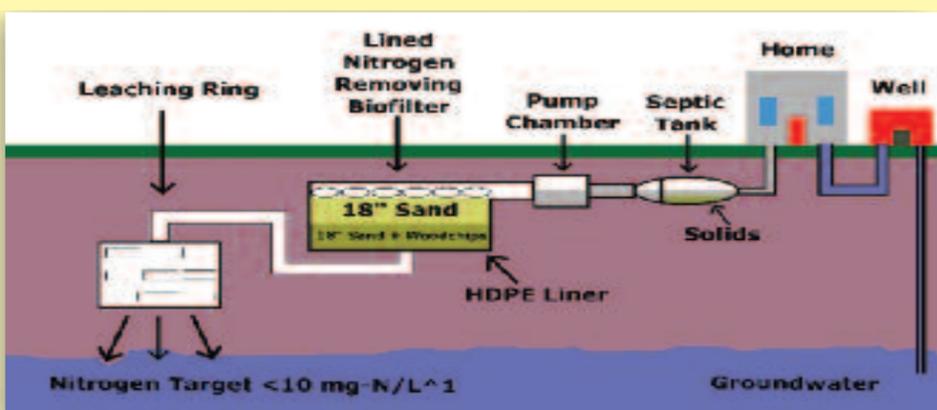
Credit: Julie Clark



**BIG DIGS:** Installation of an innovative septic system at a Suffolk County home.



**SET UP (Left):** Installing the components. **LOOKING GOOD (Right):** Monitoring the functionality of the system.



**THE WORKS:** An overview of an innovative wastewater system.

By Travis Cutter, Program Coordinator

### They Called it Red Gold The Long Island Cranberry Industry

By John Turner

*Mr. Turner is one of the original founders of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society and board member.*

Let's begin with an interesting historical note. Over 100 years ago, Long Island was the third largest supplier of cranberries to the nation.

Cranberries, like blueberries, have an affinity to sandy, acid soils so the Long Island Pine Barrens, or more specifically wetlands in the Pine Barrens, provided highly suitable habitat to create bogs and cultivate cranberries. Most of these commercial bogs were located within the large watershed of the Peconic River, along the river west of where Edwards Avenue crosses over it and near three of the river's tributaries - the Fox/Sandy Pond area, Swan Pond, and the Swezey's Pond/Little River (draining north from Wildwood Lake).

The Woodhull Bog, where Cranberry Bog County Nature Preserve in Riverhead is situated, was perhaps the most commercially successful bog. Its success was far from a sure bet when the Woodhull brothers embarked on their effort to convert low-lying swamp habitat to a cranberry bog. In 1889 the first harvest yielded a whopping 10 bushels provided by the bog. The next year was

Credits: Top-LIPBS, Bottom-Katie Muether Brown



**RICH AND TART:** Cranberry in a former bog.



**A VIEW FROM THE BOG:** Cranberry Bog Nature Preserve.

better, with 90 bushels produced and the upward trend continued in 1891 with 500 bushels. In 1892 the vines were mature at three to four years old, and the yield was 21,100 bushels, going for about \$2 a bushel at market. For many years after that the bog remained profitable and productive. No wonder they called it Red Gold! Other bogs like the Brown's Bog in Calverton and the Davis Bog further west in Manorville were also productive and profitable.

In the early years, cranberries were picked by hundreds of residents. The wooden cranberry scoop was soon invented and provided a more efficient means to harvest berries. Scoops gave way to mechanized equipment that was more efficient still and once bog owners/operators learned that ripe cranberries float, they cleverly began to flood the vine-filled bogs and then suck up the crop with a vacuum-like device. Today, a few people can do the job that once required dozens.

Flooding the bogs, also done to prevent frost and a freeze from destroying the crop, meant a reliable water supply had to be available. For the Woodhull Bog, the water source was Swezey's Pond. When an operator wished to flood the bogs to protect the berries or vines, they would remove wooden boards nestled in the concrete part of the dam next to the water source and install the boards at the outlet of the bog. A motor would spin a driveshaft attached to a large belt, which was connected to a paddlewheel; water would quickly flood the bog. In spring the reverse would occur. To allow bees and other pollinators to access the cranberry flowers (the name cranberry is thought to have derived from the name "crane berry", a reference to how the flowers look similar to the head of a crane), boards would be installed in the slots of the concrete dam next to the water supply and boards removed from the far end, thereby draining it.

