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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Protectors began fifty-one years ago with the fight that helped turn Clay Pit Ponds into a 265-acre state preserve. We are still working parcel by parcel—pushing to add 32 acres of woods and wetlands to Arden Heights Woods, expand Seaside Wildlife Nature Park, and protect the serpentine ridge surrounding the Serpentine Arts and Nature Commons.

But our responsibility to protect Staten Island does not end at the land's edge. The Raritan Bay is an essential part of our borough's ecological identity, supporting wildlife, sustaining recreation, and connecting our shoreline to the wider harbor estuary. This fall, one of our most consequential efforts to defend that environment is unfolding not in a park or preserve, but in federal court.

For nearly a decade, Protectors of Pine Oak Woods has opposed the Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) pipeline. The project would require trenching through more than 17 miles of seabed in New York waters, disturbing habitat and resuspending sediment containing contaminants such as mercury and copper.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) denied the NESE's water-quality certification applications in 2019 and 2020, finding that Williams Companies, the owner of the Transco pipeline and its extensions which include the NESE project, had not demonstrated that construction would comply with state water-quality standards.

However, in November 2025, the DEC reversed course and approved an essentially unchanged project. Protectors joined Raritan Baykeeper, Food & Water Watch, Sierra Club, Surfrider Foundation, and the Natural Resources Defense Council in challenging that decision in the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Oral argument took place on June 18 at the Thurgood Marshall United States Courthouse. That morning, Lower Manhattan hosted a very New York doubleheader. Outside, crowds gathered for the Knicks' long-awaited championship parade; inside the courthouse, our attorneys from Earthjustice were making a different kind of full-court press on behalf of clean water and Raritan Bay.

Our case asks the court to vacate DEC's approval and send the matter back to the agency. Among the central issues is DEC's reliance on dramatically revised hard-clam data submitted after the public-comment period had closed. The public and independent scientists were never given an opportunity to examine or respond to that information. The approval also deferred important decisions about dredging, water-quality monitoring, and mitigation to future plans that had not yet been developed or made available for public review.

We are now awaiting the decision of the court. Whatever the outcome, Protectors' participation ensures that Staten Islanders—and the birds, fish, horseshoe crabs, shellfish, and other wildlife that cannot speak for themselves—have a voice in this process.

I am grateful to our attorneys, our partner organizations, our board, and every Protectors member who makes this work possible. Protecting our natural heritage sometimes means caring for a trail or removing invasive plants. At other times, it means carrying Staten Island's concerns into a federal courtroom. Both are essential parts of our organization's mission.

Thank you for standing with us and for helping keep Staten Island—and the waters surrounding it—wild, healthy, and worthy of protection.

José Ramirez-Garofalo
President, Protectors of Pine Oak Woods

PROTECTOR'S MISSION

Protectors of Pine Oak Woods is committed to increasing the stewardship of Staten Island's existing parkland, Bluebelt corridors and nature preserves and to continuing the effort to preserve Staten Island's natural areas. Protectors advocates for protection and preservation by educating our members, the general public and elected officials at all levels of government through meetings, workshops, walks, articles, newsletters and sponsorship of environmental education.

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BULLETIN

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Below are excerpts from Ellen Pratt's chronicle of the fifty-year history of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods and include sections on "The Wetland Wars of the 1980's" and "Saving Mt. Loretto." With stories published in past bulletins, we will continue with the story of PPOW in future publications.

PROTECTORS OF PINE OAK WOODS: 50 YEARS OF GREEN

THE WETLAND WARS OF THE 1980'S

In 1981 the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) began to implement the Freshwater Wetlands Act. They did an initial mapping of the most obvious wetlands on Staten Island. These were designated for protection under the Freshwater Wetlands Act.

The development community assumed that Staten Island's wetlands had been identified. They assumed other wetland areas were developable. R. Randy Lee purchased many wetland areas on Staten Island. He was dismayed when DEC started a more thorough mapping of wetlands in 1983. Protectors, led by Ellen Pratt and Dick Buegler, rose to defend these newly mapped wetlands. There were articles in the Staten Island Advance about the wetland controversy. Mr. Lee attempted to infer that small property owners and homeowners were being unfairly affected. Protectors began a project of describing each of the designated wetlands in reports which were supplied to DEC as evidence of community support. Carlton Beil faithfully visited most of the wetlands on Staten Island. He reported to Ellen Pratt, who typed the reports. A team of fifteen other Protectors described wetland plants and the wetland itself.

