

Southold, New York

Southold Town Hall Thursday, June 29, 2000

Over forty people attended the final hearing of the Listen to the Sound project. Proceedings were opened by Beverley Prentice, president of North Folk Audubon Society. Bob

Yaro, executive director of Regional Plan Association, chaired the meeting and began testimony urging the group to continue the effort that began ten years prior with the first Listen to the Sound hearings.

Marguerite Purnell, director of the Fisher's Island Conservancy, set forth a vision of the reserve that incorporates terrestrial and underwater areas within Long Island Sound...adjacent to Long Island Sound. Purnell said the reserve provides for a network of open space areas encompassing ecological value, public access to Long Island Sound and educational opportunities.

Development pressures have intensified as population trends increased in the community surrounding Long Island Sound. Purnell encouraged the use of conservation easements, transfer of development rights and other tools to encourage property owners to protect the environment.

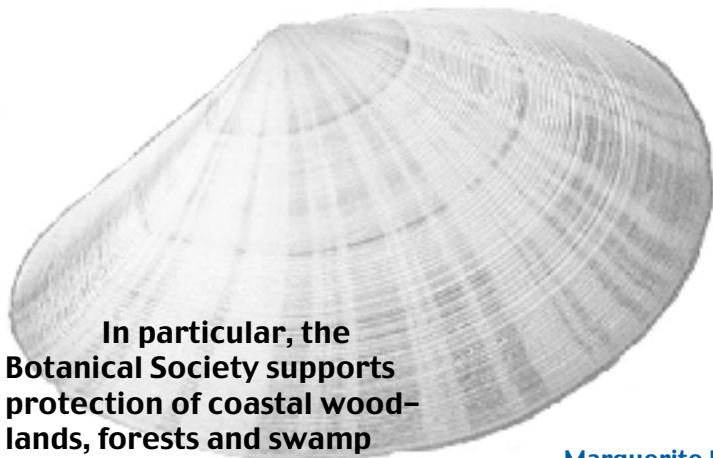
Comments on the Reserve Concept

Bob Yaro encouraged preservation of the shoreline of the Sound now under attack from sprawl. The reserve concept is critical to preserve the ecological systems of the Sound, including the natural systems that surround the Sound. He asked for government support in what he termed the "appropriate development" of our natural resources.

Mary Laura Lamont, educational chairperson of the Long Island Botanical Society, said, "I was born and raised on Long Island Sound, and I love Long Island Sound, too." Long Island Botanical Society supported all efforts to protect and preserve forever land bordering and adjacent to Long Island Sound.

"I was born and raised on Long Island Sound, and I love Long Island Sound, too."

~ Mary Laura Lamont



In particular, the Botanical Society supports protection of coastal woodlands, forests and swamp forests that are currently not protected and are in eminent danger of being developed. Significant coastal wetlands and swamps draining into Long Island Sound are currently not regulated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and are being proposed for development. Specific reference was made to the Northville Swamp Forest.

Lamont added, “I personally can attest to the tremendous number of birds in these woodland communities during migration seasons. Some of these woodlands still house breeding populations of declining neo-tropical species, such as wood thrush, ruby-throated hummingbirds, oven birds, scarlet tanagers, et cetera.”

Marguerite Purnell

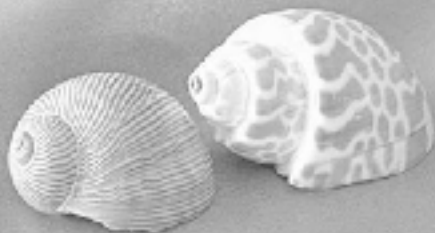


Mary Mulcahy

Sites in the area for the Reserve System

Lisa Holst, habitat restoration coordinator at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, said it would be extremely helpful if the Long Island Sound Coastal Advisory Commission, which is organized by the Department of State, and the Long Island Sound Study Management Conference would recommend to the Regional Advisory Committee a prioritized list of Long Island Sound acquisition sites. This list would assist in the development of the reserve system.