By the 1920's nearly a dozen bogs were in operation here. But about 15 years later there were perhaps only five or six (Huss, T. "Cranberry Bogs of Long Island: Some History & Natural History" New York Almanac. November 22, 2023). Several problems made cranberry production less profitable on Long Island — there were no processing facilities to make value-added products and the costs of labor and land were higher, reflected in higher property taxes, when compared with more rural areas.

Cranberries, like most agricultural monocultures, are affected by pests and such was the case with Long Island's cranberry bogs. Two notorious pests were (and still are) the cranberry fruit worm and black-headed fireworm which affects both the fruit and leaves. Cranberry producers turned to chemical means to control the insects, with amino triazole the pesticide of choice. This pesticide soon was in the crosshairs of the then Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). On "Cranberry Black Monday," November 9, 1959, HEW declared amino triazole a carcinogen. The cranberry market was dealt a severe blow with even Mamie Eisenhower declaring she would forgo cranberry sauce at the White House Thanksgiving Dinner.

The Davis Bog in Manorville was the only cranberry bog to survive this event. For years they sold their berries to the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (remember A&P supermarkets on Long Island?). In 1974 this last cranberry bog ceased operation. The Long Island cranberry industry was no more.

To gain some sense of the industry that was once so vital to Long Islanders, both as a source of food and employment, visit the Suffolk County Cranberry Bog Nature Preserve, located south of the Suffolk County Center in Riverhead. It is a preserved gem that was purchased in the mid-1970's by the County. Park in the small dirt parking lot and follow the wide trail that leads to Swezey's Pond which was the water supply source to the Woodhull Bog. A picturesque trail runs around the pond (I like to walk it in counter-clockwise fashion) and by hiking the trail you'll see evidence of the bog: the dike itself, a few of the perimeter ditches that once lined the edge of the bog, and a concrete pump house near where the stream drained from the pond into the bog. If you visit during the warmer months, you should see turtles, numerous birds, dragonflies, and waterlilies. If you visit during the winter, you'll enjoy the solitude of the place, and perhaps think about the key role the parcel played both as part of Long Island's colorful history and as a "building block" for the preservation of the Long Island Pine Barrens.

### The Best of the Rest: Moving Forward

For the past two years, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society's chief focus has been our "The Best of the Rest" Initiative. This campaign seeks to preserve another 3,800 acres of Pine Barrens land, filling in gaps in the already protected spaces, and finally completing the preservation of the Pine Barrens. Over 170 acres have already been preserved, with another 800 acres on their way to acquisition.

Credit: Suzanne Ruggles



**PRECIOUS HABITAT EPCAL:** Grasslands host many species including the Eastern Meadowlark and the Short-eared Owl.

To keep Long Island up to date on the status of the Initiative, we are running a series of Facebook and Instagram posts which provide the most current information on properties. These posts are available every Wednesday on both platforms and will continue to be posted through June. If you've not been following the Long Island Pine Barrens Society on either or both platforms, now would be the perfect time to start! We're "The Long Island Pine Barrens Society" on Facebook and @lipinebarrens on Instagram.

### Do the Crime, Pay the Fine!

After a Shirley resident illegally dumped his boat in the Pine Barrens, the Suffolk County Legislature passed legislation increasing the fines for dumping. Under this new law, the county fine for an individual dumping in the Pine Barrens is now anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000, depending on what is dumped, while the fine for corporations is now anywhere from \$15,000 to \$25,000. The proportion of the fine given to whistleblowers would increase from 25% to 33%.

Credit: Sandy Richard



**DUMPING IN THE PINE BARRENS - Don't do this!**

So, if you needed even more incentive to report illegal dumping in the Pine Barrens, there it is! If you see any illegal dumping occurring in the Pine Barrens, it's best to report the crime to the Central Pine Barrens Commission at (631) 288-1079.

### Middle School Kids Go To College: Better Than Ever

Once again, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society – supported by the National Grid Foundation – brought our Middle School Kids Go To College program to the Patchogue-Medford School District. Sixty students visited Stony Brook University to listen to a lecture by Dr. Christopher Gobler and display their projects. They demonstrated their knowledge on subjects like nitrate pollution and "dead zones" in LI water to members of the Center for Clean Water Technology and the LIPBS.

