



LONG ISLAND
PINE BARRENS
SOCIETY

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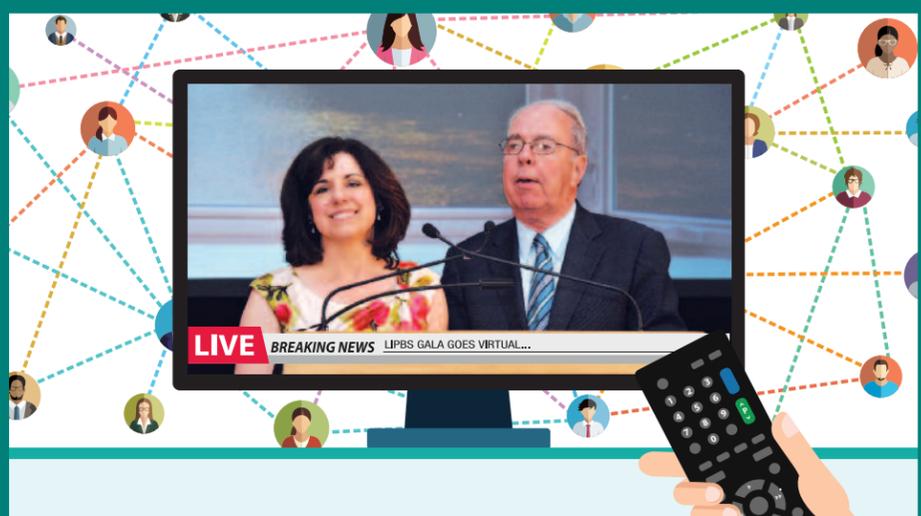
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Julie Clark

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

Printed on recycled paper.

Credit: Julie Clark



GALA-TO-GO: Although this year's Gala was held virtually, it was a great success. We thank all of our supporters who stuck by our side through the pandemic.

Pine Barrens TV

The Pine Barrens Society's television program airs on Cablevision/Altice Public Access. October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021.

The program can also be viewed on the Society's YouTube page at www.youtube.com/lipinebarrenssociety.

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

Mondays at 7:00 PM
Tuesdays at 11:00 PM
Saturdays at 11:30 AM

Town of East Hampton:

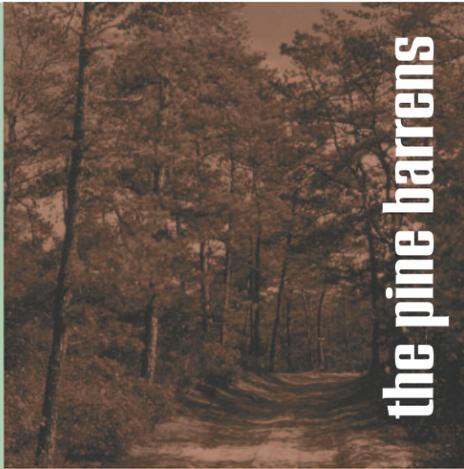
Wednesdays at 6:30 PM
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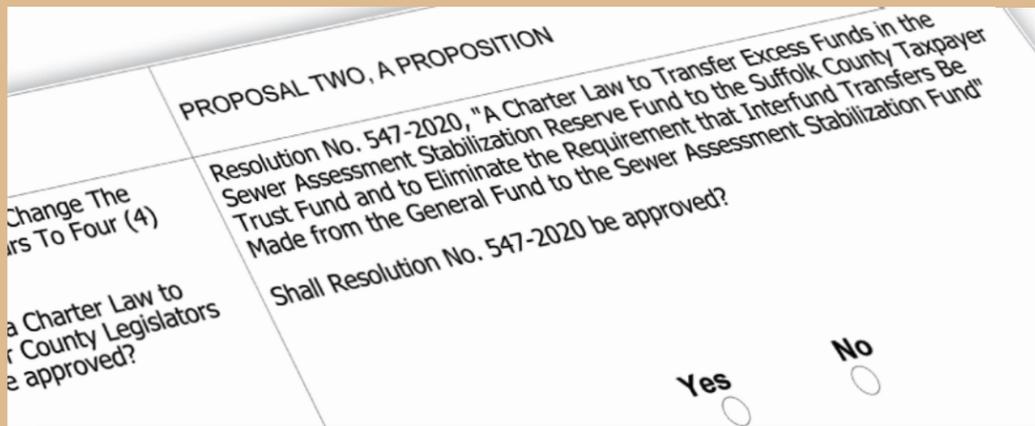
the pine barrens

today

Drinking Water Protection Program is Threatened Suffolk County Executive Bellone Raids Environmental Funds

