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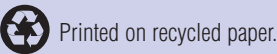
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A copy of the last annual report filed with the New York State Department of Law may be obtained by writing to NYS Attorney General's Charities Bureau, Attn: FOIL Officer, 120 Broadway, New York, NY, 10271 or may be obtained directly from the Long Island Pine Barrens Society, 2042 North Country Rd, Ste 103 Wading River, NY 11792



Credit: John Turner



NATURE IN BLOOM: Blue Lupine, a member of the pea family.

Pine Barrens TV

The Pine Barrens Society's television program airs on Cablevision/Altice Public Access. October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026. 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 9:00 PM
Tuesdays at 4:00 PM
Sundays at 11:00 AM

Town of East Hampton:

Tuesdays at 4:00 PM
Thursdays at 9:00 AM
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**LONG ISLAND
PINE BARRENS
SOCIETY**

Protecting Land & Water



today

A MAN ON A MISSION REMEMBERING RICHARD “DICK” AMPER

Last year, we said goodbye to Tom Casey, a long-time member of the Society’s Board of Directors, and to Bob McGrath, one of our co-founders. This year, we lost Dick Amper, the Society’s long-time executive director. Dick died on March 23, 2026, at the age of 81, following a brief hospital stay.

A powerhouse, a pitbull, a brilliant strategist, a champion of land preservation and water quality – superlatives often used to describe Dick. But it was his “take no prisoners,” can-do, goal-oriented philosophy that made a difference.

Dick’s background was communications design, not environmental science. But he was a quick study, appreciated the natural environment and was able to apply his skills to land preservation and water quality to the benefit of all Long Islanders.

When, in 1989, by invitation, Dick became the Society’s executive director, the Society was forever changed, from a small but noble grassroots organization that promoted preservation of the Pine Barrens to a forceful advocate for open space preservation and protection of our sole-source aquifer.

John Turner, a Society co-founder and current Board member put it, “Dick was a force of nature, fighting as a force for nature. At that time, as a society, we had a lot of really knowledgeable, highly motivated, well-meaning board members who are naturalists and environmentalists and things, but we didn’t have anyone with the expertise that Dick brought to the issue. Dick said, ‘Look, if you hire me, I will fundraise for my own salary.’ The rest is history.” John Cryan, another co-founder and Board member reflected, “Dick was a prodigious fund-raiser and a tireless campaigner. He built the society up into the most powerful environmental group on the Island.” (See more from Mr. Cryan on p. 3)

The process by which development occurred in Brookhaven, Riverhead and Southampton, was altered as well, following court battles and New York’s passing of the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act in 1993. Dick understood that to succeed, it was necessary for environmentalists and developers, working through government processes, to come to consensus. It wasn’t the environment vs. the economy; he saw it as the Long Island environment supporting economic growth. All agreed that protection of Long Island’s high quality water supply was paramount. Without clean water, the economy could not thrive.

As the Society’s current president, Elina Alayeva said, “Dick Amper was a giant of a man and a relentless advocate for the Long Island Pine Barrens. He redefined what environmental advocacy could look like, showing us how to be both principled and strategic, and combining deep commitment with a sharp, disciplined approach that proved essential in securing lasting protections for the Pine Barrens. His legacy lives on in the land he fought so hard to preserve, and in all of us who carry his work forward.”

And so, he collaborated with politicians, environmentalists and developers to produce a complex strategy for protecting the Pine Barrens. What emerged were two designated areas within the central Pine Barrens: the Core Area, where development was largely forbidden, and the Compatible Growth Area, where development was permitted if certain conditions were met.

Fred Thiele, former New York State assemblyman and Suffolk County legislator offered these comments. “I met Dick Amper during my freshman term in the Suffolk Legislature in 1988 when he lobbied for the preservation

of the watershed lands around Lake Panamoka. Soon after, he became the Executive Director of the Long Island Pine Barrens. For nearly 40 years, he was both a friend and colleague in the pursuit of a cleaner environment for Long Island. Dick Amper was the personification of the phrase ‘speaking truth to power’. Not everyone loved Dick Amper, but they couldn’t ignore him and they always had to give him grudging respect...There is no question

Credit: Nina Leonhardt



ADVOCACY PERSONIFIED: Dick and his book at Lake Panamoka, 2024.

that the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act would never have become law without his constant instigating. Because of his efforts, Long Island continues to have a pristine source of drinking water and a world-class preserve for both the environment and recreation pursuits. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his dedication to Long Island’s environment.”

