

# PROTECTOR'S OF PINE OAK WOODS



**STATEN ISLAND'S  
LAND CONSERVATION  
ORGANIZATION**

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**FIND OUT MORE AT  
[WWW.SIPROTECTOR.SORG](http://WWW.SIPROTECTOR.SORG)**

♦ **PROTECTOR'S EVENTS**  
FREQUENT UPDATES  
TO THE CALENDAR

## CITY PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVES SWEETWATER ESTATES APPROVED OR NOT, THE PROJECT IS ALL WRONG FOR THE COMMUNITY

LET'S STIPULATE, FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, that there would be a new residential development in Great Kills called Sweetwater Estates in any case. It was inevitable.

Despite some residents' pleas that the 7.7-acre parcel bounded by Nelson, Sweetwater and Wiman Avenues be preserved as open space in its entirety, that was never a realistic possibility. It is privately owned land, and the owner has the right to develop it within the context of existing zoning and other regulations.

So it was never a question of whether or not there would be a Sweetwater Estates development; it was just a matter of how much of an impact it would be permitted to have on the surrounding, established residential community.

That impact is going to be significant in any case. For one thing, the community, which is beside Great Kills Harbor, is prone to flooding as it is now. The open 7.7-acres on which Sweetwater Estates will be built serves to soak off storm water and drain it into the harbor. Opponents of the project are rightly concerned that when that land is effectively covered with more than 100 houses, sidewalks and streets, they'll lose even that protection and their chronic flooding problems will worsen.

The Department of Environmental Protection had recently concluded that the storm drainage system planned for Sweetwater was adequate. Opponents say it is anything but adequate. The first heavy rainstorm after the houses are built and the roads paved will be the test. Of course, by then, it will be too late.

Approvals notwithstanding, there's no question that the project will have a major effect on storm water runoff in the community. Simple physics dictates that.

Then there is the question of traffic. The 123 units of housing, once inhabited, can be expected to come with, by a conservative estimate, 200 cars. And it's not unrealistic to expect that there could be closer to 300 cars in the development. Those cars will enter and exit the enclosed Sweetwater site via just two quiet, residential streets.

*(continued on page 2)*

**STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE  
EDITORIAL  
(DECEMBER 26, 2004)**

**NEW  
LOCATION!  
GREENBELT  
NATURE CENTER**

**PROTECTOR'S OF PINE OAK WOODS  
SPRING MEMBERS MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30 ♦ GREENBELT NATURE CENTER  
700 ROCKLAND AVENUE (AT BRIELLE AVE),  
6:30 P.M.-9 P.M., ADMISSION FREE**

**OUR ENDANGERED WOODLANDS:  
THE ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE THREAT**

- 6:30:** Doors open: Refreshments and registration; View the exhibits
- 7:15:** Introductions and Announcements
- 7:30:** Speakers from NY State DEC and from NJ Department of Forestry
  - ♦ What you need to know about ALB identification and how to take action
- 9:00:** Closing remarks and raffle

**Call (718) 761-7496 for more information.**

**We strongly encourage car-pooling to this event as parking is limited.**

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## CITY PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVES SWEETWATER ESTATES

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And residents on those streets are already trying to cope with the parked cars of commuters who park in front of their homes all day and walk up to Hylan Boulevard to catch express buses.

So there's no question, either, that Sweetwater Estates will substantially change the traffic situation in that relatively quiet residential neighborhood for the worse. That traffic will also have to pour onto already congested Hylan Boulevard, exacerbating that artery's traffic problems at a critical point. And all that additional traffic will inevitably increase pollution in the area.

What about schools? Schools in Great Kills are overcrowded as it is. If even half of the homeowners who move to Sweetwater Estates have school-age children—and the percentage among these likely first-time home-buyers is likely to be much higher—there will certainly be a negative impact on schools in the community.

Sweetwater Estates, as currently planned with attached and detached housing, is all wrong for this part of Great Kills for all these reasons. And it is all wrong, too, because it will substantially change the established character of this community of single-family homes. The development, with its housing units facing inward with their backs to the surrounding community, will effectively be an isolated island in the middle of a close-knit neighborhood.

We must give the developer, Bruno Savo, his due. He originally planned to build 180 units of housing and put forth a drainage plan that was, at best, dubious. In response to the community's complaints, he has since scaled back the number of residential units to 123 and changed the drainage plan.

That said, Sweetwater Estates is still a bad fit and bad for Great Kills.

None of this, however, seemed to concern the members of the City Planning Commission. Members of the commission had visited the site, and were well aware of the likely impact of the project on the neighborhood and large community. Yet they voted 8-0 on Wednesday to approve Sweetwater Estates. There was not one dissenting vote; not one dissenting voice heard among the commissioners, at least at the public hearing.

Just one member, Fred Cerullo, the former South Shore Councilman and current president and CEO of the Grand Central Partnership in Manhattan, abstained.

"I definitely did not support this application," he said. "I had concerns and I recognized the issues...I could not affirmatively support the application."

But he could not bring himself to vote against the project, either. Why? Considering the negative effects Sweetwater Estates will certainly have, he might have considered breaking with his colleagues on the commission to a greater degree. Collegiality is fine, but with so much at stake, a no vote would have been appropriate.

Mr. Cerullo, however, wasn't the real problem. At least he voted his conscience based on what he knew of the development and its likely impact. In fact, if the other commissioners had abstained, the project would not have been approved. They knew of the likely impact of Sweetwater Estates, yet they voted to approve it. How could this happen? How could every single member of the City Planning Commission aside from Mr. Cerullo see this as a positive?

In talking about his successful Staten Island Growth Management Task Force last year, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said, "We will not tolerate the building of homes on Staten Island that, with little exaggeration, are being built one on top of another. They are houses but they are not homes."