Credit: LIPBS

A controversial Suffolk County ballot proposal to tap a county sewer fund to plug budget holes was too close to call on Wednesday, November 4, according to Newsday. The measure was leading 53.8% to 46.2%, based on early and Election Day voting. But the margin was just 38,087 votes, and at least 140,332 absentee ballots were left to be counted.



In response, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone (approved by the Suffolk County Legislature), placed a proposition on the ballot that would (1) overrule the court orders and legal agreements and (2) take another \$15 million from the fund for additional budget relief. If the proposition is approved, these funds will be permanently removed from

The Long Island Pine Barrens Society has led the charge against the proposed raiding of funds to plug holes in Suffolk County's bloated budget. The Suffolk County Drinking Water Protection Program (DWPP) was created by 84% of voters in 1987 and has been extended several times since. The program uses a ¼-cent of sales tax revenue to fund important water quality improvement initiatives, the preservation of open space, and to stabilize taxes for those in sewer districts.

The fund has been raided twice; first by former Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy in 2011 and again in 2013, under Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, to plug holes in the County's perpetually-stressed budget. In both instances, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society sued to block raiding of the land and water fund and has won in state courts. The Society has spent nine years in court defending the program and the voters' trust. Every court in the State of New York has agreed that funds designated by the voters for drinking water protection cannot be used for any other purpose, without the voters' consent through another mandatory referendum.

Legal agreements and court orders demanded that the County return \$183 million to the drinking water fund.

the Drinking Water Protection Program and placed into a Taxpayers Trust Fund, a general purpose fund. "These funds would be used to fill holes in the County's bloated budget, and no longer used for the environmental purposes, as the voters had originally intended," said Pine Barrens Society Executive Director Richard Amper.

Under the leadership of the Pine Barrens Society, scores of environmental and civic organizations, as well as local elected officials and local newspapers, strongly advocated for a "No" vote on Proposition Two.

Even though election officials said that official poll results may not be known for weeks, Bellone prematurely announced victory.

Even if the proposition passes, the Pine Barrens Society may consider legal action for violation of the court order and legal settlement, as well as the confusing

language of the ballot measure.

"We don't think the voters actually knew what they were voting for. The language of the ballot proposition was confusing and misleading," said Pine Barrens Society Executive Director. "We're still looking into how we can protect the public's interest and our critical drinking water program," he added.

The Suffolk County Drinking Water Protection Program (DWPP) was created by 84% of voters in 1987 and has been extended several times since.

First Robin Hopkins Amper Environmental Scholarship Awarded to Binghamton Student

Credit: LIPBS

The Long Island Pine Barrens Society's Board of Directors awarded the inaugural Robin Hopkins Amper Environmental Scholarship to Ms. Caitlin Tucker of Ronkonkoma, this past August. The scholarship was created in memory of the late Robin Hopkins Amper, a long-time volunteer of the Pine Barrens Society and wife of the Society's Executive Director, Richard Amper. Robin died of metastatic breast cancer in April of last year.

The Society encouraged Long Island students entering college



FUTURE STEWARD: The inaugural Robin Hopkins Amper Environmental Scholarship was awarded to Ms. Caitlin Tucker of Ronkonkoma

this Fall to apply for the \$5,000 scholarship. The applicants were required to pursue education in environmental studies, sciences, ecology, sustainability, public policy or land and water protection. Only Long Island residents qualified, but applicants could attend school anywhere. The Society received many qualified candidates, but selected Ms. Tucker, who was headed to Binghamton University, a state school.

