



LONG ISLAND  
PINE BARRENS  
SOCIETY

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Riverhead, NY 11901

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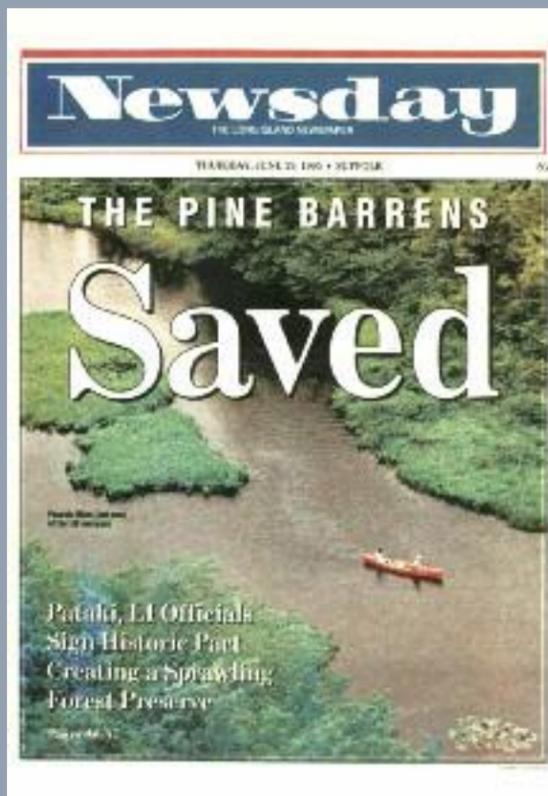
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A copy of the last annual report filed with the New York State Department of Law may be obtained by writing to NYS Attorney General's Charities Bureau, Attn: FOIL Officer, 120 Broadway, New York, NY, 10271 or may be obtained directly from the Long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



Credit: LIPBS



**ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS WE PRINT:** Long Island's greatest accomplishment was covered by Long Island's newspaper and scores of others.

**Pine Barrens TV**

The Pine Barrens Society's television program airs on Cablevision Channel 20.

The air times below are effective October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019.

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

Tuesdays at 7:30 PM  
Wednesdays at 9:00 PM  
Thursdays at 8:00 PM

**Town of East Hampton:**

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

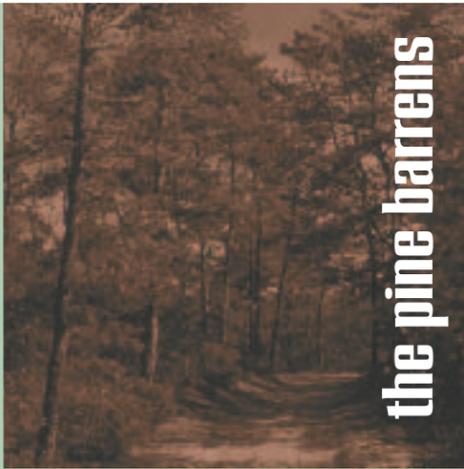
The program can also be viewed on the Society's YouTube page at [www.youtube.com/lipinebarrenssociety](http://www.youtube.com/lipinebarrenssociety).

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LONG ISLAND  
PINE BARRENS  
SOCIETY



the pine barrens

# today

## SILVER CELEBRATION!

PRESERVATION: NOW OR NEVER

# The Pine Barrens Protection Act is 25

Credit: NYS Parks



Rose Harvey

The Long Island Pine Barrens Society marked the 25th anniversary of the enactment of the Pine Barrens Protection Act at a “Silver Celebration,” on October 18 at the organization’s 41st Anniversary Environmental Awards Gala at Oheka Castle in Huntington.

The event honored two environmental leaders who are active in preservation and advocacy statewide. The Society’s award for Outstanding Contribution to Long Island’s Environment was presented to Rose Harvey, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

The Dennis Puleston Environmental Achievement Award went to Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director of Environmental Advocates of New York.

Nearly 200 guests dined and danced in celebration of the protection of more than 100,000 acres of Long Island’s premier ecosystem, under the Pine Barrens Protection Act of 1993 which was signed into law on July 14 of that year, by Governor Mario Cuomo.

