

CCOM



NPV

# Benson Reserve Habitat Restoration

**Rusty Schmidt** – Landscape Ecologist  
Nelson Pope and Voorhis

**Jeremy Samuelson** - Director of Planning  
Town of East Hampton

**Jaime LeDuc** - Director of Environmental Advocacy  
Concerned Citizens of Montauk

September 11, 2023 Montauk Citizens Advisory Committee

# BENSON RESERVE HABITAT RESTORATION

## **An East Hampton Town (EHT) Priority**

Benson Reserve has been an EHT priority for several years.

Proposed invasive species management plan has been supported by the following for the purposes of submitting a grant application subject to public hearing:

- EHT Board (grant application endorsing resolution 8/8/23 see appendix)
- Planning Department
- Natural Resources Department
- EHT Legal Department

### **Other supporting organizations:**

- Montauk Chamber of Commerce
- Long Island Invasive Species Management Area



# WHAT IS **The Benson Reserve?**

- 40-acres along 0.7 miles situated between the ocean beach and the Old Montauk Highway, just west of town.
- This property was acquired by the Town in 1999 with support from CCOM and other community groups.
- Public trails provide extensive public access to the beach.
- Historic pictures and vegetation documents indicate that it was predominately native plants--grassland with some beach plum, bayberry and viburnum shrubs. Today the vegetation has a high proportion of invasives near the road, and a large amount of natives nearer to the beach.

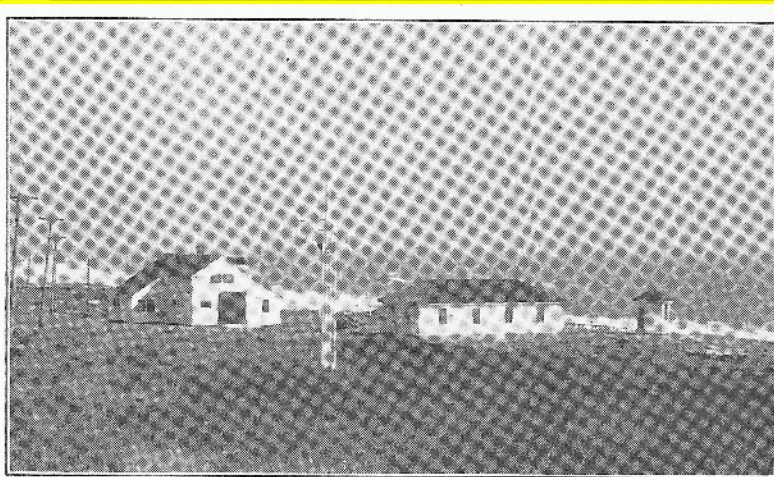


EAST END - LINCOLN TO MONTAUK HWY

Source: Invasive Species Adaptive Management Plan

CONTINUED

# The Benson Reserve - Historic Condition 1900-1920's



HITHER PLAIN STATION (Post Office address Montauk,  
Long Island, N. Y.)

(LOCATED SOUTH ½ MILE OF FORT POND)  
TELEPHONE — AMAGANSETT 120

(AT PRESENT IN INACTIVE STATUS)

WILLIAM HAWLEY, B.M.16 (L), OFFICER IN CHARGE



CONTINUED

**The Benson Reserve - Historic Condition mid 1960's**



CONTINUED

## The Benson Reserve - Historic Condition mid 1960's



# Site and Ecological Assessment

In partnership with the EHT and Rusty Schmidt, a renowned landscape ecologist with environmental planning firm Nelson, Pope & Voorhis (NPV), CCOM have been studying the property since 2021 and has been developing plans for a comprehensive 10-year habitat restoration project.

Drone photography, field observations, soil sampling and topographical mapping identified invasive vegetation and fauna species.

Three distinct vegetation zones identified:

## **Upper Zone (16 acres)**

closest to Old Montauk Hwy dominated by invasive species with few native species

## **Middle Zone**

is partially invasive and partial native

## **Lower Zone**

closest to beach - primarily native vegetation with some invasive species – no action required







# Site and Ecological Assessment



## BIRDS OBSERVED

- |                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| American Robin       | Mockingbird                  |
| Blue Jay             | Northern Parula*             |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | Osprey                       |
| Cardinal             | Raven                        |
| Carolina Ren         | Redwing Black Bird           |
| Chickadee            | Swallow                      |
| Chipping Sparrow     | Tufted Titmouse              |
| Dark-eyed Junco      | White Crowned Sparrow        |
| Eastern Towhee*      | Yellow Warber*               |
| Goldfinch            | <i>*Notable Observations</i> |

## VEGETATED SPECIES KEY:

- Dominant Species: Species covering 50% or more of an area
- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  | P – Border Privet ( <i>Ligustrum obtusifolium</i> ) <b>Invasive</b> |
|  | BP – Black Pine ( <i>Pinus thunbergia</i> ) <b>Invasive</b>         |
|  | BY – Bayberry ( <i>Myrica pensylvanica</i> )                        |
|  | AB – American Beachgrass ( <i>Ammophila breviligulata</i> )         |
|  | Vine Dominant (mostly invasive / see list below)                    |
|  | Others (as marked on map)   |

## Vines Observed:

- GB – Greenbrier (*Smilax* spp.)  
 MR – Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) **Invasive**  
 OB Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) **Invasive**  
 TH – Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tartaric*) **Invasive**  
 GV – Fox Gape (*Vitis labrusca*)