Pine Barrens Society President Alan Singer said, "We look for smart and idealistic students who are com-

Continued on Page 3

the thicket

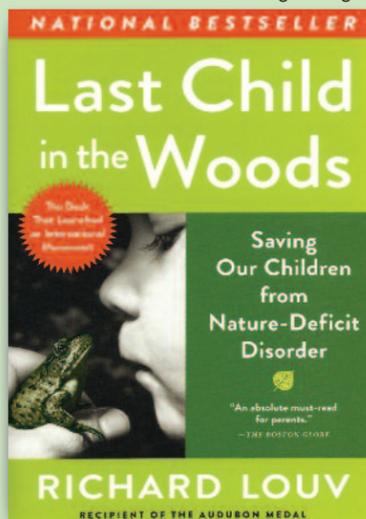
Nature Deficit Disorder

By Miranda Gonzales

Miranda is the latest addition to the staff of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society. After graduating from Stony Brook University with a degree in Ecosystems and Human Impact, she joined our team as Office Administrator in September 2020.

Nature Deficit Disorder, a term coined by Richard Louv in his 2008 book “Last Child in the Woods,” describes the behavioral impacts of children spending less time in nature and more time indoors. Specific consequences include: increased childhood obesity, attention disorders, and even depression. In times of quarantine, the concern for Nature Deficit Disorder becomes even

Credit: Google Images



NATURE DEFICIT DISORDER: Children who spend less time outdoors are more likely to have mental and physical health issues.

more prevalent. Before the Coronavirus pandemic, researchers said children between the ages of 6 and 11 spend about 28 hours a week using electronics (Ferreira, 2012). With schools going online and many public playgrounds being closed or overcrowded, the average weekly screen time has most likely increased. Now more than ever, society must encourage activities to engage the curious minds of children with the natural environment before they suffer the effects of Nature Deficit Disorder.

Early childhood education plays a huge role influencing the way children see their surrounding environment. When environmental education programs are offered in schools, children are able to connect with nature at an early age, and it also promotes a sense of community within the class. Isn't that something we need in a society that seems highly divided now more than ever? Before the electronic era, teachers often led their students outside to participate in activities such as planting seeds. Nowadays, with SMARTBoards and computers available in classrooms, it seems easier to pop on a quick video demonstration instead. This may seem like a miniscule

lesson change, however, it takes away the hands-on experience children have with the natural world. When we take away these outdoor education activities, we discourage the outdoor interests of children and therefore, risk a decline in future environmentalists. If we continue on like this, we may lose the push to fight for protecting the environment.

We must urge schools to consider the benefits of getting students outside, even if only once a week. The concept of creating “green” school yards would provide educators with a designated area to hold class outside. Schools with access to green school yards already see improved test scores, happier students/less bullying, fewer discipline problems, reduced stress in students, and increased physical activity. Along with the many mental health benefits of green school yards, they also provide a safer learning environment in the times of Coronavirus. A study done in Wuhan, China found that only 1 in every 7,000 Coronavirus infections transpired in an outdoor setting (Walljasper, 2020). Lastly, schools can help prevent Nature Deficit Disorder in children by providing more greenery around playgrounds. Studies show that kids playing on a concrete playground tend to show more depressive tendencies than those playing in areas of natural land (Jay Siegel, 2016).

Demanding that schools ramp up environmental programs is the first step in the grand fight against Nature Deficit Disorder, but what can you do on an individual level to help the children in your life? Take them outside! Long Island provides a host of different outdoor recreational activities for all age groups. In fact, Richard Louv himself composed a list of outdoor activities and their benefits back in March 2020, to exemplify how to avoid Nature Deficit Disorder during the current pandemic. His suggestions include taking a hike and setting a goal for the children to discover at least ten different critters on your walk. Children will find the hunt for critters fun and it will also educate them on the local wildlife in the process. Louv also suggests setting up a camp in your backyard, or letting the kids dig through dirt!