As a supporter of water trail recreation as well as birds, Beverley Prentice, president of North Fork Audubon Society, cited Mattituck Creek (the beach between Mattituck and Iron Pier Beach), Clark’s Beach and Greenport (the area adjacent to a 50-acre inlet pond). All of these sites should be part of the reserve system, she added.



Dan Morris, member of the Open Space Council, expressed his love for the Sound extending from his childhood. He supported saving Mattituck Inlet. "While the issues of the Sound's problems are many and complex, there's one thing I think is very clear, that there is a relation between population density, and many of the problems that exist. I encourage you to advocate for the acqui-

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~ Dan Morris

tion of as much land as you can. There can be no such thing as too much," said Morris.

Gwynn Schroeder, Friends of Long Island Sound maintained that the reserve system should contain environmentally critical islands and reef areas in the eastern portion of the Sound. These areas with their surrounding waters comprise Plum Island, Great Gull Island, Little Gull Island and Fisher's Island. Schroeder described these areas as, "a treasure trove of environmental rarities, open spaces and scenic water resources, unparalleled in the over-built, over-fished and over-polluted areas that comprise the northeast coast of the United States."

According to Schroeder, Plum Island, which is U.S. Government owned, should be saved from development. Big Gull Island is a known bird rookery and of great value to a huge colony of rare nesting terns. Little Gull Island is similar, but on a smaller scale. Fisher's Island is home to over 45 species of flora and fauna classified as rare or endangered in New York state and there are open spaces on it that should be permanently protected.

Paul Stoutenburgh described an area on the North Shore near Riverhead with eighty-foot tall banks, many of which are

untouched by man. Stoutenburgh also suggested Mattituck and Peconic Inlets and Duck Pond Road. Mattituck Inlet is noted for its oysters and its clams.

Stoutenburgh included Richard Reeve and Carol Granton Farms, which are currently being saved through an easement of the Peconic Land Trust, and the Riverhead high bluffs (two parcels of land that were saved through the Peconic Land Trust).

Beverley Prentice, president of North Fork Audubon Society, also suggested Mattituck Creek for its important wetlands, wildlife and public access. Prentice encouraged a continued search of land at the areas along the creek for possible public acquisition and restoration, and stated that, "even parcels of several acres, could have an impact on the health of the small estuary."

The beach east of Iron Pier Beach is part of a parcel now owned by the power company KeySpan that was originally to be the site of a nuclear power plant. Prentice also suggested the Hallukful Farm Museum on Sound Avenue, which contains about 300 acres of leased farmland, a fresh water pond and a stretch of hard wood forest that provide a habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.

Prentice also cited Clarks Beach, which the mayor of Greenport recently stated is for sale. The 50-acre Inlet Pond Park is now under the stewardship of the Town of Southold.

“A water trail is a series of sites spaced apart by a day’s paddling distance where boaters can spend the night on multi-day journeys. A new and interesting idea for one of our least polluting boating activities,” Prentice concluded.

Dan Morris sited many opportunities to provide public access and reduce development of pressure on the coast. Morris asked the group to consider the purchase of parcels in East Marian, Dam Pond area, the KeySpan parcel in Jamesport (500 acres) and the KeySpan parcel in Shoreham (over 800 acres). In addition, the North Fork preserve in Northville (300 plus acres) was recommended to be part of the reserve system.

Howard Meinke, president of North Fork Environmental Council, added Goldsmith’s Inlet, the last estuary before Orient Point. Behind the inlet is a marsh area that opens into a fresh water pond.

Dan Morris



Mary Mulcahy

Henry Halama of the North Fork Audubon Society reflected on the destruction of the Grandifolia Dunes, which he branded as “one of the biggest tragedies in recent years.” The Grandifolia Dunes would have been a crown jewel of the reserve system, but fell to development.

Charles Cetas, vice president of North Fork Environmental Council, proposed several areas including the KeySpan and McQuade properties, Wading River Marsh area, Wading River Creek Marsh, and the Bating Hollow Marsh, currently owned by the DEC. If the property is not purchased Cetas suggested that develop-

ment rights be given to Bating Hollow Boy Scout Camp.