Protectors, again led by Ellen Pratt, notified homeowners who lived near wetlands of the value of the wetlands and what was at stake so they could protect their interests. Scores of Islanders flocked to Protectors. There were five bus trips to the Capitol in Albany. Wetland advocates visited Staten Island legislators and stood at the entrance to the legislature with a twenty-foot sign saying "Staten Islanders Love Their Wetlands".

Environmental Advocates, a statewide organization, named Ellen Pratt "Environmentalist of the Year." That prompted the Staten Island Advance to nominate Ellen as a Woman of Achievement in 1987.

To handle the controversy and the anger of the developers and property owners who had seen their properties designated unbuildable, the State activated the Freshwater Wetlands Appeals Board which met on Staten Island for three years, 1984, 1985 and 1986. Most of the appeals were denied except for a few.

SAVING MOUNT LORETTO

"I've been looking for you." That's what David Jaffe said to Ellen Pratt at the concourse of the State Office Building. He explained that he wanted me, Dick Buegler and Dominick Durso to come to a meeting at the Mount Loretto administrative office the following week. We met with David Jaffe, Senator John J. Marchi's counsel, and David Brown, real estate director for the Archdiocese of New York. They explained that Senator Marchi was going to get a grant from the state legislature of fifty thousand dollars for the Trust for Public Land to negotiate with the

...continued on next page. 3

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH PPOW...

ORGANIZATION

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FACEBOOK:

Protectors of Pine Oak Woods

WEBSITE:

www.siprotectors.org

INSTAGRAM:

siprotectors

SAVING MOUNT LORETTO ...CONTINUED

Archdiocese the sale of Mount Loretto to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). They explained that they needed a report about Mount Loretto and asked if we would prepare the report. All agreed that I would write the report and produce ten copies. Hillel Lofaso would design and typeset it. Several weeks later I delivered the report to Senator Marchi's office so he would have a document to discuss with Governor George Pataki.

Weeks went by and there was no further news. Dominick Durso was organizing groups of walkers with the permission of Mount Loretto to tour Mount Loretto twice a day and weekends for the next two months. I began to get worried because there was no news. Eric Kulleseid was doing the negotiations. I decided that the negotiations were in trouble. The Archdiocese wanted twenty-five million dollars for Mount Loretto - one hundred meadow, woodland and pond acres and fifty underwater acres extending into the Raritan Bay, the highest point on the Atlantic shoreline in New York State.

I prepared a flyer, "Save Mount Loretto. Write to the Governor." Dominick Durso produced ten thousand copies of the flyer. Protectors volunteers delivered the flyer throughout the South Shore communities. Governor Pataki was astounded to receive a flood of hundreds of letters supporting saving Mount Loretto and explaining how much it meant to the people of Staten Island. The state released the twenty five million dollars and the land was transferred.

Governor Pataki came to Mount Loretto on October 1, 1998 to celebrate the sale. He called me out of the audience and asked me to give him a kiss for saving Mount Loretto. An article written by Bill and Norma Siebenheller explained the value of Mount Loretto perfectly. It is an oasis for wildlife. It is no coincidence that a year or two later bald eagles took up residence in the trees along Richard Avenue at the edge of Mount Loretto. They could fish in the Raritan Bay, the Arthur Kill and the ponds of Mount Loretto. This is the first time that bald eagles were reintroduced to the New York City region, using Mount Loretto as their residence.

PROTECTED . . . THE ISLAND'S MOST BEAUTIFUL WATERFRONT . . .

On October 1, Governor George E. Pataki announced the State's purchase of Mount Loretto. The Governor thanked Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, Ellen Pratt in particular, for advocating, supporting and helping to facilitate the \$25 million agreement between the State, represented by The Trust for Public Land and the Archdiocese of New York. In the photo below, the Governor speaks with Protectors' President Dick Buegler, First Vice President Dominick Durso and Ellen Pratt, thanking them on behalf of the public for the land conservation achievements in the Greenbelt, the addition of St Francis Seminary Woodlands to the Greenbelt and for the Mount Loretto presentation booklet, advocacy and letter-writing campaign which greatly helped the State and the Archdiocese to come to agreement in late summer. Your letters were very important and very helpful in pressing both parties to come to agreement.