Other suggestions by Louv cater to those living in more urban areas. These suggestions include, watching real-time wildlife cameras online, or going “world-watching” through your windows with telescopes or binoculars. Granted, the options for outdoor play in urban areas seem limited, however the push for environmental urbanism should advance cities to provide more open space. Environmental planners supply urban areas with carefully thought-out green spaces, green roofs, and urban trails systems. These innovations make it easier for families to enjoy the beauty of nature when settled in an urban home. So, whether you live in the suburbs or a city, set some time aside each week to make sure you and your children get your much-needed dose of nature.

Life indoors reaps the consequence of Nature Deficit Disorder. Getting outside your house may not feel as safe as it used to, but setting aside time in nature is essential for mental and physical wellbeing, especially for small children. So, let's focus on getting our kids outdoors to appreciate the open space that the Long Island Pine Barren Society, and many other organizations nationwide fight so hard to protect!

Sources: Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods, 2008. Jackie Ostfeld, Nature Deficit Disorder – Sustainability Defined. Ferreira, Grueber & Yarema, A Community Partnership to Facilitate Urban Elementary Students' Access to the Outdoors. Madison Allen, The Benefits of Outdoor Education Curriculum for Elementary School Students with Nature Deficit Disorder, 2016. Jay Walljasper, How Green Schoolyards Can Help Make Schools Safer This Fall and Improve Kids' Lives Permanently, 2020. Richard Louv, 10 Nature Activities to Help Get Your Family Through the Coronavirus Pandemic, 2020.



Credit: Ben Grey, Flickr CC

GET OUTSIDE: According to Richard Louv, children must spend more time outside to avoid “Nature Deficit Disorder.”

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS NOTES

Lewis Road PRD Vote Extended Once Again

Credit: LIPBS



POWER IN NUMBERS: Environmental leaders came out in force against the Lewis Road PRD in a public hearing held via Zoom in August.

The final vote on the Lewis Road Planned Residential Development (PRD), formerly called “The Hills at Southampton,” has been extended into January of 2021. In August of this year, the New York State Pine Barrens Commission held what we thought would be the final hearing on the project via Zoom. Opponents of the project provided expert testimony on the many problems associated with the project. Opponents included: New York State Assemblyman Steve Englebright; Dr. Christopher Gobler, Professor at Stony Brook University; Bob DeLuca, President of Group for the East End and his attorney, Claudia Braymer; Andrea Spilka, President of the Southampton Town Civic Coalition; Tom Ward of the Long Island Chapter of the Sierra Club; several local residents; and, Pine Barrens Society representatives Richard Amper and Katie Muether Brown.

The Society submitted a 17-page report to the hearing record. The report outlined the many ways that this project has failed to meet the standards and guidelines of the Pine Barrens Protection Act and its Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This project would greatly increase nitrogen and pesticide pollution into our groundwater and surface waters. The project would fragment open space and destroy Pine Barrens habitat. This project has now expanded into the Critical Resource Area of the Pine Barrens, an area deemed essential to protect the habitat for the rare and threatened Coastal Buckmoth. The plan proposes the placement of golf holes and a massive sewage treatment plant behind nearby homes. The development site will be seen from roadways, from local trails, and from neighbors. It is not consistent with development within the area. The applicant proposes a country club in the middle of an area that is intended to serve as an important recharge and protection area for our drinking water aquifers. The requirements of the NYS State Environmental Quality Review Act have not been met.

The Commission was expected to vote on the project at their September meeting. The New York State Pine Barrens Commission has the most authority on development in the Pine Barrens. If the Commission determines that the project does not conform to the Pine Barrens Act and Land Use Plan, the project as proposed, cannot be approved.

Alas, at the request of Southampton Town, Pine Barrens Commissioners voted to delay the decision on the Lewis Road PRD development until next year. The developer, with support of Southampton Town, had asked the Commission for an extension from the September decision deadline, so that they could make even more changes to their proposal. This comes after several rounds of other changes that had been made in the months prior, creating a constantly moving target for both Commissioners and environmentalists to re-analyze. Commissioners and environmentalists are expected to review the latest set of changes at a November 2020 public hearing. A final vote is expected in January 2021.