In approving the large, dense and disruptive Sweetwater Estates development, the City Planning Commission has flatly contradicted that mandate.

Commission members cited their official responsibility as commissioners, suggesting that they have a duty to approve any plan that passes muster legally, as if this were a matter of bureaucratic technicalities rather than the quality of life in an entire community.

Really? So all a developer has to do is dot all the i's and cross all the t's on the

*(continued on page 10)*

## A HAPPY ENDING TO THE SWEETWATER SAGA ?

**T**HE SEVEN-YEAR SWEETWATER battle appears headed for an unhappy ending, thanks to the narrow interpretation of the zoning law chosen by members of the City Planning Commission. Unhappy not only for the Great Kills and Crescent Beach neighborhoods, but for all who want to see Great Kills Harbor protected from the widespread impacts of eight feet of fill on top of a sand-filled salt marsh, with 123 houses, roads, sidewalks and 91 “dry wells” to “handle drainage.” Houses will settle and basements will crack and pollution from 250+ cars and 500 residents will make their way into the Harbor—our Island’s only harbor, which serves as a nurturing womb for the fish of the Raritan Bay. It seems it will take a miracle to save us from Sweetwater.

And a miracle may be on the way. The Trust for Public Land, agent for N.Y. State and NY/NJ Port Authority, is continuing to appraise the property and is in discussions with Bruno Savo, developer. We believe they will be offering a purchase price; then the decision rests with Mr. Savo. The 7.7 acres would be added to the Seaside Nature Park.

Then, our consulting engineer suggests we sue over the drainage plan being based on fraudulent data. Also, the down-zoning application for this entire area remains to be certified by the City Planning Department. This would mean the entire project would have to be redrawn.

It’s not over until it’s over. And it’s not over yet !

—Ellen Pratt

### PROTECTORS BOARD MEETINGS

**Wednesday, February 16, April 6, May 4**

**Executive Board Meeting – 7:30 to 10 p.m., 80 Mann Avenue.**

**Wednesday, March 9, April 27**

**Protectors Board Meeting – 7:30 to 10 p.m., The Art Lab, Snug Harbor. Come see us planning. Important decisions are often made at the meeting. Refreshments served. For more information, phone Dick Buegler (718)761-7496 or any board member.**

## RECENT LETTERS ON THE SWEETWATER DEBACLE

**A**S A RESIDENT OF GREAT KILLS I am extremely troubled by the Sweetwater project. Our politicians’ and lawmakers’ job is to create and shape public policy and change the law if that is the right course of action. However, in this case it is clear that the majority of our leaders have either stood aside or turned a blind eye to this project, letting the community down and basically siding with an individual (the developer).

The builders’ “rights” are to buy a parcel of land on speculation and, if all the proper requirements are in place, to build on that land. However, in this particular case, the speculative nature of real estate is still in question.

If I buy a stock and the company commits fraud and goes bankrupt I lose my investment. If I buy land on speculation and it turns out the land is a wetland I run the risk of losing my investment. Why do we think it is the builder’s “right” to build on this land? Why is there an entitlement to a builder?

All we hear about in the press is builders’ rights. What about the community’s rights? Sometimes the community is wrong and they are being selfish with a “not in my backyard” attitude. However, this project is not for the public good. It will not provide something the community is lacking. In fact, it will tax an already overburdened infrastructure.

Based on this decision, it is clear the community has no rights and the builder has all the rights. Even if the laws of nature, physics, and common sense are on the side of the community, the laws of greed are on the side of the builder and greed always wins—on Staten Island anyway.

—Doug Olsen

**G**IVEN THE PUBLIC OUTCRY AND OPPOSITION TO THE SWEETWATER Estates, there was shock when the City Planning Commission gave the project its fervent support on Dec. 22 when it authorized the builder to proceed. The community surrounding this development does not have the ability to absorb the effect of increased population and structures upon water supply, sewage, storm water control, traffic, schools, protective services and more. We’ve argued that the proposed development is subject to floodplain management regulations that impact building standards and that it was not designed to minimize flood risk, as required by state and local regulations. While the project is moving ahead, critical information such as drainage and environmental analyses and determinations under the NYS Environmental Quality Review Act, remain ambiguous or concealed. Further, the builder will add more than 48,700 cubic yards of fill and install 91 drywells across the site. A DEC spokesman revealed that “the alternative would have been to require Savo to build a new storm sewer outlet at the waterline—an expensive proposition...” Instead, the agencies’ decisions result in more harm and costs being suffered by the community so that a successful developer may conserve his wealth.

The uniqueness and historical features of this neighborhood had brought strong support and solidarity from its residents and others, who value this vulnerable community. We’ve maintained our patience and efforts to preserve the existing character and quality of life while we waited for relief from flooding and the overburdened infrastructure. We asked for a much-needed comprehensive zoning plan, including evaluation of systems and rezoning which would not permit attached townhouses along with the creation of a new waterfront zoning district. Unfortunately, we were neither included in recent rezoning initiatives nor did the text amendments curb the intensive development. Our objections to this dense and imbalanced construction are not arbitrary or unreasonable; we object for many environmental and human reasons—because of the serious threat/harm to people and property, as well as the wildlife and ecosystem that thrive in this coastal area and the irreversible ruin to the natural resources that are already limited and endangered.

—Shirlee Marraccini

## ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*“You don’t contain or control this invasive pest; you can only eradicate it.”—NJ Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus*

### Q. What is an Asian longhorned beetle (ALB)?

A. The Asian longhorned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*) is a large, bullet-shaped beetle about 1 to 1.5 inches long. Shiny and black with white spots, it has exceptionally long antennae that are banded with black and white. The elongated feet are black with a whitish-blue upper surface. Although its size and large mandibles cause it to appear threatening, the beetle is harmless to humans and pets. In the larval stage, the white, worm-like beetles bore into live trees causing sap to flow from wounds and frass (sawdust and other insect waste) to accumulate at tree bases. Left undetected, the ALB will girdle the vascular system of trees eventually causing the tree to wither and die.