As soon as the first payment, \$8.4 million, is made in just a few months, DEC will assume supervision of Mount Loretto-by-the-Sea and limited public access will be allowed. Protectors will be leading walks at Mount Loretto beginning in 1999 on Sunday, January 24. Check the calendar and join us, as we rejoice in the protection of Mount Loretto's waterfront portion and plan additional protection for interior Mount Loretto. —Ellen Pratt



CORSON'S BROOK WOODS

Corson's Brook Woods drains the Great Swamp at the Farm Colony. It flows parallel to Rockland Avenue and descends into the most undisturbed native woodland at the former Staten Island Developmental Center. These woodlands were recommended for preservation within the Greenbelt by the City Planning Commissioner. As the property was being transferred to the City Parks Department the day after election day 1984, a team of foresters descended on the upper woodlands and cut forty to seventy-five one hundred year old trees. They were clearing the land for four group homes being built by the State Office of OMRDD under the federal consent decree to relocate residents into the community. Protectors was immediately involved in obtaining a temporary restraining order. Then began a nearly two-year series of law suits, hearings, letter writing and protests pitting OMRDD and advocates for the developmentally disabled against "tree huggers," residents of the adjacent community and the City Department of Parks.

Governor Mario Cuomo visited the site in 1985 and in March 1986 OMRDD announced they would be moving the four group homes five hundred yards along Forest Hill Road. How would the Corson's Brook Woods be preserved?

The College of Staten Island relocated to the Staten Island Developmental Center site and has now taken the native woodlands under its wing and the Department of Environmental Science at the college has been given the property to manage as a native plant resource.

Judy and Joel Berger, residents of the adjacent community, were and still are heavily involved with Protectors and the desirable outcome which resulted.

Look for further installments in future issues of the PPOW bulletin.
"A History of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods; 50 Years of Green" by Ellen O' Flaherty Pratt.
Editorial Assistants: Lesley Andersen and Linda Cohen.



The Greenbelt: group of hikers gathering around leader



Clay Pit Pond: Clay Pit Ponds State Park-Preserve



Eastern Painted Turtle: Sharrott's Shorelands



St. John's Wort: Mount Loretto Unique Area

PROTECTOR HAS LED IN THE CREATION OF THESE PARKS AND BLUEBELTS:

- ★ **Clay Pit Ponds State Park-Preserve:** 260 acre nature preserve, and an intact watershed which drains to the Arthur Kill, and has bridle and walking trails. It is managed to retain its unique sand and clay pit ecology and as a recreational resource with nature programs. Protector was organized in 1974 during the effort to preserve Clay Pit Ponds.
- ★ **Goodhue Woodlands:** Established as a 15 acre park with 15 acres to be added. Goodhue Woodlands straddles steep wooded hillsides and a pond which make this North Shore Natural Area a magnet for migrating and resident birds and nature-loving campers.
- ★ **Islington Pond Park:** 23 acres of ponds and bluebelt make this "Forever Wild" park in northern Great Kills a neighborhood gem. It is also known as Kingfisher Pond Park.
- ★ **Mill Creek Bluebelt:** 40 acres on the island's southwest shore, this partly tidal creek is a sheltered haven for wildlife. It is part of a large natural area created by adjacent northern Mount Loretto and Long Pond Park.