But the mission was still incomplete. Legislation was in place and a commission was created to ensure compliance. Dick realized that to permanently protect the Pine Barrens, land had to be acquired. He began campaigns to do just that, with a goal of permanently protecting over 100,000 acres by 2020, a feat that was realized in 2016, four years ahead of schedule.

Bob DeLuca, executive director of Group for the East End said, “Dick was an inspiration – the heart of a lion and a brilliant strategist. His unique set of skills complimented Long Island’s environmental movement and made clean water and conservation household words all across the region. Dick’s success for the environment and for us all, is testimony to his passion, conviction and ceaseless quest for making government work for the people and the planet.”

Dick also realized a watchdog was required to prevent additional development where none was supposed to occur. This, along with

educating the public (including young people) about the Pine Barrens and the importance of advocacy, became crucial functions of the Society.

Kathleen Nasta, Dick’s co-host for the Pine Barrens cable TV show, said, “Dick was a person who made you believe in yourself, was encouraging, and was always finding teachable moments. I will treasure what I learned from him and some very deep “belly” laughs that we enjoyed!”

Ms. Alayeva, who worked for the Society after graduating from college, added, “He relished the opportunity to work with young people and treat them like they knew what they were doing...He would talk to anyone, there was no one he wouldn’t talk to, and as I think about my own advocacy work, those are the lessons that I’m taking away.”

After being invited to describe his advocacy work at numerous conferences devoted to land conservation, Dick decided to write a book as a guide to others considering such work. This was not to be a memoir; rather, it would demonstrate how grassroots organizing

can make a difference. *Saving Long Island: The David and Goliath Battle to Preserve the Pine Barrens* was published in 2022 by New Netherlands Press (NY).

Alan Singer, past president of the Society, summed up the man and his mission: “The preservation of the Long Island Pine Barrens, the opportunity to hike through its forests, fish its streams, and observe its wildlife is due primarily to the efforts of Dick Amper. The ability of Long Islanders to open their taps and obtain a glass of clean drinking water is largely due to the efforts of Dick Amper. He is owed a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid.”

*Visionary, colleague, mentor
and a dear friend.*

–Nina Leonhardt, Acting Executive Director, LIPBS

*A deep, profound, and very caring
friend. We shared a mission, sprinkled
with lots of jolly laughter and learning.*

–Suzanne Ruggles, Secretary, LIPBS



the thicket

Parasitic Plants

By John Turner

Mr. Turner is a member of the Board of Directors of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society.

When thinking of plants, one of the first things which likely crosses your mind is the fact that they’re green, a color due to the presence of chlorophyll, the pigment vital for photosynthesis. And yet, there are a handful of plants on Long Island that aren’t green and don’t make their own food by using sunlight and carbon dioxide. This fascinating group of plants is known as parasitic plants. They obtain necessary nutrients from other plants. There are more than 3,000 parasitic plant species globally and half a dozen or so present on Long Island. Two are found in the Long Island Pine Barrens.

Credit: Top-John Turner, Bottom-Wikimedia



REALITY CAN BE STRANGER THAN FICTION!: Indian Pipe and Pinesap, examples of parasitic plants.

the tree. The carbon works its way into the wood and downward to the roots where it is captured, first by the fungus and then by the Indian Pipe, a fact confirmed by measuring the radioactivity levels in the plant.

