



North Fork Views

March 2015

Clean Water — It's a Positive

Last year, the Sweeney/LaValle *Long Island Water Quality Control Act*, passed the Assembly but the Senate failed to act on it. It wasn't the perfect solution. Few things are. But we need meaningful solutions and legislation which address the myriad of problems we — homeowners, business owners, farmers, baymen and tourists — are facing to be written, supported, funded and enacted.

As Time Goes By

Since the bill's demise, many different individuals, organizations and coalitions have been regrouping, re-examining what went wrong, looking at new data and drafting proposed solutions for the public's and public officials' consideration.

- **Water for Long Island**, a group headed by Dr. Sarah Meyland, has adapted an approach used in other New York counties to protect and manage their water supplies, in our case, the aquifers which lie beneath Long Island.
- **The Long Island Farm Bureau** has proposed and received initial state funding for a nitrogen management and reduction program available to all Long Island agricultural operations.
- **The Peconic Baykeeper** is developing an approach to improve management of our natural resources to reduce negative impacts on our drinking and surface waters, and rebuild our marine systems so finfish and shellfish populations can recover and be self-sufficient for the benefit of both recreational and commercial fishermen.

All of this action is good. It's a positive step. And that's the key to future success in our fight for clean water — we all must be positive.

Being Positive

What we mean by "positive" is that as these and other plans come up for public scrutiny and debate, they deserve our attention, our time and our positive support...each and every one of them.

Some people have linked the failure of last year's *Long Island Water Quality Control Act* to the fact that many people and organizations wrote to their elected representatives about what they didn't like about the bill. They were quick to condemn the negative aspects but few either wrote about what they liked about the bill — and there were important, positive aspects about it — and even fewer offered their own proposals. This negative feedback made it easy for some politicians to back away and do nothing.

So this year, let's make a pact. We want, need and deserve clean water, today and into the future. We need action. So as these and other proposals come before the public, please write to your district representatives and be positive — tell them what you like and support about the proposal. And instead of decrying what you don't like, present your ideas on how to improve the items you feel may be lacking. And be sure to copy your local environmental groups on your letters so they can also support you.

Clean water is a right...but it's going to take some work to make sure our rights and our waters are protected. So let's be active and be supportive of others' efforts. Be strong and above all, **be positive** .

Flyboarding — Sink or Swim?



At press time, Riverhead is considering a new Town code to address a popular yet noisy and environmentally disruptive activity introduced last year on the Peconic River...flyboarding.

Both the NFEC and Defend H2O, headed by Kevin McAllister, have been listening to neighbor concerns about noise and addressing the damage this activity can do to the Peconic River, a waterway already listed as impaired by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. In letters and presentations during the public comment period, the NFEC and Defend H2O noted that the high-pressure water jets in the shallows of the river would not only stir up bottom sediments adding to problems of low dissolved oxygen levels, but also kill wide swaths of plankton, including finfish and shellfish larvae.

The Town Board listened to concerns and drafted a new code which, if passed, will place this activity out of the river, outside of the main boating channel and 300 feet from any shoreline or structure, which will reduce environmental damage, lessen the noise for area residents and put the activity further into the bay where it will be safer and less intrusive and disruptive for all.

Do You Want to Make a Difference?

The NFEC is seeking out volunteers and Board members. With so much going on around the North Fork and the region, we need more help in covering town meetings, civic meetings and discussing what the NFEC should do to most help the community.

Our monthly Board meetings are typically held on the 2nd Monday of each month at our offices in Mattituck. They are open to all. So why not attend a meeting or call the office — 631-298-8880 — and indicate your desire to fix the problems and be part of the solution.



Plum Island — The Clock is Ticking



In January, the NFEC attended what was billed as, “the first of many” community forums held on Plum Island. Attended by over 60 people representing environmental organizations, government agencies and elected representatives from across NY and CT, the forum was a good start to an open dialogue about lab operations. But what was clear by the end is that the clock is ticking on the eventual sale of the island and the closing of the lab.

The Forum

Great information presented about current lab operations and advances made in protecting food supplies around the world. An after-meeting tour of the island was also offered. But the end of the forum only briefly touched upon what many had come for — an overview on the final days of the lab.