visit us at
www.siprotectors.org

Your connection
to nature on
Staten Island



- ★ **North Shore Waterfront Park:** 9 acres of newly established parkland between Richmond Terrace and the Kill van Kull; also known as Blissenbach Marina.
- ★ **Wood Duck Pond Bluebelt:** a hidden pond and woodland in Great Kills. Its 8 acres shelter the area's largest concentration of Wood Ducks.
- ★ **Sharrott's Shoreline Preserve:** 33 sand and clay laced acres on the island's southwest shore; it is a newly established DEC preserve.
- ★ **The Greenbelt:** Our island's great "Central Park", 2,800 acres of woodlands and wetlands combines 10 parks, camps, golf courses and preserves includes Pouch Camp, High Rock Park and LaTourette Park; has 35 miles of trails and a Nature Center.
- ★ **Mount Loretto:** 149 acre DEC State-owned Unique Area Preserve on the island's southern shore, includes rolling meadows for hiking and a mile of shoreline fishing and walking. With five ecosystems, marine/coastal grassland, forest, tidal and freshwater wetlands, it is a magnet for walkers, nature lovers and bird watchers.
- ★ **Blue Heron Park:** 250 acre nature park and Nature Center on the south shore. Extensive wetlands, including 1.75 acre Spring Pond and 1.4 acre Blue Heron Pond serves part of a Bluebelt storm water drainage system.
- ★ **Corson's Brook Woods:** 30 acre "Forever Wild" Greenbelt preserve.
- ★ **Graniteville Quarry Park:** newly established 5 acre park near Mariner's Harbor. It was a rock quarry for diabase, a granite-like rock, between 1841 and 1896; and surrounds a rare rock formation.
- ★ **Wolfe's Pond Park:** 341 acres along the south shore, includes a woodland and stream system, pond and beach. It is also a recreational park heavily used by picnickers, sunbathers, fishermen, boaters and nature lovers. Protectors helped add 17 acres forming its northeastern corner.
- ★ **St. Francis Woodlands:** 24 acre mature woodland on the site of the former St. Francis Seminary, with Greenbelt trails and a pond; was purchased by DEC.
- ★ **Long Pond Park:** 110 acre natural area in Richmond Valley and has long been a favorite place to escape more densely populated Tottenville. Its walking and bridle trails wind past kettle hole ponds and 9 acre Long Pond. Its rolling woodlands adjoin North Mount Loretto and the Mill Creek Bluebelt.

★ indicates Protector was responsible ★ indicates Protector was heavily involved ★ indicates Protector was involved along with other environmental groups

JOIN
PROTECTOR
and make a
DIFFERENCE



Yellow Sweet Clover:
LaTourette Park, The Greenbelt



Spicebush Swallowtail on thistle:
North Mount Loretto State Forest



Fly Agaric:
Greenbelt White Trail

photo credits (from top left) Dorothy Bailey, (next three photos) Don Rocklin, (from bottom left) all photos by Don Rocklin

ABOUT PARKS: "EVERYBODY NEEDS BEAUTY AS WELL AS BREAD, PLACES TO PLAY IN AND PRAY IN, WHERE NATURE MAY HEAL AND CHEER AND GIVE STRENGTH TO BODY AND SOUL ALIKE."
—JOHN MUIR, AMERICAN NATURALIST (1838 - 1914)

PROTECTOR OF PINE OAK WOODS CALENDAR

FREE NATURE WALKS TO POND AND PARK

Saturday, September 5 , 12 noon-2:00 pm
Sunday September 6, 12 noon - 2:00 pm
Saturday, September 19 , 12 noon-2:00 pm
Sunday September 27, 12 noon - 2:00 pm

CROOKE'S POINT TALK AND WALK

Maritime spits such as Crooke's Point are dynamic topographical features which are formed and sculpted by water and wind action. Join naturalist Paul T. Lederer in a talk and walk where he will discuss the geology and human history of the site as well as the plants and animals that call this place home.

Meet at the Beach Center Parking Lot in Great Kills Park located near the dirt permit road leading out to Crooke's Point. For more information contact Paul at 718-354-9200.



Saturday, September 12, 7:00 pm

GREAT KILLS PARK

Come join walk leader, Corrine McNally for a beautiful sunset walk in Great Kills Park, known for its glorious colors at sunset. We will walk on mostly paved & some dirt walking trails, staying alongside the road. About 4 miles RT. If cloudy, we will still meet, but light rain cancels.

Meet in the first parking area at the entrance of Great Kills Park at Buffalo Ave. and Hylan Blvd.

For more information contact Corrine McNally: corrinemcn@aol.com.



Saturday, September 19, 10:00 am - 12 noon

FOREST RESTORATION WORKSHOP AT THE PINE PLANTATION THE LATOURETTE BIKE PATH

For our 361st workshop we'll meet at the entrance to the bike path on the Old Mill Road (west of Richmond Hill Road) next to the old St. Andrew's Church. We'll follow the Greenway to the stand of Pitch Pines that was planted in the mid 90s and where we have planted more pines adjacent to the current stand. Our job will be to dig up new Japanese Knotweed sprouts from around the new pines, and to continue cutting and uprooting Knotweed on the slope down toward the marsh. Protectors will supply gloves and the necessary tools. (Service Credit is available.)