Credit: Travis Cutter



**OUTDOOR EDUCATION:** Students hike the Fish Thicket Preserve

A first for the program: the LIPBS took students hiking in Fish Thicket Preserve, located right in the district! Board members John Turner and Bob McGrath explained the ecosystem and told stories about the preserve. By day's end, the kids were more engaged than ever with the environment, and that is the mark of a successful program.

On June 8th, this year's program ended with an awards celebration at Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge. Student scientists discussed their projects and received certificates from the Society and Deputy County Executive Jennifer Juengst. Students whose projects were a cut above the rest received plaques, courtesy of the National Grid Foundation.

By Bob McGrath

Mr. McGrath is one of the original founders of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society and vice president.

## “The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: What good is it?”

—Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

November 25th, 1983 marked the beginning of a new era for Long Island, its rare and threatened wildlife, and perhaps most importantly, for the people who call it home. On that date, I, along with my two closest friends, John Cryan and John Turner (the "bushwhackers" to our friends), took documents we had painstakingly typed on a Smith-Corona typewriter to a local drugstore in Commack. We needed the Certificate of Incorporation for the Long Island Pine Barrens Society to be notarized. Notary Public Jo-Ann Davino signed the document and affixed her notary stamp. The Society was now official; it would go on to become the most influential and effective environmental organization on Long Island.

Prior to this we had spent many years "bushwhacking" around the Pine Barrens. Long days in the field collecting Buck Moth caterpillars and looking for those ever-illusive carnivorous plants, rare ferns, and orchids that Long Island naturalist Roy Latham first discovered some 60 years earlier. Alas, that was some 45 years ago!

Where has the time gone? Yes, it was a time when the only things we worried about were having enough rolls of Kodachrome 25 for our cameras, and enough money for gas. I often reflect on that time in our lives as a period when I learned a true respect for the natural world in which we live. It was a time when we learned the value of the natural ecosystem that surrounds us and why people so desperately needed to understand that humanity is as much a part of it as the Buck Moth, Northern Pitcher Plant and Dragon's Mouth Orchid.

The Society and its three "bushwhacker" executive directors realized many singular victories, beginning with helping to preserve the Radio Corporation of America's holdings in Rocky Point and Riverhead in 1978. Next was the curtailing of illegal golf courses in Calverton (we were too late to halt the construction of one illegal course, which now serves as a primary point source of nitrogen pollution to the Peconic River watershed!). Next came the successful relocation of a proposed free trade zone in the southeast quadrant of the Dwarf Pine Plains, but not before the developers illegally bulldozed forty acres when they recognized that there was dwindling support for their project at this location. These successes were instrumental in laying the groundwork for the Society's crowning achievement: the Pine Barrens Preservation Initiative, which began in 1989.

During the first dozen years, we fought tirelessly for the preservation of key properties. The Oakbrush Plains at Edgewood, the Bishop tract, Maple Swamp, and Hampton Hills, all priority acquisitions at the time. I often think of those victories with sheer astonishment. Three young "bushwhackers," John Turner as President, John Cryan as Vice President, and me as Secretary and Treasurer. Heck our address was John Turner's post office box in Smithtown! Truth be told I was just out of high school and seventeen when we had our first thousand sheets of stationery printed by my future father-in-law for a whopping \$13.00! It was quite humorous when nobody seemed to be able to figure out which way our logo (a Buck Moth) was flying, or what it was, for that matter. And yet, we as the officers of the Society, have never lost sight of our goal.

Yes, those truly were the days!! Long days in the field

when we loaded up John Turner's Volkswagen Beetle with bug nets, our cameras and plant presses and stayed out "in the field" from dusk till dawn. Back then, nobody paid attention to us. After all, how can you take someone seriously when they bring a buck moth with them when testifying at a congressional hearing in Southampton? Yes, we absolutely were different, but I am proud to say that the three of us are still here. You can't say the same for self-proclaimed Pine Barrens political preservationists like Steve Levy, Bob Gaffney, Peter Cohalan and Steve Bellone.

Credits: Top-LIPBS, Bottom-NY Times



HIKING 101: Bob McGrath leads a hike in the Pine Barrens in 2007.



FIT TO PRINT: New York Times announces environmentalists' lawsuit, blocking development in the Pine Barrens.

It was these hard-fought battles that led us to change environmental policy in New York State. The date was November 21, 1989, when our little-known environmental organization, one with grit, conviction, integrity, and soul brought the largest lawsuit of its kind in the nation against local government in an effort to safeguard our environment and its natural resources from future degradation.