The timeline remains unchanged. By 2023, the government is expected to sell the island and close the lab. The Bush administration tied the sale of the island to the building of the new lab in Kansas, the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) — which is still not fully funded. But a bad policy decision then makes even less sense now. Sixty million dollars are being put into lab upgrades. Add to that over \$75 million funded after 9/11 and you have a sizeable investment. And that doesn't even cover the tens of millions of dollars needed to clean up the island, close the lab and transfer material to Kansas. Why not keep the lab open, save the 400 jobs and get a return on these monies?

The Time to Act is Now

The Preserve Plum Island Coalition, of which the NFEC is a member, continues to meet with elected representatives at all levels of government to find ways to protect these jobs and preserve the over 600 acres of unique and important shoreline, woodlands and wetlands, unlike any other on the east coast, for the benefit of the flora and fauna which call Plum Island home. But we need help from all corners — business owners, civic associations, chambers of commerce and more — to make sure we're heard, loud and clear. **To sign up your business or organization as a coalition member, please email the NFEC at: office@NFEC1.org** The clock is ticking.



Peconic Landing — An Opportunity Missed

There is no argument that Peconic Landing has been a positive for the community, both in terms of the professional care it provides locally but also the jobs and economic benefit it brings. But with its recent expansion, Peconic Landing missed a great opportunity to be a good neighbor, as well.

Hook-up to the Greenport Waste Water Treatment Plant

As part of its expansion plans, Peconic Landing struck a deal to hook up its wastewater with the Greenport wastewater treatment facility. As the NFEC pointed out in letters to Southold Town, this was not a good solution. It simply moved our wastewater and nitrogen pollution problems from the land to L.I. Sound.

We pump tens of thousands of gallons of water from the water table -- whether it be private wells or via Suffolk County Water Authority -- and then route the used water through the wastewater treatment plant and dump the fresh water effluent into L.I. Sound where areas of hypoxia — lack of dissolved oxygen — have been reported near the outfall. If we are to turn to the wastewater treatment facility as a "solution," then we should treat the water to a level where it can be re-used for irrigation.

Just look west to Riverhead. Its plant upgrades will allow the effluent to be used to irrigate the Indian Island Golf Course beginning in 2016. So in addition to reducing the amount of treated fresh water being pumped into the Peconic Bay, the golf course will **not** be pumping millions of gallons of water from our limited fresh water sources for irrigation. And the grass and vegetation on the course absorb the nitrogen in the treated water, meaning less goes into our drinking and marine waters, and greatly reduces the need for added fertilizers -- a win-win. Greenport — and Peconic Landing — could have and should have done the same.

Being a Good and Responsible Neighbor

In its letters, the NFEC suggested that Peconic Landing build a community wastewater treatment system on site and not only hook up the new units but take many of the existing buildings on site off of traditional septic systems, the main source of our water woes on the East End. This would have reduced the amount of nitrogen going into our ground water and L.I. Sound, and the highly-treated effluent could have been used for irrigation on the Peconic Landing property further reducing draws of water from our limited supplies.

This is the new reality. You want to build on Long Island, you need to spend a little more to do what's right to protect our waters. The Towns, Villages, developers and property owners all need to step up and do the right thing. We're saddened that Southold, Greenport and Peconic Landing opted not to do so.

Calendar Corner

April

Monday, April 13 6:30 PM
NFEC Public Board Meeting
NFEC Offices, Mattituck

May

Monday, May 11 6:30 PM
NFEC Public Board Meeting
NFEC Offices, Mattituck



NORTH FORK VIEWS - Snapshots

A periodic newsletter, published by:

North Fork Environmental Council
12700 Main Rd, PO Box 799
Mattituck, NY 11952

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The NFEC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which relies on the support of its members, sponsors, volunteers and other concerned members of the community. Its directors and officers are unpaid and volunteer their time .

Is This the “Heritage” We Want to Leave For Our Children?

After years of legal fights and community opposition, the Heritage project in Cutchogue hamlet center is back and weaving through the Southold Town planning process. And with what’s been shared in initial site plans and the Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS), the early signs are not good.

The Basics

Sitting on 46.2 acres north of the U.S. Post Office, the project is made up of 170 condo units where at least one resident must be age 55 or older. There is a community center, swimming pool and two tennis courts. Half of the site is being set aside as “open space” sitting in the middle of the buildings.

These 170 units would use 22,500 gallons of water per day. From spring through fall, add another 38,000 gallons per day for irrigation. And that doesn’t include the swimming pool water usage.