Good News and Bad for Long Island's Waters

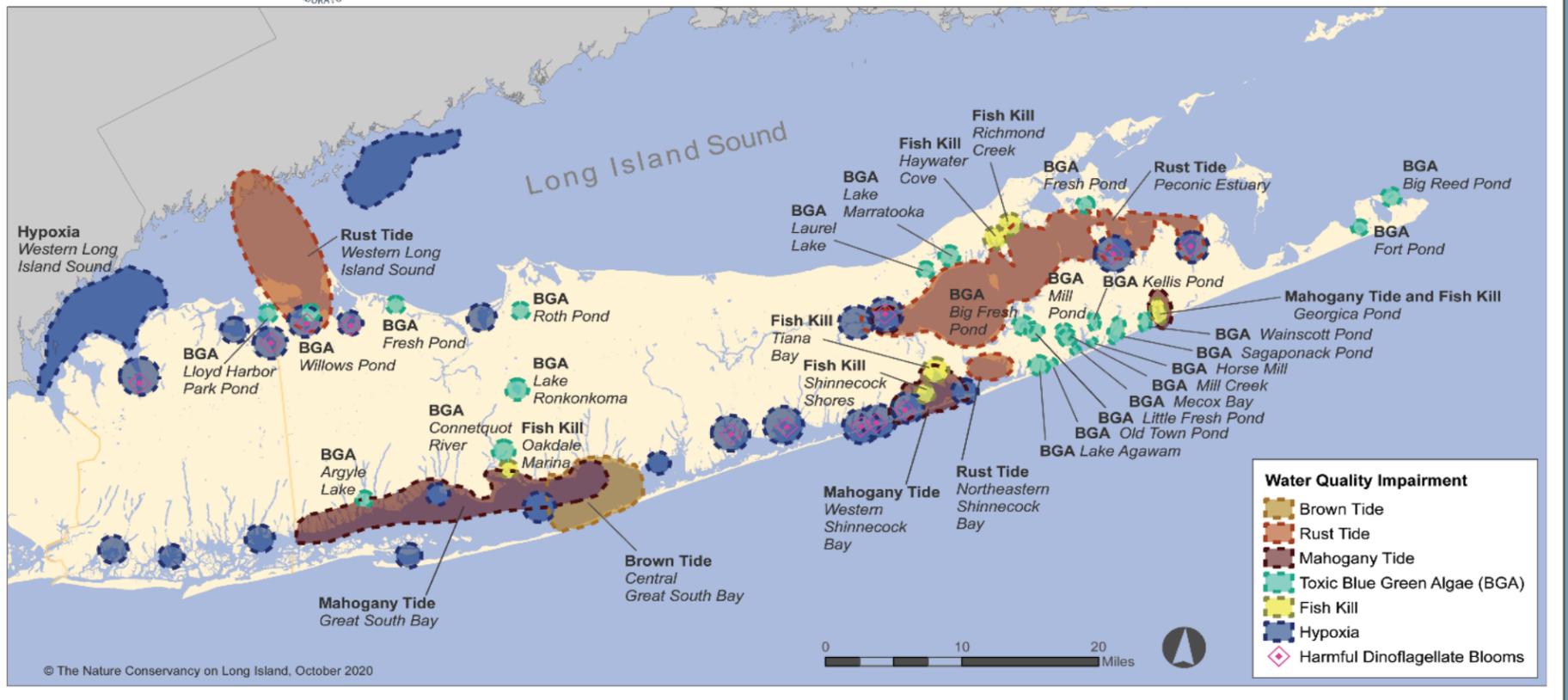
Credit: The Gobler Laboratory

Stony Brook University
School of Marine and
Atmospheric Sciences



Long Island Water Quality Impairments Summer 2020

The Nature
Conservancy



BAD NEWS: Water quality impairments are shown widespread across Long Island in the Summer of 2020.

There's good news and bad for Long Island's waters. While new regulations have been put in place to help curtail nitrogen pollution, Long Island's surface waters still continue to suffer.

In October of this year, scientists at Stony Brook University completed their assessment of water quality in Long Island's estuaries in 2020 and the news is not good. Throughout the months of June to October, nearly every major bay and estuary across Long Island was afflicted with a toxic algae bloom, oxygen-starved waters, or both.