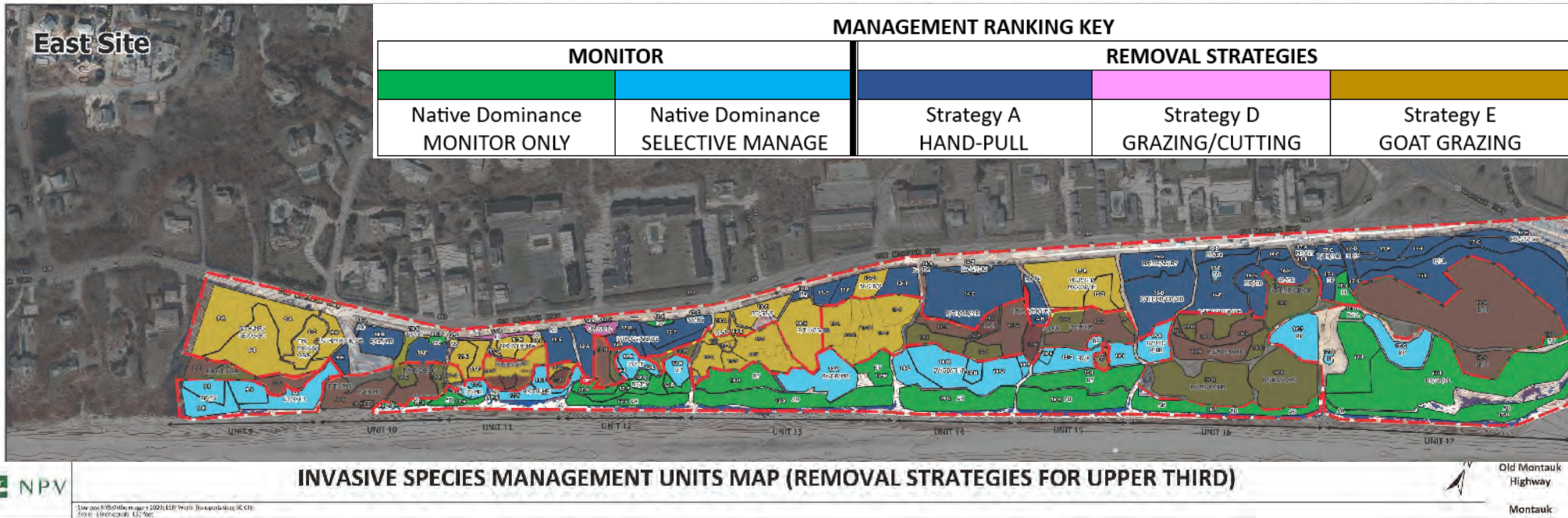
## VEGETATED SPECIES KEY

Secondary Species: Species covering less than 50% of an area

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| AH – American Holly ( <i>Ilex opaca</i> )                       | BR – Beach Rose ( <i>Rosa rugosa</i> ) <b>Invasive</b>      | MU – Mullein ( <i>Verbascum Thapsus</i> )                    |
| AO – Autumn Olive ( <i>Elaeagnus umbellat</i> ) <b>Invasive</b> | PL – Beach Plum ( <i>Prunus maritima</i> )                  | O – Scrub Oak ( <i>Quercus Dumosa</i> )                      |
| AL – Alder ( <i>Alnus</i> )                                     | CA – Crabapple ( <i>Malus</i> sp.)                          | PI – Poison Ivy ( <i>Toxicodendron radicans</i> )            |
| AS – Beach Wormwood ( <i>Artemisia stelleriana</i> Besser)      | Ce – Cedar ( <i>Cedrus</i> sp.)                             | PV – Switchgrass ( <i>Panicum virgatum</i> )                 |
| Ba – Barberry ( <i>Berberis thunbergii</i> ) <b>Invasive</b>    | GM – Garlic Mustard ( <i>Alliaria petiolate</i> )           | S – Seaside goldenrod ( <i>Solidago sempervirens</i> )       |
| BB – Bearberry ( <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> )               | IC – Japanese Holly ( <i>Ilex crenata</i> ) <b>Invasive</b> | SS – Staghorn Sumac ( <i>Rhus typhina</i> )                  |
| BC – Black Cherry ( <i>Prunus serotina</i> )                    | MW – Common Milkweed ( <i>Asclepias syriaca</i> )           | VC – Virginia Creeper ( <i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i> ) |



# Site and Ecological Assessment



## Secondary Species: Species covering less than 50% of an area

- AH – American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)
- AO – Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellat*) **Invasive**
- AL – Alder (*Alnus*)
- AS – Beach Wormwood (*Artemisia stelleriana* Besser)
- Ba – Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) **Invasive**
- BB – Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)
- BC – Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
- BR – Beach Rose (*Rosa rugosa*) **Invasive**
- PL – Beach Plum (*Prunus maritima*)
- CA – Crabapple (*Malus* sp.)
- Ce – Cedar (*Cedrus* sp.)
- GM – Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*)
- IC – Japanese Holly (*Ilex crenata*) **Invasive**
- LB – Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
- n/a – Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)
- MW – Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
- MU – Mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus*)
- n/a – Miscanthus (*Miscanthus sinensis*) **Invasive**
- n/a – Mugwort (*Artemisia* sp.)
- O – Scrub Oak (*Quercus Dumosa*)
- PI – Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)

## SPECIES KEY

### Dominant Species: Species covering 50% or more of an area

- AB – American Beachgrass (*Ammophila breviligulata*)
- BP – Black Pine (*Pinus thunbergia*) **Invasive**
- BY – Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)
- P – Border Privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*) **Invasive**
- JK – Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) **Invasive**
- TH – Morrow's Honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*) **Invasive**

## VINES OBSERVED

- GB – Greenbrier (*Smilax* spp.)
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# AREA OF CONCERN (upper 16 acres)

## 95%+ Invasive Coverage

The upper zone closest to the highway (16 acres) is dominated by invasive species (95%+) with few native species. The shrubs on the site have become nonnative invasive species of border privet and Morrow's honeysuckle. Invasive vines are presently a near monoculture of multiflora rose and Japanese honeysuckle.