So that we know how many volunteers to expect, please register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1997624720313?aff=oddtcreator> or call Brian Smith 917-842-6585 or Don Recklies 718-768-9036.

Saturday, October 10, 11:00 am

LONG POND

Explore this little-visited natural area on dirt trails and discover grasslands, wetlands, forests, vernal pools and Long Pond itself which reflects the fall colors in its waters. We will walk about 3-4 miles. Inclement weather or light rain cancels.

Meet on the corner of Richards Avenue & Hylan Blvd. Parking on Richards Ave. Information Corrine McNally: corrinemcn@aol.com.



Saturday, October 17, 10:00 am - 12 noon

FOREST RESTORATION WORKSHOP ON THE TODT HILL BLUE TRAIL

For our 362nd workshop we'll meet in the St. Francis Woodlands parking lot at the end of Helena Road (off Todt Hill Road, 1st street north of Whitlock Ave.), walk up the road to the Yellow Trail, then proceed southwest to the ruined foundations where we will join other volunteers to cut and uproot alien Devil's Walking Stick and search out and cut woody, twining vines from the trees. After the work session we'll return to the parking lot by way of the St. Francis Woodlands boardwalk. Protectors will supply tools, gloves, and refreshments. (Service Credit is available.)

So that we know how many volunteers to expect, please register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1997624720313?aff=oddtcreator> or call Brian Smith 917-842-6585 or Don Recklies 718-768-9036.



Sunday, October 25, 6 pm - 7:30 pm

OWL PROWL AT BLUE HERON PARK

Join Cliff Hagen in an evening walk through the wooded trails of Blue Heron Park in search of our nocturnal neighbors. Participants are often greeted by the calls of screech owls and will sometimes enjoy a look at the denizens of the night. Meet at the front of the Blue Heron Park Nature Center. A full moon will offer plenty of moonshine so flashlights and headlamps are discouraged.

Meet Cliff at 7pm in front of the Nature Center of Blue Heron Park (222 Poillon Avenue) for the Owl Prowl. For more information call Cliff Hagen at (718) 313-8591.

MEET OUR WALK LEADERS

José Ramirez-Garofalo is a climate change ecologist and the fourth President of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods.

Cliff Hagen is a past president of PPOW and has been involved with the group since 2000. He is deeply committed to the ecology and preservation of our natural areas on Staten Island.

Paul Lederer is a former Research Associate with Staten Island Museum, where he conducted insect surveys including the Staten Island Dragonfly Survey. He shares his interests in natural history through public outreach and education.

Corrine McNally loves the natural world and sharing observations on enjoyable walks and hikes. She has been a member of PPOW for more than 15 years and supports other local nature related groups.

Don Recklies has been part of PPOW since the early 2000's and leads many walks and workshops; his primary interest is the ecology of NYC urban forests.

Jim Scarcella is president of the Natural Resources Protective Association. NRPA advocates for Staten Island's marine environment, performing beach and shoreline cleanups.

Brian Smith has been "second in command" for Protector's Forest Restoration Workshops and is passionately interested in slowing the intrusion of alien invasive plants in our precious woodlands.

PROTECTOR OF PINE OAK WOODS CALENDAR

FREE NATURE WALKS TO POND AND PARK

SAVE THE DATE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8 1:00-3:00

PROTECTOR'S SEMI-ANNUAL FALL MEMBERS MEETING

AT THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM

**ON THE GROUNDS OF
SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER . 1000
RICHMOND TERRACE**

Info: Madeline Paladino at mpaladino@siprotectors.org.



Saturday, November 21, 10 am - 12 noon

FOREST RESTORATION WORKSHOP ON THE BUCK'S HOLLOW RED TRAIL

We'll meet in the Moses Mountain (Paulo's Peak) parking lot at the intersection of Rockland and Manor Road (or park on the road to the Egger Home), then cross to take the White Trail north to the large former restoration area at the junction of the Red and Blue Trails where we will range the restored area to continue cutting and pulling out Wisteria and Oriental Bittersweet vines that threaten the new trees, and extract alien Japanese Angelica saplings. We began this project over two years ago, but there's more to do, and it may become a yearly project. Protectors will supply gloves and pruners if needed, and refreshments. (Service Credit is available.)

So that we know how many volunteers to expect, please register:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1997631423362?aff=oddtcreator>
call Brian Smith 917-842-6585 or Don Recklies 718-768-9036.



