



## HELP GOSA SAVE THE UNIQUE HABITAT OF PLUM ISLAND

The Federal General Services Administration (GSA) has issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the proposed sale of Plum Island and is accepting comments from the public. Their DEIS has no preferred option to protect the unique habitat of this island, which has had very little development since this region was first settled by Europeans. Plum Island, located off the western end of Fisher's Island, is a unique laboratory of undisturbed habitats. Help GOSA and other groups like Audubon persuade the federal government to protect this special place.

### COME TO A PUBLIC HEARING AND SPEAK OUT FOR PROTECTING PLUM ISLAND

**Wednesday, October 17**

Saybrook Inn & Spa, 2 Bridge St., Old Saybrook

5:00 PM - Doors open (We recommend arriving at 5:00)

6:00 PM - Presentation by General Services Administration followed by public comments until 8:00 PM

or

### SEND IN YOUR COMMENTS SUPPORTING PROTECTION

Your statement can be very short, just a few sentences expressing your views on permanently protecting Plum Island habitat. If hundreds of people speak up, the federal government will listen! Use the talking points below to express the points that mean the most to you.

### WRITTEN COMMENT WILL BE ACCEPTED UNTIL OCTOBER 26

Send your comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Plum Island by fax or e-mail to:

Phil Youngberg c/o John Dugan  
GSA, 10 Causeway Street, Room 925  
Boston, MA 02222  
Fax: 617-565-5720.

Email: [phil.youngberg@gsa.gov](mailto:phil.youngberg@gsa.gov), [john.dugan@gsa.gov](mailto:john.dugan@gsa.gov) (If e-mailing, best to send as attachment) For more information on the DEIS, visit [www.plumislandny.com](http://www.plumislandny.com).

**Be sure and e-mail or send a copy of your comments to GOSA at: [gosamail@gmail.com](mailto:gosamail@gmail.com)**

### BACKGROUND AND TALKING POINTS

Plum Island has a fascinating history. It was the site of Fort Terry, a U.S. military base established in 1897 that guarded the mouth of Long Island Sound from the Spanish-American War through World War II. It is also the site of the Plum Island Lighthouse, built in 1869. In recent decades it has been the home of the Plum Island Animal Disease Lab run by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Human development has affected only a small part of the island. The rest has remained wild and been the

home of countless sea and wading birds as well as seals. In 2008, the U.S. Congress passed legislation requiring the federal government to close the lab if a replacement is built. A replacement is planned for Manhattan, Kansas, so the General Services Administration has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, as required by law, to describe the possible impacts of the proposed sale.

In the view of GOSA and other Connecticut environmental groups, the DEIS is severely flawed because it does not recommend either continued federal protection under another agency such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) nor does it propose sale only to a conservation organization such as The Nature Conservancy. If the final EIS does not change, the federal government will simply propose selling Plum Island to the highest bidder.

### **Points You Can Make in Your Comments**

\*The General Services Administration has the power to help protect Plum Island. In the final EIS, the GSA should recommend a conservation sale which would protect the critical undeveloped habitats, which could be added to the USFWS reserve system, while allowing the already-developed portion of the island to be sold for low-impact reuse, perhaps for a research program by a university or other entity.

\*GSA should ensure that any sale of Plum Island is conditioned. A transfer of ownership must include requirements that preserve critical habitat and avoid damage to the island ecosystem caused by inappropriate development.

\*Plum Island's 843 acres are comprised of a remarkable diversity of habitat types, including wetland, coastal forest, scrub, dune, marine, rocky, intertidal, and more. It is a microcosm of Long Island Sound as a whole—of value not only for the amount of habitat it contains, but for its concentration. It could be a living classroom.

\*Plum Island was named a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Coastal Areas Study habitat area of significance. It, along with the nearby Great Gull and Little Gull Islands, was named a Long Island Sound Stewardship Area by the Long Island Sound Study, which is a partnership among Connecticut, New York, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Now both Plum and Little Gull are threatened. As such, it is in the governmental interest to preserve its critical habitats, but unfortunately it seems that federal agencies are not talking to one another to identify conservation priorities.

\*Plum Island is an important stopover point for migratory birds on the Atlantic Flyway, as well as a bustling nesting area. The island hosts endangered roseate terns as well as common terns, and nearby Great Gull Island is home to one of the largest roseate tern colonies on the East Coast. Plum Island's secluded beaches provide a safe area for threatened piping plovers to nest and raise young, which on more populated shores often fall victim to dogs, cats, or careless visitors. Osprey, common eider, and other at-risk birds also breed on the island. For all these reasons, the National Audubon Society has recognized Plum Island as an Important Bird Area. The federal government has an interest in protecting these habitats under the Endangered Species Act.

\*The rocks around Plum Island are the most significant haul-out area for harbor seals and grey seals in southern New England. Critically endangered northern right whales frequent the area, and surrounding eelgrass meadows have the potential to support sea turtles.

\*The wetlands and coastal forest habitats of Plum Island are home to at least sixteen rare plant species, including spring ladies' tresses (a rare orchid with a large population on the island), American fireweed, sedges and rushes that are endangered in New York, and carnivorous plants.



**GOSA News** will support the mission and purpose of the Groton Open Space Association by publishing electronic newsletters that will inform the public of past, present and future GOSA activities and threats to the health of open space. *GOSA News* will also serve as a link to the GOSA website <http://gosaonline.org/> for additional information and as a link to other key sites. Our mission is to inform and inspire the public to become actively involved. We welcome letters to the editor. Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address and daytime phone number via e-mail to: [gosamail@gmail.com](mailto:gosamail@gmail.com).

### **GOSA Mission and Purpose**

To work to promote conservation, environmental preservation, open space and recreational areas in Southeastern Connecticut.

To educate the public about the value of open space, conservation and environmental preservation.

To enlist public support and funding to promote, acquire or maintain open space for public use, alone or in cooperation with local, state or federal agencies, or with other nonprofit organizations. GOSA is a nonprofit tax exempt organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3).

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#### **Membership**

To join, send a check to GOSA and include your name, address and e-mail. Annual dues are \$10 per year.

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