The Pine Barrens Society was created in 1977 by three prescient students, who blazed trails through the Island’s wilderness, while educating Long Islanders and their political leaders of the treasure beyond the sprawling suburbs. For their part, Long Islanders themselves came to appreciate the Pine Barrens – approving referendum after referendum – more than a billion dollars – to protect the Island’s sole source of water, while preserving what has become its “Central Park.”

All of Long Island’s water comes from underground aquifers, the quality of which has declined as a result of discharge of nitrogen into

the ground, principally from wastewater and fertilizers. The Pine Barrens Act assured protection of thousands of acres which cannot be developed, thus assuring a central source of pure water. The Pine Barrens also boast the greatest diversity of plants and animals anywhere in the State of New York.

Ms. Harvey was recognized for her dramatic improvements in New York State Parks and implementation of new recreational opportunities for young and old alike. Mr. Iwanowicz was honored for his leadership in establishing sound public policy on the part of government at every level.

A life-long environmentalist, Rose Harvey has completely revitalized the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, from one end of the state to the other. She oversees the operation of 216 state parks, 335,000 acres of parkland, a staff of more than 1,750 full-time employees and a budget of some \$436 million.

She joined the administration of Governor Andrew Cuomo shortly after he took office in 2011. She has carried out his New York Parks 2020 Initiative, restoring scores of parks that had fallen into disrepair. The initiative committed \$900 million in public and private funding to New York’s state parks. More than 700 improvement projects have been completed or are currently underway.

In 2018 alone, Harvey’s Parks Department has dedicated \$90 million to modernize the state’s park system, including the preservation of 14,000 acres of buffer lands, rehabilitation of 200 miles of trails and the

Credit: EA



Peter Iwanowicz

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## COASTAL WATER CRISIS Record Algae Blooms

The summer of 2018 was the worst ever in terms of Long Island’s surface water quality. Dr. Christopher Gobler of Stony Brook University’s School of Marine & Atmospheric Science cited ongoing nitrogen discharges into groundwater Island-wide as the cause of record algae blooms, oxygen-starved waterbodies and coastal contamination.

Declaring Long Island’s water quality a crisis, Gobler said, that nitrogen discharging from 360,000 cesspools and septic tanks, along with nitrogen from fertilizers used in agriculture and on suburban lawns, is resulting in toxic tides and low oxygen levels in almost every major Long Island bay and harbor. The result has been the die-off of fish and shellfish as well as beach closures.

In addition to coastal contamination, many Long Island lakes were contaminated by nitrogen discharge, producing harmful blue-green algae that threatens animals and humans – more than any other county in the state.

Long Island Pine Barrens Society Executive Director Richard Amper said that while New York State and Suffolk officials were making some progress, “the federal government has made little progress in addressing the drinking and surface water challenge facing the region. Government at every level

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## MAJOR DEVELOPMENT SETBACK Sewer Connection Blocked

A committee of the Suffolk County Legislature has blocked the sewer connection of the Suffolk County sewage treatment plant to the proposed 9000-unit Heartland Town Square development project in Brentwood, near the Oak Brush Plains Pine Barrens. The project is being advanced by developer Jerry Wolkoff. The Pine Barrens Society has opposed the project for years.

Environmental and civic leaders who oppose the project worried that the connection would deplete groundwater by using 2.5 million gallons of water a day and discharging it offshore into the Atlantic Ocean. Others argued that they oppose the project because the developer was seeking deep discounts on sewage connection fees and argued that if the project is built, Heartland should build and operate its own sewage treatment plant.

Located near the abandoned Pilgrim State Hospital, the project is the biggest ever proposed for Long Island. The Society is actively campaigning for expansion of the Oak Brush Plain Preserve and has actively campaigned against the mega development for more than a decade.