Sunday, November 29, 5 pm

OWL PROWL AT HIGH ROCK PARK

Join Cliff Hagen for an evening of hoots and howls as we explore the less trodden trails of the Greenbelt. Participants are often greeted by the calls of screech owls and might glimpse at the denizens of the night. Meet at the end of Nevada Avenue. With a moon shining at nearly 70% we won't need to rely on flashlights and headlamps.

For more information call Cliff Hagen at (718) 313-8591.

Saturday, December 19, ALL DAY

THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Inspired by artist, John J. Audubon's attempt to reign in the unnecessary shooting of birds for fashion and fortune, people began counting rather than collecting birds. For more than 100 years bird watchers, environmentalists, nature enthusiasts and the curious have been conducting an annual bird census on a designated day. Here on Staten Island, our Christmas Bird Count has grown to incorporate fourteen distinct territories with teams of participants roaming their territory to count each bird they identify. At the conclusion of the day we gather to report out and tally our totals.

If you are interested in participating and would like more information call Cliff Hagen at (718) 313-8591.



Saturday, December 19, 10 am - 12 noon

FOREST RESTORATION WORKSHOP BETWEEN PAULO'S PEAK AND SEAVIEW

For our 364th workshop we'll meet in the Moses Mountain (Paulo's Peak) parking lot at the intersection of Rockland and Manor Road (or park on the road to the Egger Home opposite the Bluebelt dam), then follow the Yellow Trail past Paulo's Peak where we will take an unmarked turn-off to the left and follow that trail toward Seaview. There we will continue cutting Wisteria and Oriental Bittersweet vines that strangle the trees along the trail - and possibly cut alien Devil's Walking Stick where we encounter it. Protectors will supply tools, gloves and refreshments. (Service Credit is available.)

So that we know how many volunteers to expect, please register:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1997633857643?aff=oddtcreator>
call Brian Smith 917-842-6585 or Don Recklies 718-768-9036.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER: While we strive for safety, the activities of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods (Protectors) have certain uncontrollable hazards which each participant undertakes and for which each participant is responsible. Leaders are not responsible in any way whatsoever for any of these hazards. All participants assume the responsibility and risks of hiking and participating in Protectors events, and release Protectors, its leaders or substitute leaders, from any liability whatsoever for any loss, damage to personal property, or injury, however caused, of any kind, nature, and description.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1 2027

FIRST DAY ENVIRONMENTAL WALK AT MT. LORETTO 10 - 11:30 AM

MEET AT THE Hylan Blvd. Parking Lot. There will be overflow parking available at the CYO parking lot across the Boulevard.

In cooperation with NYCDEC, PPOW is hosting a *First Day Environmental Walk at Mount Loretto*. Greet the New Year with a leisurely winter walk along the gentle slopes of the grassland trails. Visit the wildlife platform overlooking the freshwater ponds as well as the Pavilion overlooking Raritan Bay. This one-mile loop offers good views of waterfowl, raptors, and sparrows.

For more information contact José Ramirez-Garofalo at ppow@siprotectors.org.

35TH ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACH WALK 12 NOON - 2:00 PM

MEET AT BUFFALO ST. ENTRANCE TO GATEWAY GREAT KILLS PARK - OR MEET PARKING LOT F.

Join PPOW and NRPA to celebrate the New Year of 2027! The Early winter has unique features as the beach and dunes are reshaped each day. We may see herring gulls, waterfowl, fish and mammals. Bring a snack or beverage to share as we reminisce 2026 and celebrate 2027.

For more information call Jim Scarcella at 718-873-4291.



UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENTAL BOND ACT

Beginning July 2020, during the COVID epidemic, Protectors President Cliff Hagen and Corresponding Secretary Mark LaTour, organized a Land Conservation Committee whose mission was to discover on Staten Island unprotected natural Lots. Over a 26-month search, Mark and I, with boots on the ground, were able to visit and compile a list of 115 sites, with the committee establishing a “Top 7” list.

The Environmental Bond Act was passed in a referendum by voters in November 2022. The seven natural lots had a possibility for purchase and preservation, utilizing some of the 650 million dollars appropriated for land acquisition. Several criteria had to be met, the most important was if the owner of the land was willing to sell at fair market value. Another factor was the location and description of the land.