There are a few other parasitic plants found in Long Island’s forests which employ the same indirect way of obtaining nutrients by using mycorrhizal fungi as an intermediary. One of these is Pinesap (*Monotropa hypopithys*), a close relative of Indian Pipe. As the name suggests, Pinesap taps into fungi that have tapped into pine trees. Its appearance is similar to the Indian Pipe. The main difference is that Pinesap has multiple flowers per stem (as few as two to as many as twelve) and is pale yellow or cream in color, often with some red tinge compared to the ghost white of Indian Pipe. The Latin name hypopithys means “under the pines” and I’ve seen it in several places in the Long Island Pine Barrens, most recently in Robert Cushman Murphy County Park in Manorville, last year.

A mid-summer to late-autumn walk through a North Shore beech forest might reveal another common parasitic wildflower. This one taps into the roots of beech trees. Known as Beechdrops (*Epifagus virginiana*), with slender stems that rise as high as a foot above the leaves, its Latin name means “growing upon beech,” an apt description of the situation in which it grows. If you take a moment to look closely at a Beechdrops plant you’ll see the pretty tan-and-purple striped tubular flowers emanating from a light-brown colored stem. They are reminiscent of thin candy canes in coloration.

Beechdrops has a more robust-looking cousin growing in the same mixed deciduous forests of New York — Squawroot (*Conopholis americana*), also referred to as Bear Corn. A parasite of oaks, squawroot’s name stems from the fact it was used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes including treatment for menopause. I know of it from only two places here although it is common upstate.

Another parasitic species related to the prior two which has what is arguably the most beautiful flower is the one-flowered cancer-root (*Orobanche uniflora*). It has white five-petaled flowers with fine pink lines in the petals. It is found in a number of locations on Long Island. I’ve seen it at the Town of Brookhaven’s West Meadow Beach in Old Field.

Not all parasitic plants tap into their host through the intricately interwoven underground complex of roots, rootlets, hyphae, and mycelium. The Dodder (genus *Cuscuta*), an annual species of vine, serves as an excellent example.

A dodder plant starts out like other plants. A seed lands on suitable soil and germinates. The threadlike shoot grows upward but in the case of dodder it isn’t growing toward sunlight nor expending energy setting roots. Rather, it elongates, becoming a vine and, using chemosensory clues which remarkably involves being able to detect volatile organic chemicals emitted from suitable host plants, to orient in their direction.

Once it makes contact, dodder quickly coils repeatedly around the stem and, through the use of numerous haustoria (penetrating claw-like structures), penetrates the plant to which the dodder is anchored. At this point the vine is no longer connected to the soil. It gains all its sustenance from its hosts and continues to grow on and intertwine with adjacent plants.

The best-known parasitic species in the Pine Barrens is Indian Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*), a reference to the dried straight stalk similar in appearance to that of a Native American peace pipe. *Monotropa uniflora* is also descriptive, meaning “one turn, one flower,” highlighting the fact that the lone nodding flower turns upward after pollination.

This species is known by several other common names, including Ice Plant, due to the waxy-white appearance of its stem, almost devoid of leaves. Then there’s the fascinating, yet macabre, monikers: Dead Man’s Fingers and Corpse Plant, which are references to the plant’s stems that often penetrate the forest leaf litter in bunches of three or four, resembling the unburied hand of a deceased person (remember the horror film, *Carrie?*).

The fascination with this species doesn’t end with its common names. More interesting is its lifestyle. Indian Pipe taps into the abundant strands of fungal hyphae that form a dense and interwoven network in most forest soils. These mycorrhizal fungi, notably those strands that produce the common and familiar Russula and Lactarius mushrooms, tie into the roots of trees, mostly oaks, gaining nutrients from the trees. Indian Pipe turns the table on these mushrooms by tapping into their hyphae, made nutrient-rich by their exploitation of the tree.