The newly revised site plans now propose using 36 standard septic rings to be placed around the outer perimeter of the property to handle the development’s wastewater. Why build a new development and use a centuries’ old method of wastewater treatment...the same type of system that has created our current water issues? Is this good for the community?

Environmental Considerations

The initial DEIS was full of inconsistencies and misrepresentations. We know for a fact that current septic systems are a major source of nitrogen pollution in our ground (drinking) water and surface (lakes and bay) waters. Yet the DEIS states that the impact of this form of wastewater treatment would be “positive” on the environment. How absurd.

And being an old farming area, there are pockets of arsenic and mercury on the property. The solution? Scrape the topsoil off and bury it on site. But what happens when 60,500 gallons of water are added to the property each day? Where will those contaminants flow? Neighbors’ wells?

The plan also calls for clear cutting all 46.2 acres and then replanting the borders and open space. The DEIS also says that this will have no impact on wildlife. With native bird, garter snake, box turtle and wildlife populations on the decline, as noted by the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, this loss of native, natural habitat and mowing will have a lasting negative impact.

What About the Water?

All of the 60,500 gallons of daily water use will come from the Suffolk County Water Authority system. That means 60,500 gallons per day are being added to the ground. What will that water do?

Besides the arsenic and mercury, some area private wells are also tainted with the legacy pesticide temic. With all of this added water, the underground flow of all contaminants will change from today’s predictable flows. That means some unaffected wells may become afflicted by different pollutants. And more pollutants may be forced into Wickham Creek.

And doesn’t it seem unbelievable that with all of our water woes the project will use over 60% more water on its landscaping and swimming pool than is needed by its residents? One solution is for the Heritage to put in a community wastewater treatment plant, keeping the 22,500 gallons of wastewater out of the ground and then using the treated water for on-site irrigation. The reduces potential underground flow problems and reduces the amount of water used. That would be the epitome of being a good neighbor.

Not In Keeping With the Community

Is this type of housing needed? Yes, but only if properly planned and integrated with the community. For all of the time the developers have had to fine tune their plans to complement the community, their initial filings and plans have come up short. The neighbors and all of Southold deserve more and better. When you use a traffic study of one day in the off season to say that this project will have no impact on hamlet traffic, you know the project is not trying to be on the up and up with the community.

There will be revised plans, a revised DEIS and public hearings yet to come. Maybe some of these gross errors can be addressed. But that can only happen with the public’s participation in the process. Attend the meetings. Speak out. If these issues aren’t addressed here and now, you may find them in your hamlet, even next door to you, next.

Contributions to “Save Cutchogue” can be made online at: <http://www.groupfortheeastend.org/ways-to-give/donate-now/> or by sending a check to the Group for the East End, PO Box 1792, Southold, NY 11971 with the notation: Save Cutchogue Fund.

Northville Terminal — A Community Under Fire

If you’ve driven Sound Avenue at all over the past decades, amongst the bucolic farmland and quiet country homes, you’ve seen the oil storage tank farm at Northville. With few changes over the years, the new owners of the facility are looking to change not just their operations but their impact on the community.



A Gasoline Blending and Trucking Operation

United Riverhead Terminal (URT) is proposing the installation of two 19,000 gallon tanks for ethanol and reintroducing the storage of up to 154,000 barrels of gasoline; a use which was discontinued at the terminal over 13 years ago. With the reintroduction of the storage of gasoline, URT is effectively applying for a non-conforming use, not allowed in the town Code, and in an area of Riverhead that is zoned strictly as residential.

It’s the position of the NFEC that the storage of gasoline and ethanol, and the operations of mixing these substances on-site and trucking them out from URT has the potential for dramatic impact on the community and the environment, including:

- gasoline spills in the process of unloading from ships
- leakage of gasoline from the aged storage tanks, or from the mixing and truck filling process
- an increased fire hazard
- added truck traffic, causing both congestion and air quality issues along Sound Avenue, a road not intended for such use

If this wasn’t enough, URT has been less than forthright in its presentations to the Town of Riverhead and the public, so far. A Town meeting set for March 18 should add some light to this proposed operation and provide some answers to questions from the community. We encourage all Riverhead residents to attend.