To say we caught the media, local government, and the development community completely off guard was an understatement. "Who are these people?", I overheard many reporters asking as they milled about waiting for the press conference to begin at the Middle Island Country Club. "After all no environmental group could possibly be this well organized," they could be heard mumbling amongst

themselves. We had a three-dimensional map identifying the priority properties of critical concern, a podium emblazoned with our logo (which we had now changed from a buck moth to an outline of Long Island with the Pine Barrens strategically placed), and yes, we even served Danish and coffee. So befuddled were the media covering the event that the first question one of them asked was, "Who paid for all this?" A Pulitzer award winning reporter if ever there was one, I thought to myself!

That eventful day led to a ruling handed down by the Appellate Court in March 1992 that required cumulative impact studies if development threatened the integrity of the Pine Barrens. These studies were to be conducted before any further development took place. While the ruling was overturned by the following November, it set in motion a series of events which culminated with the now famous "Why Can't Long Island" campaign" on April 12, 1992.

This led to a "meeting of the minds" at the Long Island Association in Commack on April 25th where, as President of the Society, I first introduced our dog-eared map to the masses of politicians, businessmen and developers. This was the map we had used for every political meeting, slide show, hike, or hearing we had ever attended. This map, which we so painstakingly colored in with colored pencils was our "vision," if you will, of what a Pine Barrens Preserve should look like.

Personally, I thought the meeting was a pathetic demonstration of arrogance on the part of the invited politicians and the developers. Even some allegedly "environmentally minded" people were playing politics. Still, after over three hours, they agreed that something needed to be done to end the "war of the woods," as our campaign had been called by the press. Within ten weeks we secured a path to preservation - our dream was realized. Today, we can look back and be grateful.

Reflections such these are what I turn to when anyone, be it a developer or fellow environmentalist, asks me, "what is the Long Island Pine Barrens Society?" I guess, plainly and simply, we are nothing more than a group of devoted individuals who care about Long Island's future. Given all the politics, personalities, economics, and egos that have come into play where the Pine Barrens is concerned, it impresses me that the Society has survived since the 1970's. And yet somehow it has, and we are on the verge, with our newly introduced "The Best of the Rest" campaign, of making certain that adequate amounts of this fragile and wondrous landscape remain forever wild for future generations to enjoy and discover.

So, to bring this piece full circle, I titled it "Who Knows Where the Time Goes?" Anyone who has ever read one of my articles knows I always include a musical quote. The title of this one comes from songwriter Sandy Denny and made famous by American folk singer Judy Collins.

*Across the evening sky; All the birds are leaving.  
But how can they know; It's time for them to go?  
Before the winter fire; I will still be dreaming.  
I have no thought of time; For who knows where the time goes?*

## Water Quality Report: March 2024

On Wednesday, March 27, Dr. Christopher Gobler, endowed chair of coastal ecology and conservation in the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences at Stony Brook University, presented his annual talk, "State of the Bays, 2023: Love Where You Live," to Long Island environmental leaders. Once again, scientists at Stony Brook University spent last summer assessing bodies of water surrounding Long Island for measures of water quality.

Unfortunately, every major bay, inlet and estuary continues to be affected by nitrogen from wastewater. Nitrogen levels in groundwater have risen 60% in recent decades and coastal ecosystems have continued to degrade. Since the late 1990's, critical marine habitats such as eel grass and salt marshes have declined by up to 90%. Similarly, shellfisheries have been negatively affected. Climate change is exacerbating the nitrogen pollution problem from

Credit: Stony Brook University



BAD NEWS: The Gobler map identifies algal blooms and low oxygen zones.

These efforts, along with the replacement of home cesspool and septic systems with innovative/alternative systems that capture nitrogen are necessary if we are to prevail.

outdated cesspools and septic systems.

The Summer 2023 Long Island Water Quality Impairment map is a graphical representation of last summer's water quality issues. These include "dead (low oxygen) zones," fish kills and turtle kills, along with harmful algal blooms. "This was the worse year for harmful algal blooms on Long Island, ever," said Gobler.

Obviously, actions are required if we are going to reverse these trends that have the capacity to change our way of life on Long Island. Gobler stated that various remediation efforts involve kelp and bivalves to contain nitrogen loads and algal blooms. In addition, recent shellfish restoration efforts have been successful.