How was this intimately interwoven subterranean relationship revealed? Through experiments involving the use of radioactive carbon dioxide gas. Plastic bags were placed around oak leaves and radioactive gas injected into the bag. This gas, a basic ingredient which drives photosynthesis, is readily assimilated by

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS NOTES

By Travis Cutter, Program Coordinator

The Best of the Rest Update

After Dick Amper’s passing, Town of Brookhaven Supervisor Panico wrote to Governor Hochul urging the preservation of another 600+ acres of Rose-Breslin-owned property, in Dick’s honor. This acreage is a core part of

Credit: John Turner

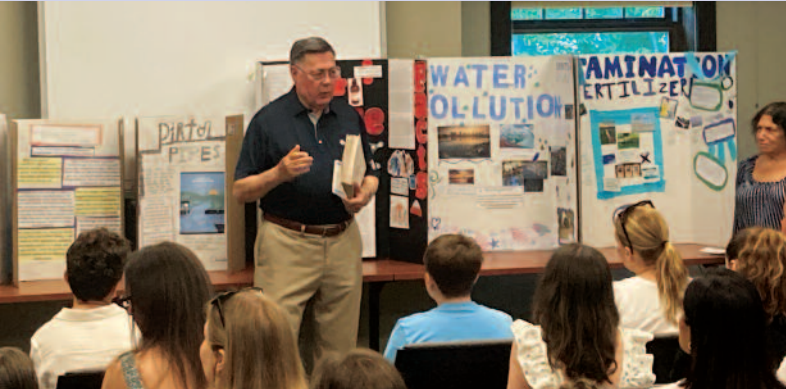


STEP 1: Already preserved.

and are eagerly anticipating the parcels’ preservation. There could be no greater tribute to Dick’s legacy.

Middle School Programs 2026: Welcome Longwood!

Credit: Travis Cutter



MAKING A DIFFERENCE: County Executive Romaine addresses students and their families at the awards celebration.

This year, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society’s middle school programs expanded yet again, incorporating students from the Longwood School District into both “Middle School Kids Go to College” and “Inspiring Youth to Protect Their Environment.” Longwood students attended the hike to Fish Thicket Preserve, assisted with clean-up efforts and participated in a letter writing campaign to express their concerns about the Brookhaven Landfill. Students from the Patchogue-Medford School District once more crafted dozens of interesting, informative research projects surrounding issues of water quality and waste management and were treated to a talk from Dr. Christopher Gobler at Stony Brook University. At the final awards celebration on June 6th, County Executive Ed Romaine joined us to recognize the students for their remarkable efforts. Next year, we’re looking forward to further integrating the Longwood School District into our programs and continuing to guide the next generation of Long Island’s scientists and environmental stewards.

“Life in the Pine Barrens”

Credit: Travis Cutter



LOOK DOWN: Wintergreen is a subtle understory plant found throughout the Pine Barrens.

Late last year, the Society launched a new social media feature called “Life in the Pine Barrens.” These short videos highlight a single species of plant or animal, which can be found throughout Long Island’s premier ecosystem. Recently, the Society premiered a new episode of its TV show, bearing the same title as the online feature, which highlights a diverse collection of species. LIPBS Board Member Suzanne Ruggles and Cofounder John Turner provided insightful narration covering species as far reaching as the Atlantic White Cedar, Wintergreen, and Eastern Painted Turtles. You can find this episode – and all other episodes of our show – archived on our YouTube channel.

founder's
corner

Dick Amper: Anatomy of a Legacy

By John Cryan

Mr. Cryan is one of the founders of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society.

Dick Amper has left this world. He has also left behind a deep and lasting legacy on Long Island.

It is a living legacy, over 100,000 acres in size, and still growing. It is a type of legacy few people have aspired to leave, and fewer still have succeeded at creating.

Credit: Scott Ross



THE DYNAMIC DUO: Dick and Robin Amper at the Society's 40th Anniversary Gala.

Dick did not do this alone. Key to understanding how he managed to do what he did is to start by acknowledging the thousands of other players Dick interacted with, in an intricate ballet that spanned almost four decades. Many, but by no means all, are or were members of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society.

Dick did not create the Society. He was invited by its nascent board to come onboard as our first Executive Director. The three founders, all field naturalists, had decided that if the Society was going to have a chance to save what was left of the Pine Barrens, it would be by 'professionalizing' the Society. That meant legally incorporating and finding a leader who could enter Teddy Roosevelt's arena of political combat on behalf of not a person, or a group of people, but all the people. Someone who fully understood what was at stake, and had the chops to fight for it, incessantly, and win. A heavyweight.