Extensive evidence exists of invasive vines, which are not palatable to deer, growing over the top of other species and eventually killing them.

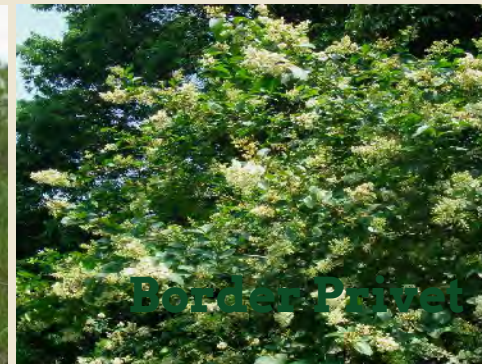


Japanese Honeysuckle

Multiflora Rose

Border Privet

Morrows Honeysuckle



# IMPLICATIONS

## What happens if we ignore the issue?

### **CONTINUED HABITAT DEGRADATION**

Invasive species can destroy biodiversity and cause habitat degradation, resulting in fundamental disruptions of ecosystems. They are capable of causing extinctions of native plants and animals, competing with native organisms for limited resources, and altering habitats. This can result in fundamental disruptions of coastal ecosystems.

### **SITE EROSION**

Compared with native species, most of these invasives have more shallow roots of just a few feet. Native species have an impressive web-like root system that can grow to depths of 8 to 15 feet, lending deeper stability. Shallow invasives concentrate their growth horizontally along the surface, providing less dune anchorage during storm events and less protection from dune erosion. The shallow rooted plants which dominate the treatment area are at greater risk of uprooting and destabilizing berm and dune when major climate events occur here.

### **NO LONGER A SCENIC AREA OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE**

The historic scenic ocean vistas have been obscured by tall non-native shrubs and invasive vines compromising the highway's designation as a scenic area of statewide significance.

# WHAT IS THE **Recommendation?**

## **Focus on upper 16 acre zone**

Manage the invasive species and restore to a native maritime shrubland and grassland habitat in a two year removal and revegetation, and an 8 year maintenance program. Restoration with more dominance of native grasslands and larger inclusion of native shrubs appropriate for this shoreline.

- Remove the existing invasive species
- Plant and restore to reestablish the native habitat using native plant seed collected on site and prevent further spread of any remaining invasive species
- Ensure long-term maintenance program to manage regrowth and health of re-established natives.

# WORK ZONE

## Upper 16 Acre Zone



### MANAGEMENT RANKING KEY

REMOVAL STRATEGIES		
Strategy A HAND-PULL	Strategy D GRAZING/CUTTING	Strategy E GOAT GRAZING



### INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT UNITS MAP (WORK ZONE)

Source: NYS © 2020; ESRI, Inc. "Translocation, S2 GIS  
Scale: 1 inch equals 100 feet"

#### Secondary Species: Species covering less than 50% of an area

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#### SPECIES KEY

#### Dominant Species: Species covering 50% or more of an area

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# PROPOSED SOLUTION

## Native Plants

A typical beach plant, like Little Bluestem, although unassuming above ground, can have a root length in excess of 5 to 6 feet. Native plants proposed for this restored and healthy coastal bluff ecosystem, include:

### Prioritized Plants:

**Maryland goldenasters** (*Chrysopsis mariana*)  
**Little Bluestem** (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)  
**Seaside Goldenrod** (*Solidago sempervirens*)  
**Switchgrass** (*Panicum virgatum*)  
**shrubs like Bayberry** (*Myrica pensylvanica*),  
**Beach Plum** (*Prunus maritima*)

### Secondary Plants if available:

**American Beachgrass** (*Ammophila breviligulata*)  
**Beach Pea** (*Lathyrus japonicus*)  
**Greene's Rush** (*Juncus greenei*)  
**Indian Grass** (*Sorghastrum nutans*)



**"Secret Life of Roots"**  
exhibit at the U.S. Botanic Garden

# WHAT ARE THE **Results?**

Removing these species and diversifying the plant community with native grasses, flowers, shrubs and a few trees will:

## **RESTORE NATIVE PLANT AND ANIMAL AND INSECT SPECIES**

It will restore native species. Native plant species will provide vital native coastal habitat for many animal species (e.g., monarch butterflies, migratory birds, and coastal songbirds) that are present nearer to the beach, where native plants still predominate.