Amie Hamlin, director of the Long Island chapter of the New York League of Conservation Voters, stated, “The North Fork has the opportunity, I think more than any other place on Long Island, to preserve its land on the Sound.” Hamlin added the Chandler Estate.



Mechanisms to protect open space

Dick Amper of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society discussed how eastern Long Island was being developed before our eyes. A county study he mentioned projected a build-out of all major developable lands on the island by 2012. Amper called for preservation of the lands and increased public access to counter this trend.

Amper noted that the protection of land would benefit the ecological value of the Sound. These open areas need to be prioritized and development rights must be transferred to appropriate groups so they can be preserved for future generations.

Related conservation issues

Gwynn Schroeder of Friends of Long Island Sound addressed the polluting of the Sound and warned of its consequences. Jim King, a lobster fisherman from Mattituck concerned with the state of his industry and the environment, remarked, “I think we’ve got a lot of work to do. We haven’t cleaned up the Sound. We still have a ways to go.”

Captain James House asked the group to maintain a “balanced approach” by working with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to regulate fishing, ensure the public access and preserve the environment.

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~ Jim King



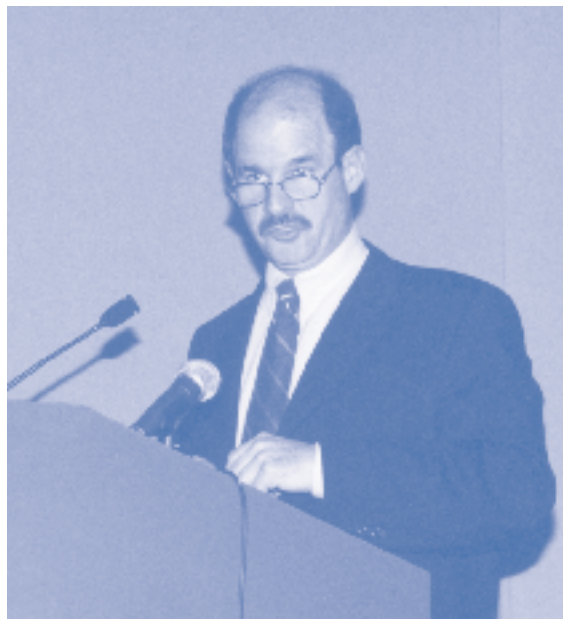
Tim Holstrom c/o TheTrust For Public Land

Chandler Estate

Concluding Remarks

Bob Yaro opened with the remark that the hearings raised inspiring ideas for thousands of citizens of the Sound. He warned that instead of allowing the remaining areas of the Sound to be developed the community must fight to protect the land.

Yaro maintained that the collaborative effort was necessary for the assurance of a legacy for future generations, and so predicted, “This is the beginning...and it will be a great ending if we all work together to make it happen.”



Jeanne Host

Bob Yaro

“I hope we will be able to permanently preserve as much as possible, and that the North Fork can avoid the overdevelopment that has gobbled up most of the rest of Long Island,” said Amie Hamlin. Dismayed about the injustice of the Grandifolia Sandhills, she claimed, “It hurts. And so I hope that we can just preserve as much as we possibly can preserve.”

Paul Adams, a biology professor at SUNY Stony Brook, voiced disgust about the destruction of the hummingbird habitat at the Grandifolia Sandhills. He likened the slaughter to “an unarmed nation facing a few Soviet tanks, the developers.” Adams added, “I’m appalled that in the Year 2000, in one of the wealthiest, most educated counties in the U.S., their breeding grounds should be casually bulldozed to make yet another golf course.”

Jane Kerin-Moffat linked conservation to the survival of the entire community. “A lot of people at different times have mentioned, almost in passing or by implication, we have a spiritual need to be able to get to nature. I think this is very, very fundamental. I think we’re in a world crisis.”