Dick clearly, from the start, was that person. We knew from the outset that we were in powerful hands.

Dick, by the way, never felt that way. This was a deep source of his strength. Another was his background in public relations. He had followed his father, who had worked for Governor Rockefeller, into that profession.

But the Society had other strengths as well. They were embodied in history, primarily the history of an earlier battle to save the Albany Pine Bush. Out of that decades-long campaign had come a series of court decisions tailor-made for application to the far larger landscape of the Long Island Pine Barrens.

One of our biggest strengths, which paradoxically was also a huge weakness, was water. We, here on this fair island, live on top of the water we drink. We are one of the largest, most concentrated and developed communities in the world doing this crazy thing. We do it because Long Island is one of the most serendipitous places in the world to live and raise a family. Even in its vastly more degraded state now, it still is.

Dick had a visceral sense of how important that simple fact was. His beloved wife Robin contracted breast cancer on Long Island. Suspicions ran high about the connections between polluted drinking water being pulled from under

everybody's houses, roads, stores and factories, and the high cancer rates across the Island.

There was only one place that was still recharging uncontaminated rainwater. That was the Long Island Pine Barrens, which also happened to contain the biggest deposit of rare and endangered organisms left in New York State. That's saying a lot in a large state with two huge, world-renowned forest preserves, among many other amazing, unique and beautiful gifts of Nature.

Dick knew in his heart that combining the Transcendentalist view of unspoiled wilderness with the hard-headed, practical 'water argument,' he, and the Society, could convince the people of Long Island to back the Society's charge to preserve the Pine Barrens. In addition, he came to learn, quickly, that we had an ace in the hole, a series of court precedents we could build a mega-suit upon that would do the impossible – stop every development planned in the Pine Barrens. And there were hundreds of them.

The suit was constructed in record time. We relied heavily on the earlier legal work in the far smaller Albany Pine Bush, contacting attorneys there and down here to expand the arguments and documents used so successfully in the Albany cases to include the crucial drinking water issue along with the ecological case for the far larger Long Island Pine Barrens. Dick and Robin ran this operation out of their house. They spent enormous amounts of energy working with many allied public groups, who provided information and affidavits in support of the Society's efforts.

When the suit dropped, late in 1989, all hell broke loose. Almost 250 pending projects involving thousands of acres across the Pine Barrens were frozen. Dick and others began receiving death threats. Dick went to the media and revealed them, and got the malign forces to back off. The same happened with threats of so-called 'slapp-suits' (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation),' which were commonly used by powerful interests to harass opponents. Dick was fearless, and so, therefore, were we.

Credit: LIPBS



IN THE BEGINNING: Steve Englebright, Dick, Ken LaValle and Tom DiNapoli press for Pine Barrens Preservation.

The suit took four years to run through the court system. It lost at the lowest level, then won at the first appellate level, then headed to the highest court, the Court of Appeals, for final disposition. During this time Dick lead a back-and-forth battle of words and images in all the available media (there was no internet, in the sense we know it now, then), while at the same time running back-channel discussions with developers, their

organizations, and politicians of all stripes and parties about what it would take to resolve the matter by actually preserving the Pine Barrens, while funneling development into places that were already partially developed and therefore degraded as natural habitat and clean groundwater recharge areas.

By keeping this cause front and center for that length of time, Dick ensured the public was aware and stayed supportive of the Society's legal effort. Politicians were aware of it as well, both locally and up in Albany. This would prove crucial to forging the solution that led to the Pine Barrens Preserve.

In 1993, the Court of Appeals punted. It declared that the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) law did not have

Credit: Scott Ross



ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL: Dick at the 40th Anniversary Gala, with Society co-founders Bob McGrath, John Turner and me.