The proposal, however, is not dead. The Suffolk County Legislature can overrule the disapproval by its Public Works Committee. The Society has urged Suffolk County Legislators to uphold the committee’s opposi-

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# the thicket

## Fire in the Forest

### Using Prescribed Fire to Manage and Improve Forest Health and Reduce Wildfire Potential in the Central Pine Barrens

by Polly Weigand

*Ms. Weigand is the Science and Stewardship Program Manager with the Long Island Pine Barrens Commission.*

It is an exciting time of engagement within the forests of the Central Pine Barrens as a new prescribed fire management program is being developed to improve forest health, strengthen resiliency to pests and disease and reduce wildfires within this regionally-valued ecosystem. Spearheaded by the Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning and Policy Commission, this important forest management program has been made possible thanks to a five-year, \$1.25 million grant provided by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to build capacity within the Commission and within the Long Island Region that will allow for the planning and implementation of prescribed fire.

Credit: Central Pine Barrens Commission



**FIRE WHEN YOU ARE READY:** Prescribed burning provides regeneration of the Pine Barrens without the danger of an uncontrolled wildfire.

In order to understand why forest health management is important and so integrally related to wildfire suppression, we need to first examine why the Central Pine Barrens is an ecologically significant, culturally valuable, and fire dependent ecosystem. The Central Pine Barrens extends over 105,000 acres across central Suffolk County and is classified as globally and state rare, being one of only a few pine barren ecosystems that exist in the northeast. It is characterized by the dominant tree species, the Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) and the diverse mosaic of **barrens**: patches of bare sand, populated with low-growing shrub, heath and herbaceous vegetation that are interspersed within a montage of wetlands, forests, and grasslands. A high diversity of rare, endangered, and/or endemic ecological communities, plants and animals supported within the Pine Barrens, include but are not limited to, Atlantic White Cedar Swamps, Dwarf Pine Barrens, Coastal Plain Ponds; Sick-leaved Golden Aster, Northern Blazing Star, and Southern Wild Raisin and Tiger Salamander, Frosted Elfin Butterfly, and Mud Turtle, respectively.

Credit: LIPBS



**A BURNING ISSUE:** Wildfires in 1995 and 2012 were challenges to suppress as they burned thousands of acres, threatening lives and property.

A dynamic aspect of the Pine Barrens is that its persistence, vitality and species diversity are dependent on specific environmental conditions and fire disturbance. It thrives on some of the sandiest, nutrient poor, and low water holding capacity soils, creating harsh desert-like, fire prone ecosystem. Fire, the dominant disturbance regimen, rejuvenates the forest by opening up gaps, thinning vegetation, and increasing availability of space, sunlight, and nutrients. Fire accomplishes these results by burning off duff, eliminating crowded, old and declining individuals; and suppressing pests and disease, which collectively increases diversity, enhances ecosystem function and reduces wildfire potential.

The long-term influence of and dependency on fire is revealed in the adaptive traits of Pine Barren species such as the Pitch pine. Its thick bark insulates its vascular tissue from the heat of fire while post fire, epicormic buds regenerate incinerated foliage and serotinous cones open and disperse seed onto mineral soils allowing for ready germination of the next generation of pines. Although we sometimes remove ourselves from the equation, humans are a formidable and important part of the ecology of the Pine Barrens that increasingly makes managing this fire dependent ecosystem very complex. We have built homes, improved hunting grounds and sourced wild foods, effectively weaving the Pine Barrens into our cultural heritage. The most influential period of land use began with European clear cutting for timber, cordwood, and agriculture which fragmented and altered forest stands, reset succession and inadvertently fueled mass outbreaks of wildfire. Both wildfire and continued development of the wildland urban interface catalyzed an understandable fear of fire and a sustained belief that fire suppression was a proactive means of protecting homes and livelihoods.

Unfortunately, this limited understanding of Pine Barrens ecology has inadvertently compounded, rather than reduced the risk for and severity of wildfire, as nature has not been able to cleanse its forests. Fuels have built up on the forest floors. Ladder fuels have developed that can transport fire to the canopy. Forests are even-aged, crowded, dense, and aging. All these characteristics make the forest very susceptible to fire, pests and even collapse. Further, the southern pine beetle continues to be a striking indicator of our regional forests' susceptibility to new pests and declines in forest health and which continues to bring the concept of forest health to the forefront.