### Q. Why should the United States be concerned about ALB?

A. The ALB is a serious threat to U.S. trees. ALB larvae bore deep into deciduous hardwood trees such as maple, birch, horse chestnut, poplar, willow, elm, and ash, eventually killing them. Damage from infestations in New York and Illinois has resulted in the removal of thousands of trees and costs to State and Federal governments in excess of \$80 million since the discovery of the infestations in 1996. If the ALB were to expand beyond the current quarantined areas of New York and Illinois, it has the potential to wreak havoc nationwide, affecting such industries as lumber, maple syrup, nursery, commercial fruit, and tourism and accumulating over \$650 billion in losses.

### Q. How did the beetle get here?

A. ALB is primarily found in China and areas of Korea and probably hitchhiked here in solid wood packing material (SWPM), such as crates and pallets, from China. U.S. trade with China has increased exponentially over the past decade. In 2000, imported commodities from China to the United States exceeded \$100 billion. As a result, the risk of this plant pest as well as the potential of other invasive insects, plant diseases and weeds being introduced into the United States has increased as well.

### Q. Is there an effective treatment to control or destroy these pests?

A. Although treatments exist to control ALB-infested cargo, the ALB is not easily controlled once it is introduced into the environment. Because the majority of the beetle's life is spent deep within the heartwood of host trees, it is difficult to control using contact insecticides. Although costly and undesirable, the only assured method of eliminating the beetle is to cut and chip or burn infested trees and replace them with nonhost species.

The recently introduced insecticide imidacloprid shows great potential in preventing the spread of ALB and is expected to become an additional effective control tool in the eradication of this pest. Imidacloprid is a systemic insecticide that, when applied directly into the trunk of a tree or the soil near a tree, moves quickly

upward into stems, twigs, and foliage where the beetles would be expected to feed and lay eggs.

Research to attain additional survey and control options remains ongoing. Scientists continue to experiment with new chemicals, application methods, biocontrol methods, and devices to detect ALB-infested trees.

### Q. What can homeowners do to prevent ALB from attacking their trees?

A. Homeowners can assist officials in preventing an infestation in several ways. By cooperating with officials, allowing them to survey trees, and allowing the removal of ALB-infested trees, homeowners can help prevent further devastation. When planting yard or ornamental trees, homeowners within regulated areas should select varieties that ALB does not prefer. Host trees include maple (Norway, sugar, silver, and red), birch, horse chestnut, poplar, willow, elm, and ash. They should adhere to current quarantines and regulations in their area concerning the movement of host material, firewood, and other wood products.

Homeowners may also visually inspect tree health by keeping a close watch for signs of distress that may occur as the result of an infestation. Indicators of distress may include dead leaves during normal seasonal conditions, excessive sawdust buildup near tree bases and tree crotches, excessive sap oozing from trees, and random holes in trees measuring approximately three-eighths of an inch or about the diameter of a dime.

#### If you suspect an Asian longhorned beetle infestation, call

United States Department of Agriculture — New York  
(631) 598-5943 or 1-866-265-0301

New York State Department of Agriculture: 1-800-554-4501 ext.72087

City of New York Parks and Recreation: 1-800-201-PARK (800-201-7275)

Trees New York: 1-877-STOPALB (877-786-7252)

For more information: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ep/alb/index.html>



Illustration by: Joel Floyd, USDA, APHIS, PPQ

**FREE NATURE WALKS TO POND AND PARK FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS**

WITH EXPERIENCED NATURALISTS—ALL ON STATEN ISLAND!

**NOTE:** THE SYMBOL (♦) INDICATES THIS WALK RECEIVED FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE NYC ENVIRONMENTAL FUND.

**Saturday, February 5, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.**

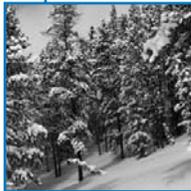
♦ **Great Kills Park Winter Waterfowl with Howie Fischer**—Find out which birds remain here during winter, or move south from more severe northern weather. Learn how local bird populations manage to survive during this season. In the beach and dune area, look for horned larks, snow buntings and, with great luck, the almost pure-white snowy owl; out in the bay, certainly ducks and gulls, possibly grebes, loons, brant and cormorants. Dress very warmly for the weather. Meet in parking area off Hylan Blvd., opposite Buffalo Street. For more information phone Howie at (718) 981-4002.

**Sunday, February 6, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

♦ **Long Pond, Tottenville's newest Pond Park**—A one- to two-mile tour of the woodlands, ponds and wetlands in the Long Pond Park area. Take a leisurely two-hour stroll with naturalist, science educator and columnist, Clay Wollney. Both youngsters and adults are invited to share Clay's reminiscences of his childhood roaming this area and learn of its natural history and the succession of habitats that has occurred over the years. Meet at PS 6, 555 Page Avenue, about 3 blocks NW of Hylan Blvd. Phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 for details.

**Saturday, February 12, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

♦ **Forest Restoration Workshop**—High Rock from Nevada Avenue to Hour Glass. Meet in the Nevada Avenue Parking lot at High Rock. If you are late, walk along the Loosestrife Swamp and take the right trail to Hour Glass Pond. Gloves, plants, tools and refreshments provided. We may plant a few additional shrubs and trees, check on our highbush cranberry plantings, as well as remove all the new invasive vegetation. Then play the game "Find All the Green." It never completely disappears. We'll do an evergreen plant count by species. Call Dick Buegler for more information at (718) 761-7496.