## **STABILIZE BLUFFS AND IMPROVE WATER QUALITY**

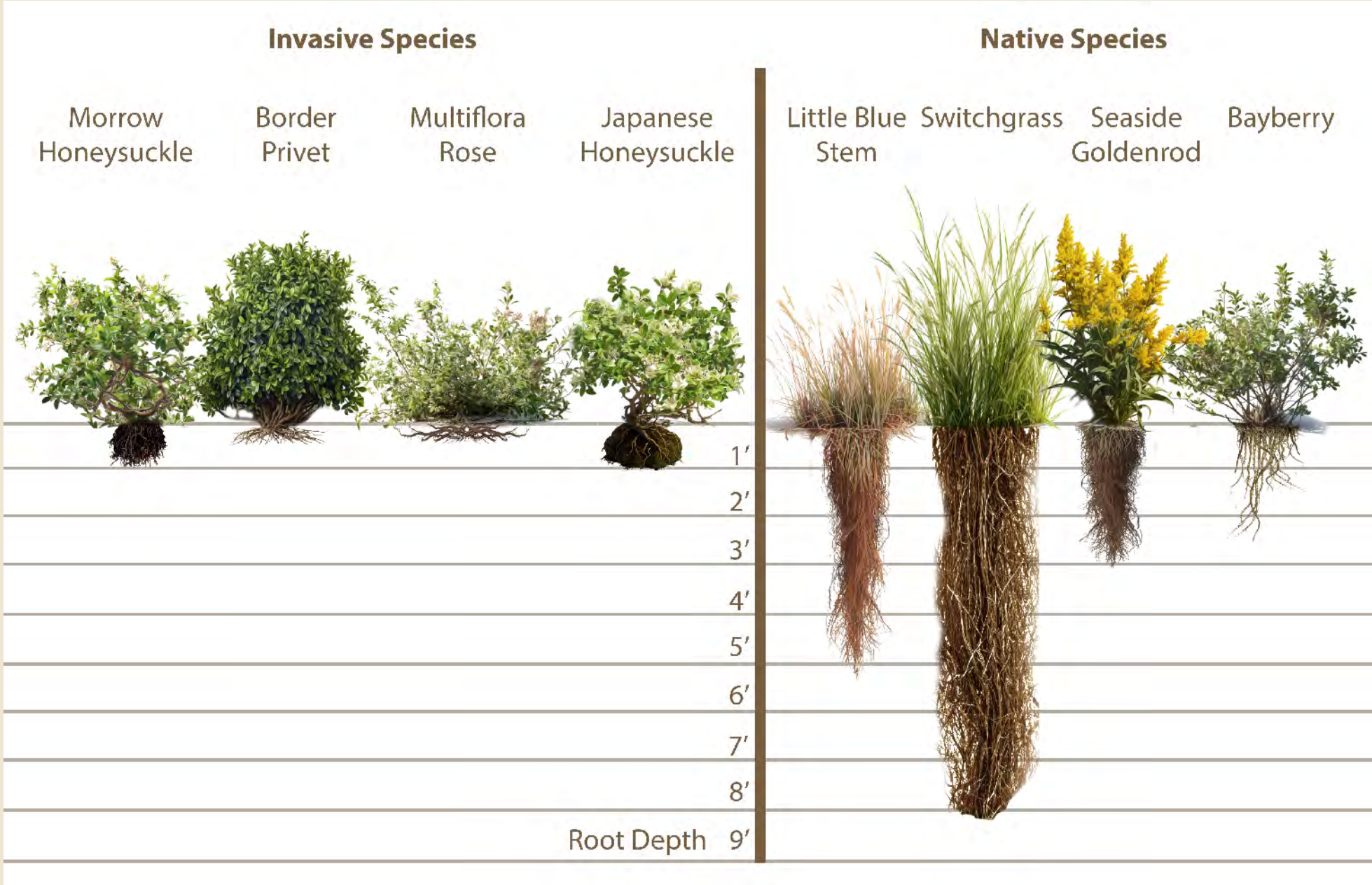
It will protect the the sandy soils from future climate-related issues, storms, and erosion. In addition, the denser stem and the deeper root structure of the native plants will ensure greater storm water retention on site.

## **RE-ESTABLISH THIS SCENIC AREA OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE**

It will decrease the height of the plants from tall shrubs to shorter shrubs, grasses and flowers that are associated with this ecosystem, providing views from Old Montauk Highway, a scenic area of statewide significance.

# COMPARISONS

# Non-Native vs. Natives





# COMPARISON GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

# Before and After



**Before**



**After**



# WHO ARE

# The Partners and Consultant Team

## THE PARTNERS

- **EHT**
- **CCOM**
- **Local residents**



**CCOM**



**NPV**

## THE EXPERTS

- **Rusty Schmidt, Nelson, Pope & Voorhis -Technical Advisor**

Rusty Schmidt is a landscape ecologist who has worked with native plants and ecosystems over several decades. Rusty has restored 10,000+ acres of prairie/meadows, 8,000+ acres of woodlands, and approximately 3,000+ acres of wetlands. Nelson, Pope Voorhis, established in 1997 provides creative solutions for complex environmental projects and land use planning services to public, private, institutional and governmental clients on Long Island, in the NY Metro area and in Hudson Valley. Rusty is also President of the Long Island Native Plants Initiative. Rusty is an Adjunct Professor in the Horticulture Department at Farmingdale State College, NY.

- **Jaime LeDuc, CCOM, Director of Environmental Advocacy**

Jaime LeDuc earned a master's degree studying the interactions between native and non-native species. She has 14 years of experience monitoring, researching, and writing rapid response plans for invasive species infestations. Her previous experience includes working for the National Park Service. Voyageurs National Park and the Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network.