The value of the Central Pine Barrens has been demonstrated through the preservation of this ecosystem which has ensured not only its persistence but the benefits provided by its many ecological services such as improvements in air quality; providing recreational resources; and cleansing and recharging rainfall into Long Island's sole source of drinking water, the underground aquifers. These services, however, are only provided when the ecosystem is functioning and resilient. Proactively implementing forest management and reintroducing prescribed fire, in a planned and controlled manner, is the direct route to reducing fuel loads, ensuring resiliency to pest and disease and achieving maximal ecosystem health, function and preservation. We look forward to a cultural and ecosystem transition, where the smell of smoke from a prescribed burn provides a feeling of security, knowing that this management is reducing the potential for catastrophic wildfire, improving forest health and protecting homes and businesses, while keeping the Pine and Barrens within the Central Pine Barrens.

## ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS NOTES

### 800 Acres Preserved in Shoreham

Credit: Google



**A SOUND INVESTMENT:** 800 acres of woodlands and marshlands are to be permanently preserved at Shoreham.

New York State has yet to close on the preservation of 800 acres of woodlands and marshlands adjacent to the abandoned Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant on the shore of Long Island Sound. Governor Andrew Cuomo included in his 2018 budget, preservation of the last coastal forest on Long Island. State officials say delays were caused by the process of identifying the metes and bounds of the area to be preserved and say announcement of the acquisition should be expected, soon.

The acquisition was also contained in legislation proposed by New York State Senator Ken LaValle and Assemblyman Steve Englebright, solar site but was rejected by the Long Island Power Authority. The Long Island Pine Barrens Society and the Nature Conservancy worked for many years to secure the site which was a top state priority for more than a decade.

## Southampton Water Crisis

Credit: LIPBS



**CLEAN WATER CAMPAIGN:** PBS Executive Director Richard Amper, Group for the East End President Robert DeLuca, Southampton Town Civic Coalition President Andrea Spilka are working with Southampton Town officials to improve water quality, town-wide.

Southampton Town is facing contamination of groundwater in every hamlet of the South Fork township. There is a migrating VOC Plume in Speonk, migrating PFC contamination in Westhampton, turtle and fish kills in Flanders, PFC Contamination in East Quogue, fish die-offs in Western Shinnecock Bay, PFC Contamination in Hampton Bays and toxic algae blooms in Southampton Village.

In response, Southampton Town Councilman Tommy John Schiavoni has introduced legislation that would tighten regulations on development on land in the town's Planned Residential Development areas, limiting overall clearing and construction on residential and recreational projects.

Some town officials are expressing concern that land in the Pine Barrens, state-designated Special Groundwater Protection Area and the town's Aquifer Protection Overlay districts will be over-developed, threatening further drinking and surface waters in the town.

The Pine Barrens Society, Group for the East End and the Southampton Town Civic Collation are working to halt the contamination and restore water quality town-wide.

## Appealing Lawsuit

Credit: Suffolk County

A New York State Appeals Court heard arguments on October 17 in a years-long case, brought by the Pine Barrens Society, intended to reverse the re-direction of funds from Suffolk County's Drinking Water Protection Program to the bloated county budget. The appeals court has previously ruled that the referendum-approved funds could not be re-directed to the county's general fund by discredited Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy.



**BAD GUYS:** Former and current Suffolk County Executives Steve Levy and Steve Bellone. One ripped-off the voter-approved Drinking Water Protection Program and the other won't give the money back. The Appellate Division of New York State Supreme Court will decide the matter.

Current Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone accepted the court's ruling that the raid was illegal but challenged the requirement that the county had to return the stolen money to the water protection program. "The Bellone administration is saying, "we agree the money was stolen, but we don't have to give it back," said PBS Executive Director Richard Amper – "That makes Bellone as bad as Levy."

# SILVER CELEBRATION

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## The Pine Barrens Protection Act is 25

Credits: New York State

construction or improvement of 300 cabins and cottages and 30 nature and cultural centers. On Long Island, she obtained new funding including \$16 million for twelve parks, including the recent opening of 10 new cottages at Wildwood State Park and expansion of hours at Brookhaven Pine Barrens State Park.