Out of the “Top 7” sites just two met the DEC’s strict criteria and were submitted in a lengthy, difficult application for purchase and preservation. They were both located on a steep woodland hillside called the Serpentine Ridge in a high-density, low-income neighborhood.

We thank Friends of Graniteville Quarry and grant writer Meg Ventrudo for completing the application to secure the 5.4-acre parcel at Serpentine Ridge.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation gives high priority to preserving natural land in neighborhoods known as Environmental Justice Communities.

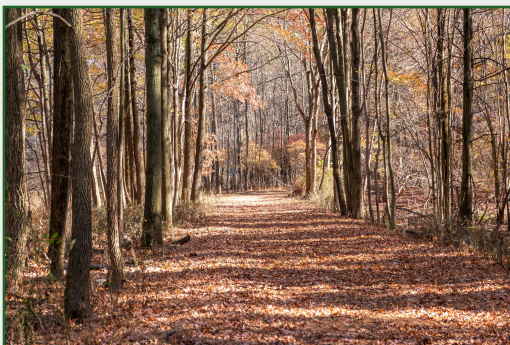
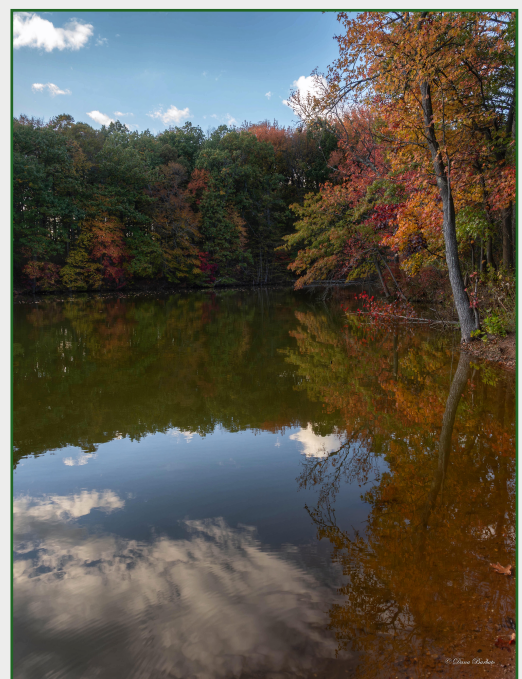
There is tremendous pressure from builders, so there is a race against time to utilize the Environmental Bond Act to save at least two combined 11 acres of natural land along the Serpentine Ridge.

The tree-covered land is unique, supporting wildlife and rare plants identified by the Sierra Club. It provides lower temperatures during heat waves, mitigates erosion from storms, and provides cleaner air for the community.

If the Serpentine is protected, the trees will also provide a nature preserve so the children in this Environmental Justice Community will have easy access within walking distance from their residences and schools to experience and enjoy nature.

— Jack Bolembach

Jack Bolembach is 1st Vice President of PPOW. He is a U.S. Navy veteran and served as Plant Chief and Deputy Plant Chief for the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, earning an M.S. degree through the Mayor’s Scholarship Program. He is actively involved in many environmental organizations on Staten Island.



Woods and Water, a few photographs taken by talented nature photographers on Staten Island.

Bottom left: *Clay Pit Pond Woods* by Anthony Esposito.

Top left: *Seal* by Ken Filmer.

Above: *Glossy Ibis* by Ken Filmer.

Right: *Autumn in Wolfe’s Pond Park*.

IN MEMORIAM MENTION FOR LENORE MILLER

The Staten Island environmental community mourns the passing of **Lenore Miller**, a dedicated educator, author, naturalist, and lifelong advocate for the preservation of New York City's natural resources. Through decades of teaching, writing, and volunteer service, Lenore inspired countless students, educators, and conservationists to appreciate and protect the natural world.

Lenore's environmental journey began at High Rock Park Conservation Center, where she served as a trail guide and environmental educator. Guided by pioneers in environmental education, she developed a lifelong commitment to connecting people with nature. As a New York City public school teacher, she integrated environmental education into her classroom, encouraging generations of young people to become thoughtful stewards of the environment. She authored *Centering On... Using the Outdoors to Enrich Learning* and *Inspiration on a Hill: How High Rock Park Conservation Center Transformed Lives, 1965–1989*, preserving the history of one of New York City's most influential environmental education programs.