# Public Engagement Process and Budget

## Public Engagement Process

- EHT
- Not within DEC jurisdiction
- Natural Resources and Planning Department review
- Resolution in support of grant application passed 8/8/23 (see appendix)
- Upcoming EHT public hearing to be scheduled

## Budget

CCOM will seek funding from community members and public agencies.

No EHT tax dollars are proposed for the project.

- Total 10-year budget \$865k

# WHAT TO EXPECT - TIME LINE

## Anticipated Implementation Phases

### Phase 1 (1 year)

Mechanical invasive removal and enclosure fence installed:

- Erosion control measures installed prior to any work
- Goats released in enclosures for one growing season (appx. 7 mos)
- Onsite seed collection

### Phase 2 (1 year)

- Planting and Restoration

### Phase 3 (8 years)

- Maintenance and monitoring



Phase 1  
Erosion Control Measures



Phase 1  
Mechanical Removal



Phase 1  
Goats released into enclosures

# Invasive Species Removal Methods

TYPE	SPECIES	ROOT DEPTH	EXTRACTION METHOD
DOMINATE SHRUB	<b>Border Privet</b> ( <i>Ligustrum obtusifolium</i> )	Shallow	Hand Pull
	<b>Morrow's Honeysuckle</b> ( <i>Lonicera morrowii</i> )	Shallow	Hand Pull
MINOR SHURB	<b>Barberry</b> ( <i>Berberis</i> spp.)	Shallow	Hand Pull
	<b>Autumn Olive</b> ( <i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i> )	Moderate	Hand Pull
	<b>Japanese Holly</b> ( <i>Ilex crenata</i> )	Shallow	Hand Pull
	<b>Beach Rose</b> ( <i>Rosa rugosa</i> )	Shallow	Hand Pull & Graze
DOMINATE VINES	<b>Japanese Honeysuckle</b> ( <i>Lonicera japonica</i> )	Shallow	Integrated approach & Graze
	<b>Multiflora Rose</b> ( <i>Rosa multiflora</i> )	Shallow	Hand Pull & Graze
MINOR VINES	<b>Oriental Bittersweet</b> ( <i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i> )	Moderate	Hand Pull & Graze
PERENNIAL OF CONCERN	<b>Japanese Knotweed</b> ( <i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i> )	Shallow	Graze (present in only 0.1% of entire Preserve)
MINOR PERENNIALS	<b>Garlic Mustard</b> ( <i>Alliaria petiolata</i> )	Shallow	Hand Pull & Graze
	<b>Mugwort</b> ( <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> )	Shallow	No practical method
	<b>Bull Thistle</b> ( <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> )	Shallow	Hand Pull & Graze
	<b>Leafy Sponge</b> ( <i>Euphorbia esula</i> )	Moderate	Hand Pull & Graze
	<b>Chinese Silver Grass</b> ( <i>Miscanthus</i> spp.)	Moderate	Hand Pull & Graze
TREE	<b>Black Pine</b> Coastal Asian Plant ( <i>Pinus nigra</i> )	Moderate	Hand Pull & Cut

# WHY Goats?

The use of goats for weed and invasive plant management has been studied and implemented throughout the Northeast, and locally at Heckscher Park, Prospect Park and Staten Island and in coastal locations. Goats have effectively reduced unwanted vegetation and increased the populations of native grasses.



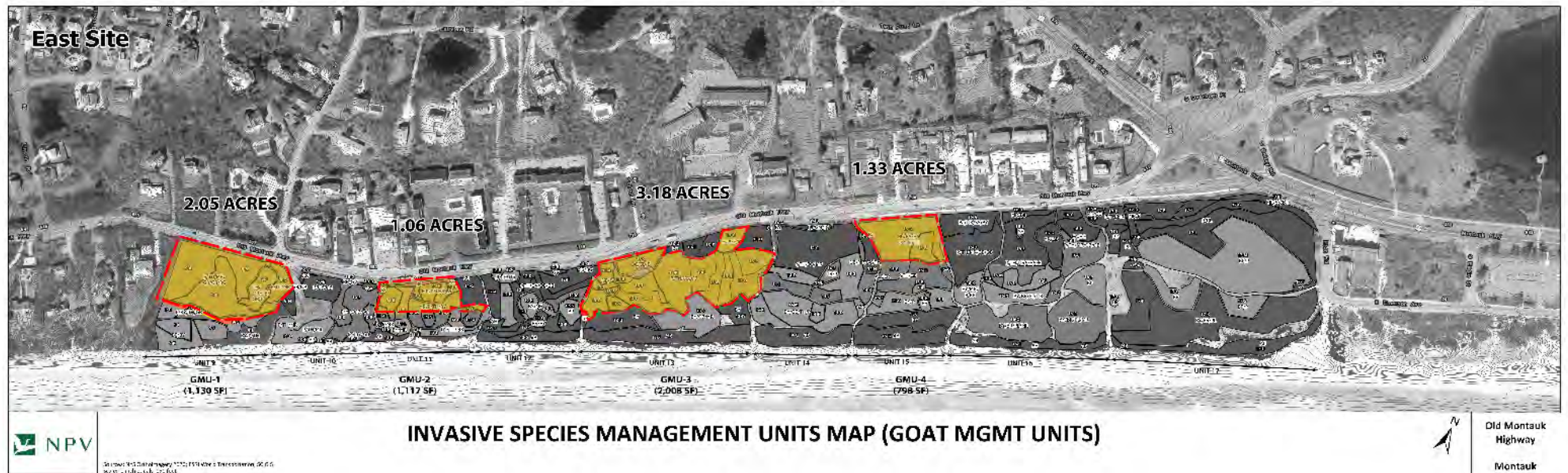
- **Goats love to eat invasive plants.** They are highly effective at eating a wide range of invasive plants, reducing the need for herbicides and mechanical removal methods. The species of vines on site are some of their favorite foods: multiflora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed, poison ivy and greenbriar. The goats' selective grazing can target invasive plants while leaving native vegetation largely intact, making them a precise and eco-friendly choice.
- **Steep slopes, of over a 30% grade** in some areas, make the terrain ill-suited for machines. Goats have been shown to reduce unwanted invasive vegetation effectively with limited soil disturbance.
- **Goats have been used successfully in coastal settings.** Some case studies:
  - **Freshkills Park in Staten Island, NY:** [https://web.mit.edu/nature/projects\\_12/pdfs/GoatsPresentation\\_2.pdf](https://web.mit.edu/nature/projects_12/pdfs/GoatsPresentation_2.pdf)
  - **Audubon NC and Southern Appalachian Highland:** <https://nc.audubon.org/news/goats-help-restore-golden-wing-habitat>
  - **Science Daily:** <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/09/140925132703.htm>
  - **San Luis Obispo County:** <https://www.kcbx.org/pets-animals/2019-08-06/cal-trans-turns-to-goats-for-habitat-restoration-project>