**Wednesday, February 23, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

♦ **Owl Prowl at High Rock Park**—Join Cliff Hagen as he uses his realistic owl calls to coax local screech or great horned owls from afar to nearby trees overhead where they can be observed by strong beam and encouraged to call back. Dress

very warmly and carry your own light. Park outside the parking lot gate at Nevada Avenue, which gets locked at about 5 p.m. For more information phone Cliff at (718) 227-8839 or Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496.

**Wednesday, February 23, Snow or Wolf Full Moon, 5:10 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.**

**Sunset Moonrise Walk at Mt. Moses**—Sunset is at 5:41 p.m. and moonrise is 27 minutes earlier at 5:14 p.m., shortly after we meet. It takes another 20 minutes to rise above the hills of High Rock so we'll have to go promptly up Mt. Moses to see the moonrise occur. Meet at the entry road to Eger Home at the intersection of Rockland and Meisner Avenues. Bring a light refreshment to share with others and a flashlight for each person in your group. Please dress warmly. The walk is barely fif-

teen minutes each way. On the way to the intersection see the hundreds of shrubs, trees and wildflowers that DEP planted in the flood control system that has worked well in heavy rains. Call Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 for more details.

**Thursday, February 24, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

♦ **Owl Prowl at Blue Heron Park**—Join Cliff Hagen as he uses his realistic owl calls to coax local screech or great horned owls from afar to nearby trees overhead where they can be observed by strong beam and encouraged to call back. Dress very warmly and each carry your own flashlight. Park in Blue Heron's lot on Poillon Ave. For more information phone Cliff at (718) 227-8839 or Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496.

**Saturday, February 26, 10 a.m. to 12 noon**

♦ **The Wildlife of Mt. Loretto Unique Area**—Join Ed Johnson, science curator and author from the Staten Island Museum, in welcoming the return of sunlight at our most beautiful park. This will be a general winter walk with ocean views through the fields and wetlands of Mt. Loretto and along the bluff, the focus being on birds and any other wildlife that might be present. For two months the days have become longer and we are only a month away from spring. Get to know the many different habitats of this newest of Staten Island's state parks: the meadows, the freshwater ponds and streams, the vast pastures recently mowed, the forest trees around and the ocean shoreline. Meet in the parking lot opposite Kenny Road on Hylan Blvd. For more information phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 or Ed at the Museum, (718) 727-1135, ext. 16.



**Sunday, February 27, 10 a.m. to 12 noon**

♦ **The Wildlife of Mt. Loretto Unique Area**—Join Seth Wollney from the Staten Island Museum in welcoming the return of sunlight. For two months the days have become longer and we are only a month away from spring. Get to know the many different habitats of this newest of Staten Island's state parks: the meadows, the freshwater ponds and streams, the vast pastures recently mowed, the forest trees around and the ocean shoreline. Skunk cabbage should be in flower and buds are swelling on many trees and shrubs. Meet in the parking lot opposite Kenny Road on Hylan Blvd. For more information phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 or Seth at the Museum, (718) 727-1135.

**Sunday, February 27, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Patterns of Spring at High Rock, First Session**—As warmth replaces cold and days lengthen, forests and fields turn from brown to yellow-green to deep green. Another growing season begins. Take part in this unique experience where we take a close look at the changes taking place at High Rock Park over four different points in the season. Participants are encouraged to attend all four sessions and keep a journal of notes from each field trip. Meet at 12:15 p.m. at High Rock parking lot at the top of Nevada Avenue. Bring beverage and snacks, binoculars, notebook and pencil. For more details call walk leader Hillel Lofaso at (718) 447-2220. (Also, March 13, April 10 and May 15.)



### **Saturday, March 5, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

◆ **Long Pond, Tottenville's Newest Pond Park**—A one- to two-mile tour of the woodlands, ponds and wetlands in the Long Pond Park area. Take a leisurely two-hour stroll with naturalist, science educator and columnist, Clay Wollney. Share Clay's

reminiscences of his childhood roaming this area and learn of its natural history and the succession of habitats. Meet at PS 6, on Page Avenue, about 3 blocks NW of Hylan Blvd. at 2:00 p.m. Phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 for details.

### **Sunday, March 6, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.**

◆ **Late Winter Birds and Ducks at Mt. Loretto**—If not frozen, the ponds will have a variety of waterfowl and the waters of the lower bay are sometimes crowded with flocks of ducks, geese, grebes, gulls and cormorants. Be sure to dress warmly. Meet in the parking lot on Hylan Blvd opposite the CYO and Kenny Road. For more information phone Howie Fischer at (718) 981-4002.

### **Saturday, March 12, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

◆ **Forest Restoration Workshop**— Buck's Hollow, Intersection of Blue and White Trails. Gloves, tools, plants and refreshments will be provided. Meet at the foot of Light House Hill, Meisner Avenue and Rockland Avenue. This site still needs a lot of attention with removal of invasive vines and additional shrub and tree planting to replace the dying Norway maples. We will walk past the new wetland restoration (BMP 8) and enjoy the trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers planted there by DEP. We'll also check the BMP8 Bluebelt restoration at Meisner Ave and plant a few trees or shrubs at this major restoration location. For more information phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 or Chuck Perry at (718) 667-1393.

### **Sunday March 13, 10 a.m. to 12 noon**

◆ **Conference House Park with Seth Wollney**—Seth will introduce you to the ecology of the park, including the NY State rare hackberry, a member of the elm family. (Perhaps he'll locate some of the witches broom, which causes disfigured growth in trees infected by a mite.) Taste one of the berries to see why it is called sugarberry. His walk will include a discussion of Staten Island's Lenape Indians who have left much evidence of their presence here as well as the history of the colonial Conference House during the Revolutionary War period. Meet in the new parking lot at the southern end of Hylan Blvd. For more information phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 or Seth at the Museum, (718) 727-1135.