An Unneeded and Unwanted Expansion

These proposed changes affect the entire North Fork. There are many concerns which need close examination by the Town including a comprehensive traffic study and analysis of critical road intersections, particularly at the intersection of Penny’s Road, Sound Avenue and Northville Turnpike, as well as the ability of the Riverhead Fire and Police Departments to respond to potential emergency situations at the terminal or on town roadways.

The residents of Northville need and deserve support from the Town as well as other community groups and members to stave off this unwanted expansion. Let your voices be heard. Write to the Town to express your thoughts on this matter.

“Fore” Cheers for Riverhead Greens

Riverhead is taking steps other Long Island communities should copy. In upgrading its wastewater treatment plant, it will allow the effluent to be used to irrigate the Indian Island Golf Course beginning in 2016. This is an important step in addressing our water woes.

Currently, treated wastewater, along with hundreds of pounds of nitrogen, are being pumped into Peconic Bay daily. By improving the level of nitrogen removal and using treated water to irrigate the golf course, the vegetation on the course will absorb the nitrogen in the treated water, meaning less goes into marine waters — about one ton less nitrogen annually — and reduces the need for fertilizers. In addition, the golf course will not be pumping 60-plus million gallons of water from our limited fresh water sources for irrigation each year.

So Riverhead is conserving fresh water supplies, re-using treated water for irrigation purposes, removing fresh water and pollutants from entering the Peconic estuary, and helping to improve the quality of the water we drink and swim and fish in. We need more such investment in our waters and our future across all of Long Island.

Community Preservation Fund — Growing and Growing Up

Who says that the voting public doesn't know what's good for them, their community and the future? In 1998, voters approved a referendum creating the Community Preservation Fund (CPF), a program designed to preserve open space and farmland in the five East End towns, and thus protect our waters and our way of life. Recently, the CPF passed an historic milestone — **one billion dollars!**

How the CPF Works

Money designated for the CPF is generated by a one-time 2% tax on real estate sales of both homes and vacant property in the five East End towns. Varying by town, either the first \$150,000 or \$250,000 of the sale price is exempt, and first-time homebuyers in all five towns, except Riverhead, are exempt from the tax. CPF funds generated in each of the five towns are then used by that Town to purchase either property or development rights in order to protect open space.

These protected lands are critical in serving as natural filters for rain water and recharge zones for drinking water supplies. These actions help to maintain not only clean drinking water and, thus, cleaner marine waters, but they also help make agricultural operations more viable and maintain open space, rural vistas and natural habitat for wildlife. The CPF has been an amazing success story. But there's more to tell.

Growing Up and Changing With the Times

Since its inception, the CPF program has remained relatively unchanged. In 2006, voters in the five East End towns approved a referendum to extend the collection of the tax from 2020 to 2030. But there are more changes on the horizon...if voters agree.

NYS Assemblyman Fred Thiele Jr. (I-Sag Harbor) recently proposed a number of changes to the CPF, changes supported by many elected officials on the State, County and local level. The major changes are:

- **Extend the CPF tax to the year 2050**

The 20-year extension from 2030 to 2050 is critical. From 2015 to 2030, conservative estimates place additional CPF revenues at \$1.2 billion. Extending that period to 2050 could see upwards of an additional \$2 billion above that.

These added funds are needed, especially for towns like Riverhead, which heavily borrowed against anticipated revenues to buy open space and development rights early on, to refill the coffers for future use. The added years will also allow Riverhead to refinance its service debt and reduce its budget shortfalls due to this debt repayment.

- **Use a portion of CPF funds to finance needed changes to private wastewater treatment systems and other clean water projects**

How we handle our waste water is archaic, at best. Whether in-ground septic systems or municipal treatment systems, we need new technology to address our problems. And that costs money. Using a portion of CPF monies, perhaps 10%, to fund municipal system upgrades or to fund development and purchase incentives for new residential systems makes sense. We just need to make sure that the ways CPF funds can be used for clean water projects are clearly defined and closely tracked.

- **Extend the program to a sixth township — Brookhaven**

Brookhaven is late to the game but they need CPF participation in order to protect open space in the face of continued development pressures. The Town has made great strides in trying to address water quality issues, especially around the Carmans River, but more needs to be done and joining the other five East End towns in the CPF program is an important step.

Some Concerns Remain

Because of the wide difference in real estate prices across the East End, each year the towns of Southampton and East Hampton collect far greater funds through the CPF program than the other towns. Because of this huge difference and the common goal of clean water, we believe some discussions should take place on pooling some of the monies between all of the towns so that meaningful progress can take place on clean water projects.