## GOATS CONTINUED

# Goat Management

Goats will be managed by a professional goat management company.

- 2-3 goats per acre will be grouped in 4 enclosures. It is necessary for goats to graze repeatedly within the same acreage in order for elimination to be effective.
- Goats are proposed for one growing season (approximately 7 months) for the first year of the project for 7 months. Depending on their effectiveness, a determination will be made at the end of this phase whether they may be required for a second season.
- Clean fresh water and shelter provided to avoid rain.



# Conclusion

A successful invasive management program will achieve:

## **ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION**

Restore native plant, animal and insect species

## **ENHANCE RESILIENCY**

Stabilize bluffs and improve water quality

## **RESTORATION OF HISTORIC VIEWSHED**

Re-establish this scenic area of statewide significance

The success of this project is an EHT priority.





# Appendix

- Observed Native Fauna
- Case Study - Fort Pond House
- FAQs - General Questions
- FAQs - Goats
- FAQs - Interactions Between Invasive Species and Butterflies, Migratory Birds, and Coastal Songbirds
- FAQs - Partner and Plan
- EHT Letter of Support
- EHT Resolution

# Observed Native Fauna



## OTHER BIRDS:

- Swallow nesting -
- Cliff and/or Bank Swallow
- Blue Jay
- Carolina Wren
- Mocking Bird
- Dark Eyed Junco
- Tufted Titmouse
- Eastern Chickadee
- American Robin
- American Goldfinch
- Cardinal
- Redwing Blackbird
- Raven
- American Crow
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- White Crowned Sparrow
- Chipping Sparrow
- Osprey

## UNCOMMON TO RARE BIRDS FOUND IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES:

- Eastern Towhee
- Common Yellowthroat
- Yellow Warbler
- Northern Parula
- Blue-eyed Vireo



## INSECTS:

- Monarch Butterfly

## MAMMALS:

- Eastern Cottontail
- Squirrel
- Deer Sign, but not observations

## CASE STUDY

# Fort Pond House (FPH) - Assessment

Invasive Species Remediation Case Study 2019. The following 4 photos show the problem and the work undertaken in 2019 by CCOM in conjunction with EHT Natural Resources/DEC and community volunteers to remove invasive vines that were killing many of the native species on the shoreline at FPH.

The Damage



The Task



The Work



## CASE STUDY

# Fort Pond House - Result

Following several days of volunteer vine clearing in May and June 2019 the magnificent stand of shads and understory natives were revealed and have continued to prosper with periodic maintenance from EHT.



## FAQs

# General Questions

**Q: Can the entrenched invasive ecosystem be fully converted back to native?**

A: We acknowledge that reversing the effects of invasive species is a complex challenge. Our goal is not to turn back time but to establish a native-dominant ecosystem.

**Q: Does removing invasive species disturb the soil and does it invite more unwanted plants before native plants can be seeded?**

A: We're minimizing soil disturbance, using specific methods for flat areas and goats on steep slopes. Erosion protection measures are implemented before any work begins. The native plants we're introducing are well-suited to this micro-ecosystem. It's important to note that only the top third of the property, which amounts to 16 out of 40 acres and parallels the road, is being disturbed. This approach avoids disruption near the coast or mid-slope areas. The invasives are removed, and we promptly seed any disturbed soils. To ensure the seeds establish successfully and protect against rain events and erosion, we employ erosion control blankets or mulch. This seeding process happens immediately, and the soil remains protected as the native plants get established, minimizing the potential for invasives to reseed.

**Q: How will invasive plant species be managed during the restoration project?**

A: Invasive plant species will be removed both mechanically and, in the first year, by using a small number of goats. Goats have been proven effective in managing invasive vegetation like the vines we are looking to be managed. After the initial removal, continued monitoring and maintenance will be required monthly to observe any new young invasive species germinating to be removed by hand and to plant any locations that no plants are germinating.