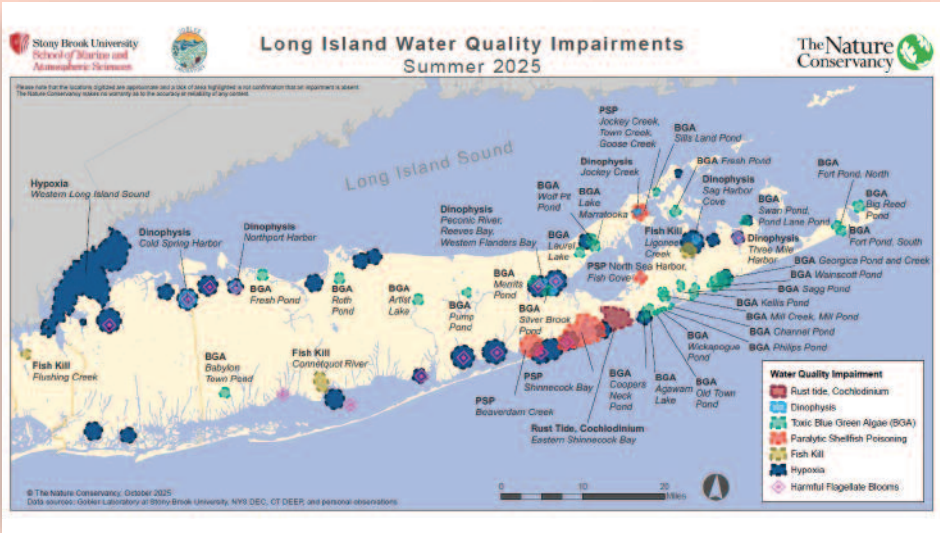
the specificity to apply to such a large bundle of applications over such a large area, even though nothing in the law forbade it. Instead, the Court remanded the case to the State Legislature for consideration of amending the law.

This was a huge disappointment, but Dick, and we, the Society, were ready to pivot. And so, Dick declared we would simply challenge each application, one at a time, using all the same arguments we'd made en masse in the original suit. That brought everyone Dick had been talking to while the suit went on, to the table, or at least into the lobby outside the room. All the politicians and developers finally had been herded together to solve a real crisis on and under the ground, but only made urgent by Dick, backed up by the Society, allied civic and environmental groups, and the overwhelming voice of the people of Long Island in favor of preserving the Pine Barrens.

The rest, as they say, is history. Dick, as his last act, and with help from me and others who lived this story, completed his personal memoir, *Saving Long Island: The David-and-Goliath Battle to Preserve the Pine Barrens*, just in time before his retiring and passing. If you take the time to read it, you will hear Dick's strong voice ring out once more. And in that powerful instrument, you will hear the stories not of Dick, but of all the other people he interacted with and relied upon to perform his particular magic.

This is the crucial takeaway from Dick's telling. There is absolutely no ego there. It is all about others. Dick Amper, the once-powerful head who built a tiny naturalists' group into the greatest environmental juggernaut Long Island will ever see, put everyone forward, ahead of himself. He made friends out of some of his most dedicated opponents. This truly humble man rose up and showed us how it is done.

SBU Reports on 2025 Water Impairments Study



“NO TIME TO WASTE”: The 2025 Gobler map proves the point.

On April 24, 2026 at Stony Brook’s Southampton campus, Dr. Christopher Gobler (School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences) presented his lab’s annual report, “State of the Bays: No Time to Waste,” which identified the findings after studying the Island’s waters during the summer of 2025. There were serious algal blooms and “rust tides” (see map), mostly caused by the nitrogen contamination that continues to emanate from our legacy cesspool and septic systems. Our heavy use of nitrogen-based fertilizers also contributes to this problem.

The bad news this year: some of these blooms appeared earlier than ever and in small creeks and inlets that were never before affected. The good news: several areas of Long Island Sound did not suffer from hypoxia (low dissolved oxygen), which leads to anorexic conditions that harm the ecosystem. Fish depend on oxygen and cannot survive in such conditions.

Gobler stressed the importance of installing IA systems, including one developed at SBU, to replace the legacy wastewater systems to cut the nitrogen problem. He also explained that generous grants are available to assist the homeowners in covering the cost of these new systems. **Follow this link to view his talk on YouTube.** <https://tinyurl.com/2sa4uzh6>