According to Dr. Christopher Gobler, Professor of Coastal Ecology and Conservation at Stony Brook University, Long Island's waters saw mahogany and brown tides and a harmful rust tide across Long Island Sound. In addition, a record was set with an alarming 24 lakes and ponds being afflicted with toxic blue-green algae, across the island. Blue-green algae is deadly for both humans and animals. Toxins produced by this particular type of algae have been linked to dog illnesses and a dog death on Long Island.

These "tides," named after the color of their appearance, are the result of excess nitrogen entering our waters. Almost all of these events can be traced back to nitrogen pollution from household sewage. There are over 380,000 cesspools and septic systems in the ground in Suffolk County. These systems, that were never designed to remove nitrogen, discharge nitrogen-laden wastewater into our groundwater aquifers that eventually flows into our surface waters. There, this excess nitrogen fuels the overgrowth of harmful algae, which has devastating impacts on our marine environment and our economy. Each year, these harmful algae blooms lead to the closure of our beaches and shellfish beds, and contribute to the die-off of seagrass and marine life. Certain blooms also pose a health threat to both humans and animals.

According to the Gobler Laboratory, we are also seeing the emergence of "dead zones" across Long Island. Dead zones or hypoxic zones, are regions of low or no dissolved oxygen. Fish and other marine life depend on oxygen in the water to survive.

Dr. Gobler stated that "the data reveals that many sites are not suitable habitats for sustaining fish and shellfish."

Each year, the Gobler Laboratory, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy on Long Island, produces a visual map outlining the many water quality impairments seen across the island. The Gobler Lab has been monitoring and sampling Long Island's waters each week, every Summer, since 2014.

Katie Muether Brown, Deputy Director of the Pine Barrens Society, said, "The results of Dr. Gobler's water quality report show us that clean water action is needed now. We can't wait resolve our water quality issues. We must continue to pass legislation and implement plans that work to restore and protect our drinking and surface waters."

The good news? Just days after the release of this report, Suffolk County implemented a new law requiring that all new construction install advanced wastewater treatment systems. 75% of the homes in Suffolk County have cesspools or antiquated septic systems. We must begin to replace these systems with new nitrogen-removing technology.

Brown added, "While replacing the nearly 380,000 systems currently in the ground will be an effort that continues for years to come, we must start by making sure that we do not continue to keep placing new polluting systems in the ground."

Nitrogen-reducing septic systems will be required in all new home and commercial construction and for single family home renovations that increase the number of bedrooms to more than five and increase the building's footprint or floor area. The new requirements take effect in July of 2021.

Homeowners that are looking to replace their old systems with new nitrogen-removing technology may qualify for town and county grants and low-cost loans. Please visit reclaimourwater.info for more details about qualification.

Inaugural Environmental Scholarship Awarded

Continued from Page 1

Credit: LIPBS

mitted to the environment on Long Island much the way that Robin was, and whose education may depend on available funding." Robin was a quiet but active champion of Pine Barrens preservation for the past 25 years.

The scholarship is the result of a Matching Funds Challenge provided by Nancy Rauch Douzinas of the Rauch Foundation, Nick Gabriel of the Greentree Foundation, and others who have pledged to match donations by the public.

The Long Island Community Foundation has assisted the Pine Barrens Society in establishing the scholarship. "We are honored to be working with the Pine Barrens Society



ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY: Dick and Robin Amper lead the charge to preserve the Long Island Pine Barrens in 1989.

on this investment in Long Island's environmental future," said David M. Okorn, Executive Director of the Foundation. "Robin was a positive force for Long Island Pine Barrens protection and this scholarship will not only keep her legacy alive, but also inspire others to follow in her footsteps," he added.

The Pine Barrens Society is working to establish an endowment fund that will continuously fund environmental scholarships for Long Island students in perpetuity. The Matching Funds Challenge, with donors' donations being doubled, is continuing through the end of the year. Those interested in donating to the scholarship fund should visit www.pinebarrens.org/scholarshipfund.