She helped play a part in the creation of the Excelsior Conservation Corps in 2016 – a ten-month residential AmeriCorps program for environmental stewardship. She helped create “I Love My Park Day,” “The Parks & Trail Partnership Program,” as well as “Connect Kids to Parks.”

All this while increasing overall park attendance in New York state by 23 percent since 2011, with 2017 seeing a record-breaking 71.5 million visitors.

Peter Iwanowicz is the Executive Director of Environmental Advocates of New York (EA), the leading environmental government watchdog in Albany, and a voice for the environment, conservation, wildlife, and public health in New York State. Environmental Advocates works closely with a diverse coalition of advocates and organizations, and is a trusted source for sound policy analysis. EA also partners with multi-state coalitions and participates in national initiatives that have an impact on New York. It is



NYS State Senator  
Ken LaValle



NYS State Assemblyman  
Tom DiNapoli



NYS State Assemblymen  
Steve Englebright



**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:** Governor Mario Cuomo is flanked by State Senator Ken LaValle, Pine Barrens Society Executive Director Richard Amper and State Assemblyman Tom DiNapoli at July 14, 1993 signing of the Pine Barrens Protection Act. Also pictured (from left) Long Island Association President James LaRocca, State Assemblymen Steve Englebright and Fred Thiele, developer Wilbur Breslin, Long Island Builders Association head Edwin “Buzz” Schwenk and State Senator Caesar Trunzo.

the New York State affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

Peter came to Environmental Advocates in 2013, after serving as Assistant Vice President of

the American Lung Association where he directed the organization’s Healthy Air Campaign. Prior to that, he was the lead voice on environmental issues in state government, serving as Deputy Secretary for the Environment under Governor David Paterson and later as acting commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. In these roles, he secured the final deal for protection of lands in the Adirondacks, established the first-ever limits on pollution from outdoor wood boilers and created the electronic waste recycling program.

He launched the DEC’s Office of Climate Change and led the state’s participation in the Regional Green House Gas Initiative. At Environmental Advocates of New York, he is responsible for implementation of all of the organization’s statewide programs to enhance protection of our environment and wildlife.

Environmental Advocates is ever-vigilant, monitoring state government’s actions, advocating for the policies and practices that will protect our environment and defeating regressive measures that seek to roll back hard-won conservation victories. Peter’s efforts were instrumental in passing some of New York’s most significant environmental legislation.

## COASTAL WATER CRISIS Record Algae Blooms

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contributed to the protection of Long Island’s water quality 25 years ago, through a collective effort to protect the Pine Barrens which sit above the Island’s largest supply of pure water, but not enough is being done to control groundwater contamination in other parts of the Island.”

Environmentalists are seeking dedicated revenue streams for water quality restoration. “The public cannot be asked to foot the bill for water restoration Island-wide,” Amper said. “Voters have always supported environmental protection on Long Island, but local, state and federal government must play a major part in restoring water quality,” he added.

Credit: Dr. Chris Gobler



**YECH!** Harmful algae blooms impacted Long Island bays and harbors throughout the summer season. They closed many beaches and shellfish beds – the result of nitrogen discharge to groundwater.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENT SETBACK Sewer Connection Blocked

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tion which might kill the mega-development entirely.

The Pine Barrens Society has set a goal of 1000 acres for the Oak Brush Plains Pine Barrens Preserve. Nearly 850 acres have been protected to date and the Society has recommended the remaining goal in legislation proposed for action by the New York State Legislature in the 2019 legislative session. Part of the land targeted for preservation was suggested for a rail transit hub, but environmentalists have concluded that it would not be feasible at this location. The Oak Brush Plains once covered thousands of acres which have been lost to development in the busy Islip area. This Pine Barrens habitat is not connected to the sprawling Central Pine Barrens Preserve.

Credit: Newsday



**A BIG BAD PROJECT:** The latest problem with the Heartland Town Square development project was an effort to hook the project up to an existing sewage treatment plant