### **Sunday, March 13, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Patterns of Spring at High Rock, Second Session**—As warmth replaces cold and days lengthen, forests and fields turn from brown to yellow-green to deep green. Another growing season begins. Take part in this unique experience where we take a close look at the changes taking place at High Rock Park over four different points in the season. Participants are encouraged to attend all four sessions and keep a journal of notes. Meet at 12:15 p.m. at High Rock parking lot at the top of Nevada Avenue. Bring beverage and snacks, binoculars, notebook and pencil. Call walk leader Hillel Lofaso at (718) 447-2220. (Also April 10 and May 15.)

### **Saturday, March 19, 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**The Sweetwater Project, an Environmental Disaster**—Join Shirlee Marraconi of the Turn Around Friends and Protectors of Pine Oak Woods in a tour of

the Sweetwater Estates site in Great Kills where builder Savo intends to cram 123 one- and two-family homes, recently approved by the City Planning Commission. The development will cause severe flooding for the surrounding neighbors. Dick Buegler will co-lead and have comments about the endangered natural resources of the site. Meet at the end of Nelson Avenue in Great Kills by the gate of Seaside Nature Park. For more information, phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496.

### **Sunday, March 20, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.**

◆ **Early Spring Woodland Migrant Birds at High Rock Park**—You may be surprised what birds have begun to move north already, now that we have 12 hours of daylight. You will easily spot the resident robins, blue jays and cardinals. Howie Fischer will introduce you to the early migrants such as the phoebe. Listen for the spring peepers and find the strange flower of the skunk cabbage. This is a wonderful chance to introduce your children to a lifetime appreciation of nature around us. Meet in the parking lot at end of Nevada Avenue. For more information phone Howie at (718) 981-4002.

### **Friday, March 25, Lenten or Sap Full Moon, 5:45 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.**

**Sunset Moonrise Walk at Mt. Moses**—Sunset is at 6:14 p.m. and so is moonrise, half an hour after we meet. It takes another 20 minutes for the moon to rise above the hills of High Rock so we'll have to go promptly up Mt. Moses to see both events. Meet at the entry road to Eger Home at the intersection of Rockland and Meisner Avenues. Bring a light refreshment to share with others and a flashlight for each person in your group. Please dress warmly. The walk is barely fifteen minutes each way. On the way, see the hundreds of shrubs, trees and wildflowers that DEP planted in the BMP8 flood control system that has worked well, so far, in heavy rains. Call Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 for more information.

### **Saturday, March 26, 10 a.m. to 12 noon**

◆ **Early Spring Walk at Conference House Park**—Ed Johnson knows amphibians and reptiles, as well as the early spring migrant birds, the trees and early spring wildflowers of this southernmost Staten Island park. He'll introduce you to the NY State rare hackberry grove, a tree, relative to the American elm, which harbors a minute mite that causes witches broom growths in the branches. Try a few of the dried berries to see why it is known as the sugarberry tree. The Lenape Indians left many artifacts in this area, long before the early settlers built this colonial house, famous during the Revolutionary War and now a historical house and museum. For more information phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 or Ed Johnson at the S.I. Museum, (718) 727-1135, ext. 16.

### **Wednesday, March 30, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.**

#### **Protectors' Spring Semi-Annual Members' Meeting**

#### **ANGER TO STATEN ISLAND'S TREES FROM THE ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE**

Protectors becomes the Staten Island watchdog committee to discover any new invasion of this Chinese, tree-killing insect. It is a serious pest which has already invaded a large number of trees in Carteret, New Jersey, only a short mile or so across the Arthur Kill. New Jersey Forestry has declared a quarantine around the infected area. We expect speakers from NY State DEC and from New Jersey Department of Forestry that have been battling this imported pest in both states for several years. The meeting will be held at the new **Greenbelt Nature Center** on Rockland Avenue, at the intersection of Brielle Avenue. For more information phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496. (See also the article on page 4.)

### **Saturday, April 2, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**The Ancient Forest Trees of Wolfe's Pond Park**—Meet at the far right corner of the parking lot at the end of Cornelia Avenue, near the rest rooms. In an easy two miles, large numbers of trees, 200 to 300 years old will be examined in Staten Island's most ancient forest. Walk up a short hill and view the broad flood plain forest of this major Bluebelt stream. Call Dick Buegler (718) 761-7496 for more information.

### **Saturday, April 9, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

◆ **Forest Restoration Workshop**—Southwest Latourette, Meet at St Andrews Parking lot. We will want to check on all our numerous planting sites along Old Mill Road and especially along the upper trail where we worked in December. We'll free many plants from the invasive honeysuckle that is taking over. Gloves, plants, tools and refreshments provided. We will plant additional shrubs and trees. Call Dick Buegler for more information at (718) 761-7496.

### **Saturday, April 9, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

◆ **Conference House Park with Clay Wollney**—Clay will introduce you to the ecology of the park including the NY State rare Hackberry, a member of the elm family. (Perhaps he'll locate some of the witches broom that causes disfigured growth in trees infected by a mite.) Taste one of the berries to see why it is called sugarberry. Look for spring flowers and many kinds of birds, migrating and local. Enjoy the view of Raritan Bay and Perth Amboy across the water. Ask Clay about Staten Island's Lenape Indians who have left much evidence of their presence here as well as the history of the colonial Conference House during the Revolutionary War. For more information phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496.