**Q: Knowing how difficult it is to eradicate Japanese knotweed, is it even worth trying to at the Benson Reserve?**

A: Absolutely. Japanese Knotweed can be difficult to eradicate, but it is possible. Right now, it is only present on 0.1% of the Benson Reserve, which makes this an opportune time to remove it before it spreads further. With repeated cutting (5+ times/year), Japanese knotweed can be controlled and eventually eliminated.

Please go to [www.preservemontauk.org](http://www.preservemontauk.org) for full set of FAQs

## FAQs

# Goats

**Q: Why is using goats considered a good method for removing invasive plant species on a dune?**

A: Using goats is a beneficial method for invasive plant removal on dunes because they are highly effective at eating a wide range of invasive plants but not grasses, reducing the need for herbicides and mechanical removal methods reducing soil disturbance, and reducing the tangled web of vines for easier access. They will provide sunlight for the native grass species to germinate in the dune while continually eating the vines that are trying to reestablish.

**Q: Are there economic benefits to using goats for invasive plant removal on dunes?**

A: Yes, using goats can be cost-effective as they require less labor and equipment compared to mechanical removal methods, and they can access steep or challenging terrain. The areas that the goats will be targeting are on the steep portions of the project where mechanical methods are not safe and human hand removal is too time-intensive and costly.

**Q: Will the goats require special fencing in Benson?**

A: Yes, goats need appropriate fencing to keep them within the targeted area. The fencing will not be a permanent structure and will be removed from the site when the goats are removed. The fencing is an open woven wire fence, that is not obtrusive to the visitors.

**Q: How many goats will be at the project site?**

A: A total of 14-21 goats in 4 separate locations comprising 8 acres within the 40-acre Benson Reserve. The number of goats in each area is based on a grazing density of 2-3 goats/acre and therefore will depend on the acreage of each area as follows:

1.33 acres: 2-3 goats

3.18 acres: 6-9 goats

1.06 acres: 2-3 goats

2.05 acres: 4-6 goats

**Q: Will public access be restricted by this project?**

A: No. The current trails that exist on the property will remain open.

Please go to [www.preservemontauk.org](http://www.preservemontauk.org) for full set of FAQs

## CONTINUED FAQs

# Goats

**Q: Do goats used for invasive species control bite humans or other animals?**

A: The goats proposed for this invasive species control are not aggressive toward humans or other animals, they have been specifically selected for these types of projects. They are retired goats from milking and breeding programs, only wanting to spend the remaining years grazing. They are browsers, primarily interested in eating vegetation. However, the goats will be kept in enclosures away from humans and other animals.

**Q: Will the goats be used year-round for invasive plant management on Benson?**

A: Goats will only be used seasonally, typically during the growing season when invasive plants are most abundant.

**Q: Are the goats going to be there every year?**

A: No. The goats will be brought to the Benson Reserve to graze invasive plants within 4 designated, enclosed areas for 7 months. Depending on their effectiveness in these 4 areas, a determination will be made at the end of this phase whether they may be required for a second season. The ongoing management of invasive species in subsequent years will be a combination of hand and mechanical removal and will not involve goats.

**Q: Do goats have a strong odor when used for invasive plant management?**

A: Goats have a distinct natural odor, but it is usually not overpowering. Their odor is generally less offensive than other livestock animals, and because we will have only a small number of goats at each location, the smell will likely be unnoticeable.

**Q: Are goats noisy when employed for invasive plant removal?**

A: Goats are relatively quiet animals. They may occasionally make sounds like bleating or low-toned vocalizations when disturbed or herded, but they are not known for being particularly noisy compared to other livestock, in fact a number of goat herds being used in urban areas are so quiet that collar bells are used to help with locating them.

**Q: Are there other areas where goats are being used for dune restoration and invasive plant control?**

A: The use of goats for weed and invasive plant management has been studied and implemented throughout the Northeast, and locally at Heckscher Park, Prospect Park and Staten Island and in coastal locations.

Please go to [www.preservemontauk.org](http://www.preservemontauk.org) for full set of FAQs

## FAQs

# Interactions Between Invasive Species and Butterflies, Migratory Birds, and Coastal Songbirds

### **Q: What is the connection between invasive plant removal and the survival of migratory birds?**

A: Removing invasive plants enhances the availability of native vegetation, which provides better nesting sites and food sources for migratory birds during their stopovers and breeding seasons in Montauk. Our insects (90%) require a host plant or specific species of plants to develop in their growth, for instance the Monarch requires milkweed. 90% of our terrestrial birds eat 6,000 insects to raise a brood of birds, without the insects, the birds are not able to be reared. The Cornell Ornithological Lab has calculated a decline of 35% of the bird population across the US since 1970, primarily due to habitat loss, including the decline of insects to feed those broods.

### **Q: What role do coastal songbirds play in Montauk's ecosystems?**

A: Coastal songbirds contribute to ecosystem health by aiding in pollination and seed dispersal, making them vital for maintaining the diversity and resilience of Montauk's coastal habitats.

### **Q: How do invasive species disrupt coastal songbirds in Montauk?**

A: Invasive species can alter the structure of coastal habitats, making it harder for songbirds to find suitable nesting locations and food resources, ultimately affecting their populations. Our invasive species of Long Island are not host plants, they come from other parts of the world and have not evolved with the ecosystem of our coastal zone, providing very little to no benefit to our habitat, songbirds, and resources.