A devoted member and Honorary Director of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, Lenore worked tirelessly to protect Staten Island's forests, wetlands, and open spaces. She organized Earth Day events, edited the Environmental Education Advisory Council newsletter, and mentored educators and conservationists throughout New York City.

One of Lenore Miller's significant but lesser-known contributions was her determined effort to bring national recognition to fellow conservationist Richard Buegler. Recognizing his decades of leadership in protecting Staten Island's natural areas, she championed his nomination for the Goldman Environmental Prize, one of the world's most prestigious honors for grassroots environmental activists. The Goldman Environmental Prize carries a **\$50,000 award** and is often referred to as the "Green Nobel Prize." Although the nomination process is confidential and the Prize does not publicly identify nominators, Lenore worked diligently to ensure that Richard Buegler's extraordinary conservation achievements received the consideration they deserved.

Those who knew Lenore remember her boundless enthusiasm, quiet determination, and deep knowledge of Staten Island's natural history. Whether leading a nature walk, writing about conservation, or encouraging others to become involved, she left an enduring mark on the community she loved.

Lenore Miller's legacy lives on in the parks she helped protect, the students she inspired, the colleagues she mentored, and the countless individuals who will continue her work of preserving Staten Island's extraordinary natural heritage. Her contributions to environmental education and conservation will continue to inspire future generations.

Thank you for donations received in her memory. She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered by her family, friends, colleagues, and all whose lives she touched.

— Elaine Croteau

Elaine Croteau has been a member for over twenty-five years. She is currently the President of Friends of Blue Heron Park and since retiring, she has been active as a Board Member and serves as 2nd Vice President of Protectors, NYS Women-Staten Island Chapter, The Preservation League of Staten Island and Lathrope Voorspuy Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Juvenile Red-tailed hawk photographed at Clove Lakes Park by Dana Barbato.



The hawk is the aerial brother of the wave
which he sails over and surveys,
those his perfect air-inflated
wings answering to the elemental
unfledged pinions of the sea.

— Passage from *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau

MEMBERSHIP



PROTECTOR'S OF PINE OAK WOODS MEMBERSHIP COUPON

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P.O. Box 140747, Staten Island, NY 10314.

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CONTACT ME - I WANT TO VOLUNTEER MY HELP: _____

Questions? Email membership@siprotectors.org.

Already a member?
Please use this form
to give generously to
further our mission.

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Summer is still serving up sunshine and delicious delights from our gardens and greenmarkets. The Island is still green and giving. And as we begin to move into our autumn mode, with colorful foliage and bountiful harvests, we gather in many ways: in our communities, at school, at home, at services, at events, at the polls.

We at Protectors recognize another type of gathering: the gathering of support, of information, of petitions, and of members. When our membership is strong, our collective voice is strong. Our credibility is recognized, and we are able to do the things that we are tasked to do: to keep Staten Island green, to preserve open spaces, to educate the public, to alert the elected officials.

In our fifty-first year as an all-volunteer non-profit organization, the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods needs you to join up and join in. If you are not a current member, come back to the action! Or if you are up-to-date, consider an extra donation to support our ongoing efforts.

Plant the seeds of environmental awareness and action by giving a gift membership to a returning high schooler or a new college student. The bulletins, walks, and workshops can help them in their studies and service programs, and will inspire them to be active advocates in our world going forward.

Send a check by mail using the convenient postage-paid coupon/envelope within this bulletin, or use the coupon on this page. If you go on the Protectors website www.siprotectors.org, payment can be made by credit card or PayPal.

Not sure of your 2026 membership status? Email us: membership@siprotectors.org.

Be a Protector. Stay a Protector. Sponsor a new Protector!

Madeline Paladino

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SAVE THE DATE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8 1:00-3:00

**PROTECTOR'S
SEMI-ANNUAL
FALL MEMBERS MEETING**

**AT THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM
ON THE GROUNDS OF
SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER
1000 RICHMOND TERRACE**

CONTACT MADELINE PALADINO AT MPALADINO@SIPROTECTOR'S.ORG
FOR MORE INFORMATION.

SAVE THE DATE

**5TH ANNUAL
CITY OF FOREST DAY**

WILL TAKE PLACE ON

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

SPONSORED BY
PROTECTOR'S OF PINE OAK WOODS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
CONFERENCE HOUSE PARK.