### **Sunday, April 10, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.**

◆ **Early Migrant Warblers at Mt. Loretto Unique Area**—Don't expect to recognize most of these warblers at first sight since there are at least 40 different species of these small beautiful, singing birds. Let Howie Fischer introduce you to America's favorite spring birds. Howie is also familiar with many of the different warbler songs. We'll look for common snipe, more visible when flushed giving its rapid, sharply zig-zagging flight and the meadowlark with a black V on its breast. This bird nests on the ground making a grass cup with a dome shaped roof. Bring your children who are fascinated by birds. Meet in the parking lot on Hylan Blvd opposite the CYO and Kenny Road. This can be one of those experiences that make you want to return again and again. For more information phone Howie at (718) 981-4002.

### **Sunday, April 10, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

**All-Day Botanical Tour of Bloodroot Valley and High Rock Park**—Meet with Torrey Botanical Society at 10 a.m. on the Passenger Pickup Ramp of S. I. Ferry Terminal or at 10:30 a.m. at Manor Rd. side of S. Wagner High School. This could be the peak blooming of our native bloodroot. Lunch and beverage are a must. Wear foot gear for wet walking. Call Dick Buegler, (718) 761-7496 to make your reservation (attendance limited) or arrange car pool.

### **Sunday, April 10, 12:30p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Patterns of Spring at High Rock, Third session**—As warmth replaces cold and days lengthen, forests and fields turn from brown to yellow-green to deep green. Another growing season begins. Take part in this unique experience where

we take a close look at the changes taking place at High Rock Park over four different points in the season. Participants are encouraged to attend all four sessions and keep a journal of notes. Meet at 12:15 p.m. at High Rock parking lot at the top of Nevada Avenue. Bring beverage and snacks, binoculars, notebook and pencil. Call walk leader Hillel Lofaso at (718) 447-2220 (**also May 15**).

### **Sunday April 10, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.**

◆ **More Early Migrant Warblers, at Mt. Loretto Unique Area**—A special treat for those of you who could not get out this morning. We are interested in how different the morning's bird species list will be from this afternoon's list. We wonder how many 9 a.m. walkers will bring lunch and stay after the morning's walk to join us. This walk will be led by Seth Wollney. Meet in the parking lot on Hylan Blvd. opposite Kenny Road. For more information phone Seth at the S.I. Museum, (718) 727-1135.

### **Saturday, April 23, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

**Celebrate Earth Day at Bloomingdale Park in Early Spring**—See Staten Island's second-best spring wildflower display in a 2-mile stroll of a mature forest and along a classic meandering stream. Meet at the intersection of Maguire Avenue and Drumgoole Road West. Wear sturdy shoes and bring a light refreshment. For more information call Dick Buegler at (718)761-7496.

### **Saturday, April 23, Grass or Egg Full Moon, 7:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.**

**Sunset Moonrise Walk at Mt. Moses**—Sunset is at 7:44 p.m. and moonrise is 32 minutes earlier at 7:12 p.m, shortly before we meet. It takes another 20 minutes to rise above the hills of High Rock so we'll have to go promptly up Mt. Moses to see the moonrise occur over the High Rock Hills. Meet at the entry road to Eger Home at the intersection of Rockland and Meisner Avenues. Bring a light refreshment to share with others and a flashlight for each person in your group. Please dress warmly. The walk is barely fifteen minutes each way. On the way past the intersection, see the hundreds of shrubs, trees and wildflowers and grasses, getting ready to bloom, that DEP planted in the BMP8 flood control system that has worked well, so far, in heavy rains. Call Dick Buegler (718) 761-7496 for more information.

### **Sunday, April 24, 10 a.m. to 12 noon**

◆ **Clove Lakes Park for Early Bird Migrations**—Meet Seth Wollney at the Martling's Ave. Bridge. There are always wonderful surprises of birds just looking down from the bridge and then along the paved path by the stream and woods below. For more information phone Seth at the SI Museum, (718) 727-1135.

### **Sunday, April 24, 1 p.m. to 3:30 pm**

**Corson's Brook Woods, Staten Island's Greatest Secret**—Celebrate Earth Day with a visit to A MAGNIFICENT NATIVE WILDFLOWER DISPLAY. See tens of thousands of white spring beauties, hundreds of trout lilies in bloom, plus wild leek, Canada mayflower and skunk cabbage galore. Meet on Forest Hill Road, corner of Jasper St., opposite rear entrance road to CSI. Expect some wet walking. Few places can match this display of tree, shrub, wildflower and fern biodiversity in 21 acres. It also has the rare bladdernut, corn lily, zigzag goldenrod and dwarf ginseng. Please bring cameras. For more information phone Dick Buegler (718) 761-7496.



**Saturday, April 30, 10 a.m. to 12 noon**

◆ **Willowbrook Park, Pond, Wetlands and Forest**—Lots of wildflowers including wild ginger and lesser celandine. We'll be looking for frogs, salamanders and other wildlife. The focus will be on the large number of spring migrant birds, featuring warblers and vireos, among other birds, most of whom will continue on north to near arctic areas. Your children should enjoy this walk very much. Discover how rich the woods are behind the Carousel for all Children. Meet in the parking lot just west of the entrance to the College of Staten Island off Victory Blvd. For more information phone Ed Johnson, S.I. Museum, (718) 727-1135, ext. 16.

**Sunday, May 1, 10 a.m. to 12 noon**

◆ **Clove Lakes Park for a Spring Warbler Short Walk**—Meet Seth Wollney at the Marling's Ave. Bridge. Most people miss the wide variety of birds in our most-visited city park. There are always wonderful surprises just looking down from the bridge and then along the stream and woods below. Enjoy pleasant streamside walking on paved paths with our newest trip leader who has spent his youth out-of-doors. Phone Seth at the SI Museum, (718) 727-1135.