We need new ideas such as Assemblyman Thiele's. They deserve discussion and support in their fair and final forms. But because the monies in question are so great, we also need to take care that they are used and not abused. Voters have shown their wisdom before and we're sure they'll do it again.

Dumping Dredge Spoils in L.I. Sound

The EPA continues to study a plan to dump dredge spoils from Connecticut harbors in the L.I. Sound off of Greenport and Fishers Island shores. Despite ocean dump sites being open and available, the EPA wants to use these spots for long-term dumping because it's cheaper.

Such dredge spoils often contain heavy metals, pesticide residue and other pollutants which can affect finfish and shellfish. Put in the relatively shallow L.I. Sound, these spoils will create "dead spots" — areas of low dissolved oxygen — which also affect marine life.

The NFEC asks you to attend local EPA meetings and speak out against the use of local waters for another state's dredge spoils.

The Affordable Housing Argument

Recently, plans for an affordable housing project in Mattituck were submitted. The NFEC spoke out against it. Not because such housing isn't needed but because it went against current zoning and the Town's comprehensive plan.

Last year, the Town went to each hamlet and explained current zoning and the reasons behind it. One key point was that affordable housing should be spread out across the Town and no one hamlet should bear an unfair amount of such housing. With one affordable housing project already in Mattituck and across the street from this recent proposal, this was a good proposal but it was in the wrong place.

The Town's role is not to change zoning to make someone's project viable. There are plenty of properties where such a project could work. It's the developer's responsibility to make the project work within the zoning **and** within the needs of and desires of the community.

Protecting Our Drinking Water

The group, *Water for Long Island*, headed by Dr. Sarah Meyland of NYIT — a leading expert on our aquifers — has been working for over four years on a plan to better protect and manage the three aquifers — the Glacial, the Magothy and the Lloyd — which lie beneath us and serve as our sole sources of drinking water here on Long Island.

NYS Starts to Fund Water Projects

Recently, NYS announced a commitment of \$150 million to help improve sewage treatment in Nassau County. The money is earmarked to help reduce nitrogen levels in the Bay Park Wastewater Plant's discharge into nearby Reynolds Channel. This is a good start in helping restore water quality in the adjacent bay. But more needs to be done.



The Bergen Park Sewage Treatment Plant in West Babylon, which treats much of western Suffolk's wastewater, also has no nitrogen reduction processes in place. This is also true of many of

the smaller municipal systems which discharge their effluent into L.I. Sound. Whether discharges are directed into the ocean, the Sound, our bays or rivers, **ALL** systems should be upgraded to reduce the amount of nitrogen and other pollutants discharged in our rivers and marine waters.

Agriculture's Plan Takes Root

Advancing efforts to reduce the amount of nitrogen and pesticides migrating into our ground and marine waters, the L.I. Farm Bureau, on behalf of a broad coalition of agricultural groups and government agencies, requested that upstate farm management programs and grants be extended to L.I. These programs will allow for training of technicians and research proposals on new technologies to ensure success.



Suffolk County's Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension's Agricultural Stewardship Program are now working with local farmers to implement best management practices — such as nutrient management systems including the use of slow-release fertilizers. Additional funding is expected in 2015 to include more farms and help protect our waters.

The plan calls for a non-government, non-commercial entity to coordinate and protect ground water use island wide. Much like the river compacts in place upstate, this "aquifer compact" would be an objective and balanced approach, based on science. The NFEC admires this no-nonsense, proven approach to water supply management and hopes that you will research it and support it as it comes up for public comment.

Save What's Left!

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The Changing Landscape of the North Fork

County Road 58 in Riverhead is unrecognizable and, in some opinions, quite deplorable. Instead of protecting the Peconic River, more building and more pollution is proposed along its banks. Sound Avenue is seeing more and more heavy truck traffic on this scenic rural road. And natural phenomena, such as greater tidal flooding, beach erosion and destruction of our woodlands, are all changing the face of the North Fork.

Still, we have so much for which to be thankful, to protect and fight. Won't you help?

The NFEC, the North Fork and your neighbors need your help through membership, donations or volunteering of your time. We can't speak out against bad development decisions, poor land use or lack of protection of our resources and our way of life without you, your voice and your support. Please join us in fighting the good fight.

Snapshots



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