### **Q: How do invasive plants harm monarch butterflies in Montauk?**

A: Invasive plants can crowd out native milkweed and our seaside goldenrod. The milkweed, which is essential for monarch butterflies to lay their eggs and provide food for their caterpillars, while seaside goldenrod is essential nectar source for the butterflies to migrate. This can lead to a decline in monarch populations, in fact this past year, Monarchs have been listed due to the vast population decline.

### **Q: Does removing invasive species disturb the soil and does it invite more unwanted plants before native plants can be seeded?**

A: We're minimizing soil disturbance, using specific methods for flat areas and goats on steep slopes. Erosion protection measures are implemented before any work begins. The native plants we're introducing are well-suited to this micro-ecosystem. It's important to note that only the top third of the property, which amounts to 16 out of 40 acres and parallels the road, is being disturbed. This approach avoids disruption near the coast or mid-slope areas. The invasives are removed, and we promptly seed any disturbed soils. To ensure the seeds establish successfully and protect against rain events and erosion, we employ erosion control blankets or mulch. This seeding process happens immediately, and the soil remains protected as the native plants get established, minimizing the potential for invasives to reseed.

Please go to [www.preservemontauk.org](http://www.preservemontauk.org) for full set of FAQs



## FAQs

# Partner and Plan

### **Q: What environmental review is being done for this project?**

A: While this habitat restoration project does not require environmental review under SEQRA, the Town has reviewed the project for potential short and long-term impacts, and worked with project partners to ensure any potential impacts such as erosion, stormwater runoff or potential impacts to public access are avoided completely or mitigated to the maximum extent possible.

### **Q: What outreach to adjacent property owners and public awareness is being planned?**

A: Before any work commences all adjacent property owners will be notified and provided with details of the project by EHT. Also, both CCOM and EHT will maintain a website portal with all relevant information and CCOM will be providing regular public updates on progress throughout the 10 year plan period.

Please go to [www.preservemontauk.org](http://www.preservemontauk.org) for full set of FAQs

# EHT Letter of Support



## TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON

159 Pantigo Road  
East Hampton, New York 11937

**PETER VAN SCOYOC**  
Supervisor

(631) 324-4140  
pvenscoyoc@ehamptonny.gov

August 8, 2023

Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez  
c/o Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure  
99 Washington Avenue  
Suite 1010  
Albany, NY 12231

Dear Secretary Rodriguez,

I am writing to express support for the Concerned Citizens of Montauk (CCOM) 2023 Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) grant application.

This grant would support the Benson Reserve Maritime Shrubland and Grassland Restoration project, a joint project with the Town of East Hampton that would benefit an important ecosystem on Town property along the Montauk shoreline. At present, the area, which is protected from development in perpetuity, is threatened by invasive species.

A successful invasive management program at the site will restore native species back to the dune and protect it from future climate issues, storms, and erosion, while also providing native coastal habitat that is vital to so many species (e.g., monarch butterflies, migratory birds, and coastal songbirds).

The Town of East Hampton stands ready to partner with CCOM in advancing this essential project. East Hampton Town is on the front lines of our coastal state's environmental crisis, with the Montauk shoreline, in particular, feeling the impacts.

Formed more than 53 years ago, CCOM, with more than 2,000 members and supporters, has consistently been in the forefront of efforts to protect and preserve Montauk's natural environment. With this award, East Hampton Town and CCOM can take essential steps to preserve this coastal area for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter Van Scoyoc  
Supervisor, Town of East Hampton

# EHT Resolution 8/8/23



**East Hampton Town Board**  
159 Pantigo Road  
East Hampton, NY 11937

**Carole Brennan**  
Town Clerk

[www.ehamptonny.gov](http://www.ehamptonny.gov)

ADOPTED

Meeting: 08/08/23 11:00 AM

DOC ID: 29847 D

**RESOLUTION 2023-1118**

## Resolution in Support of the Benson Preserve Habitat Restoration Project

Resolution in Support of the Benson Reserve Habitat Restoration Project

WHEREAS, the Town of East Hampton is the owner of vacant property in Montauk, known as the Benson Reserve (hereinafter, "Reserve"); and

WHEREAS, the Reserve measures approximately 40-acres and consists of a maritime shrubland, grassland and beach area; and

WHEREAS, the upper approximate 16-acres of the Reserve is threatened by the intrusion of invasive species; and

WHEREAS, the Concerned Citizens of Montauk ("CCOM") has offered to oversee, administer and manage a restoration and management program for the Reserve; and

WHEREAS, CCOM will pursue grant funding as well as raise private funds to fund the restoration; and

WHEREAS, the restoration will include the removal of invasive species of flora and will be followed by planting native species and restoration work, as well as maintenance and monitoring of site conditions thereafter; and

WHEREAS, the Town of East Hampton is fully-supportive of the Benson Reserve Habitat Restoration project, subject to the rights of interested parties; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Supervisor is authorized and directed to execute any and all documents, in a form to be approved by the office of the Town Attorney, to consent to and support the CCOM grant application for the Benson Preserve Habitat Restoration project.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ADOPTED AS AMENDED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	David Lys, Councilmember
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Cate Rogers, Councilmember
<b>AYES:</b>	Kathee Burke-Gonzalez, David Lys, Cate Rogers, Peter Van Scoyoc
<b>ABSENT:</b>	Sylvia Overby