**Sunday, May 1, 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**Clay Pit Ponds State Park/Preserve: Trees and Wildlife in a Mini Pine Barren**—Find out why Protectors urged the preservation of this parkland and how we got our name in 1975. It has rare pine trees, two rare southern oak species, fence swift lizards, and a few rather unusual wildflowers, nothing like our Greenbelt forest. Meet at the park office at the end of Carlin Avenue, off Sharrotts Road in Rossville. Call Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496 for more information.

**Saturday, May 7, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.**

◆ **The Birds and Wildlife of Clove Lakes Park**—Our most-visited community park still has more than its fair share of birds and other wildlife. Ed Johnson includes Clove Lakes almost more than any other S.I. site in his Advance nature column. Meet at the Marling's Avenue Bridge and bring your binoculars. You can actually look down on many of these neotropical migrating birds (they are much more interesting from above and five times prettier). You might see many types of warblers who spent their winter from Mexico to South America, vireos migrating from Argentina to Canada, scarlet tanagers up from South America and grosbeaks that wintered in Mexico and Central America. For more information, phone Ed at the SI Museum, (718) 727-1135, ext. 16.

**Saturday, May 7, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**36th Annual Spring Ten-Mile Walk of the SI Greenbelt**—Ten moderate miles at a comfortable pace. See wonderful vistas, beautiful woodlands and the blooming of the pinxter azalea, highbush blueberry and Canada mayflower. Meet at the foot bridge leading to the Clove Lakes Café. Bring lunch, beverage and sturdy walking shoes as well as camera, binoculars and field guides. We go in all weather but walk shortened if high pollution levels occur. Call Dick Buegler at (718)761-7496, Herman Zaage at (718) 727-0772 or Chuck Perry at (718) 667-1393 for more information.

**Saturday, May 7, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

◆ **Long Pond, Tottenville's Newest Pond Park**—A one- to two-mile tour of the woodlands, ponds and wetlands in the Long Pond Park area. Take a

leisurely two-hour stroll with naturalist, science educator and columnist, Clay Wollney. Share Clay's reminiscences of his childhood roaming this area and learn of its natural history and the succession of habitats that has occurred over the years. Perhaps the Royal Paulownia or Princess tree will be in bloom with its magnificent upright light-lavender flower clusters and foot-long heart-shaped leaves which follow. Meet at PS 6, on Page Avenue, about 3 blocks NW of Hylan Blvd. at 2:00 p.m. Phone Dick Buegler (718) 761-7496 for more information.

**Saturday, May 7, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

**Nature Photography Walk at Blue Heron Park**—Join Don Riepe, one of NYC's top naturalists, authors and nature photographers, in an opportunity to learn new photo techniques with a slide presentation followed by a nature photography walk. Meet at Blue Heron Nature Center, Poillon Avenue. Be sure to bring your lunch, beverage and cameras. Phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496.

**Saturday May 14, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

◆ **Forest Restoration Workshop**—Greta Moulton and Abandoned Home-site at High Rock. Meet in the Nevada Avenue Parking lot at High Rock. If you are late, walk to the first bend of the entry road and follow the yellow trail to the green trail to our working location. Gloves, plants, tools and refreshments provided. We will plant additional shrubs and trees, check on our highbush cranberry, the ten year old tuliptree and oak tree plantings as well as remove all the new invasive vegetation that persists in returning. Call Dick Buegler for more information at (718) 761-7496.

**Saturday May 14, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

◆ **Conference House Park with Clay Wollney**—Clay will introduce you to the ecology of the park including the NY State rare Hackberry, a member of the elm family. (Perhaps he'll locate some of the witches broom that causes disfigured growth in trees infected by a mite.) Taste some of the berries to see why the tree is called sugarberry. Look for spring flowers and many kinds of birds. Enjoy the view of Raritan Bay and Perth Amboy across the water. Ask Clay about Staten Island's Lenape Indians who have left much evidence of their presence here as well as the history of the colonial Conference House during the Revolutionary War. For more information phone Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496.

**Sunday, May 15, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

**A Second Visit to Bloomingdale Park in Late Spring**—Enjoy a wildflower and woodland display in a 2-mile stroll of a mature forest, along a classic meandering stream. Meet at the intersection of Maguire Avenue and Drumgoole Road West. Wear sturdy shoes and bring a light refreshment. For more information call Dick Buegler at (718) 761-7496.

**Sunday, May 15, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Patterns of Spring at High Rock, Fourth Session**—As warmth replaces cold and days lengthen, forests and fields turn from brown to yellow-green to deep green. Another growing season begins. Take part in this unique experience where we take a close look at the changes taking place at High Rock Park over four different points in the season. Participants are encouraged to attend all four sessions and keep a journal. Meet at 12:15 p.m. at High Rock parking lot at the top of Nevada Avenue. Bring beverage and snacks, binoculars, notebook and pencil. Call walk leader Hillel Lofaso at (718) 447-2220 for more details.

## GREEN ALL OVER THE GREENBELT IN MIDWINTER

ONLY THREE INTREPID forester volunteers appeared in the midst of a heavy downpour for Protectors' 103rd Forest Restoration Workshop in the Greta Moulton Tract at High Rock in the Greenbelt. With no shrubs or trees to plant on hand, the team did a survey of old plantings along the yellow trail leading to Manor Road.

We first began a check of our planting of many hundreds of highbush cranberry, a shrubby viburnum quite similar to the maple leaved viburnum with a tart, edible bright red oval berry. Within a few minutes we found more than a dozen healthy plants with buds on the hillside overlooking the Nevada Avenue parking lot along with a few discarded pots we should have removed. We were careful to remove any obvious tags we had originally placed so that the plants are no longer easily found by the untrained eye. The original steeply sloped trail was redesigned as a more gentle zigzag to reduce erosion. On either trail side, we found many clusters of the evergreen round-leaved pyrola which at first we thought was spotted wintergreen

which we also found later in a nearby woodland. The pyrola was easily propagating new plants all along the trail, most likely by seed, since the plant flowers extensively annually. Finding evergreen wildflower plants is a very good sign of a healthy forest floor with little disturbance from human traffic. At the same location we found an opposite leaved vine with green leaves which we all knew was Japanese honeysuckle. We were sure to uproot every local specimen to give the pyrola a better chance to take over. We examined a single one-foot tall American holly which we agreed could become a holly tree if left undisturbed, growing as high as 35 to 40 feet like the large specimen in front of the Clay Pit Ponds staff houses.

The other evergreens we identified were either white pine, Canadian hemlock or Japanese yew. Most of the forest was deciduous, but even some of those trees had not shed their lower dried leaves. We found a large number of young American beech trees almost wherever we looked. We can safely predict that our High Rock forest, after a hundred or so years, will become an old-growth deciduous woodland dominated by American beech, a handsome sight to envision.

—Dick Buegler, from notes taken on Saturday, January 9



**NEW MEMBERS:** Mr. & Mrs. A. Barone, Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Bramante, Joan Chiacchiero, Charles Cutler (a gift from Philip & Arlene Cutler), George Garis, Claire Jakubowski, Edward Manganel, Frank & Phyllis Petito, Terry Shapiro, Adrienne Stakofsky, The Treglia Family

**PATRON:** Jane & Robert Adamski, Fred & Christine Baumann, Brian & Gladys Diran, Virginia Hill, Stephanie McCullough, Evelyn Otten MacDonald, Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Pettigrew, Terry Shapiro

**CONTRIBUTING:** Mimi Aloia, Rose Ancona, Ken Baer, Mr. & Mrs. A. Barone, Helen Bialer, Mr. & Mrs. Alfred Caime, Thomas & Barbara Coffey, Glenn Cronick, Rita Gentile & Dante, Ira & Joyce Goldstein, Daniel Jablon & Amy Winkler, Rabbi David & Nancy Katz, Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Kelly, Elizabeth Mazes & Family, Susan & George McAnanama, Edith Miraldi, Adrienne Stakofsky, Mary Wheeler

**PROTECTORS' DEFENSE FUND:** Catherine Barron (Life member), Mildred Broderidge, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Cosentino, Glenn Cronick, Adele Eines, Rita Gentile & Dante, Edward Manganel, Michael Manna, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Perry (Life members), Mariko Perry, Stephen Petrowicz (Life member), Elise Schmaus, Paul C. Schwartz (Life member), Barbara Shelp

If you want to be on Protectors' E-mail Network list and receive our latest action alerts and descriptions of our fabulous walks, just send me your E-mail address.

Wishing you all the best in 2005!

—Sylvia Zaage (sylhz@earthlink.net)

CLIP AND MAIL

### PROTECTORS OF PINE OAK WOODS



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ORGANIZATION

## ARE YOU A MEMBER? HAVE YOU RENEWED?

YES, I WANT TO HELP STATEN ISLAND'S FINEST REMAINING NATURAL AREAS AND SEE THE GREENBELT PROTECTED.

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- \$100.00...Donor (includes 2 lapel pins)\*
- \$100.00 & Up...Corporate (includes 2 lapel pins)\*
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Already a member? Please use this form to continue to generously support Protectors' Defense Fund or other projects.

Enclosed is an additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to defray special expenses for

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**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVES SWEETWATER ESTATES**

*(continued from page 2)*

bureaucracy’s paperwork and they have to approve his project, regardless of what they see with their own eyes and hear from residents who know the neighborhood? Aren’t they, as members of the City Planning Commission, obligated to consider each project in terms of planning? Or are they just rubber stamps for developers with the juice to get questionable projects through the system?

If that’s all they are, then what’s the point, really, of having a City Planning Commission?

Because in the case of Sweetwater Estates, what the members of the City Planning Commission have approved—have planned—is a project that will forever alter the quality of life in this love-

*Ed. Note:* Protectors thanks the *Staten Island Advance* for permission to reprint this editorial.

ly corner of Great Kills, and not for the better. In this case, what they’ve planned is a lot of problems, not just for the people who already live in that part of Great Kills, but for all the people who move into the development.

How they could do that and still say they are fulfilling their official responsibilities is beyond us.

**TPL APPLAUDS OUR WORK**

*Ed. Note:* Ellen Pratt received the following letter from Eric Kulleseid, N.Y. State Director and Clark Wallace, Project Manager, of the Trust for Public Land (TPL).

“We are pleased to thank you for your partnership on the acquisition of the former Staten Island Marina property in the West Brighton neighborhood of Staten Island. Without you, we would not have been able to make this newest city park a reality.

“The former Staten Island Marina property consists of 4 acres of land along the Kill Van Kull. It is located in West Brighton, a community suffering from a lack of parks and recreational opportunities. Despite living next to the Kill Van Kull, area residents have not been able to access the waterfront due to its legacy of heavy industry.

“For many years, local residents have been calling for a new park in order to provide open space and waterfront access.

“In February 2004, TPL purchased the site from Karl and Werner Blissenbach, using funds provided by the Port Authority of NY & NJ and donated it to NYC’s Department of Parks & Recreation.

“TPL is proud to have played a role in the property’s protection, and is grateful to you for your contribution to making it happen. Thank you again for your efforts.”

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SEE INSERT INSIDE**

**SAVE THE DATE: PROTECTORS SEMI-ANNUAL  
SPRING MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 6:30 P.M.-9 P.M.  
GREENBELT NATURE CENTER**

**MEMBERS, PLEASE CHECK THE MAILING LABEL.  
IF YOU DON'T SEE 2005 OR LIFE, YOUR MEMBERSHIP  
HAS EXPIRED. PLEASE, RENEW TODAY!**