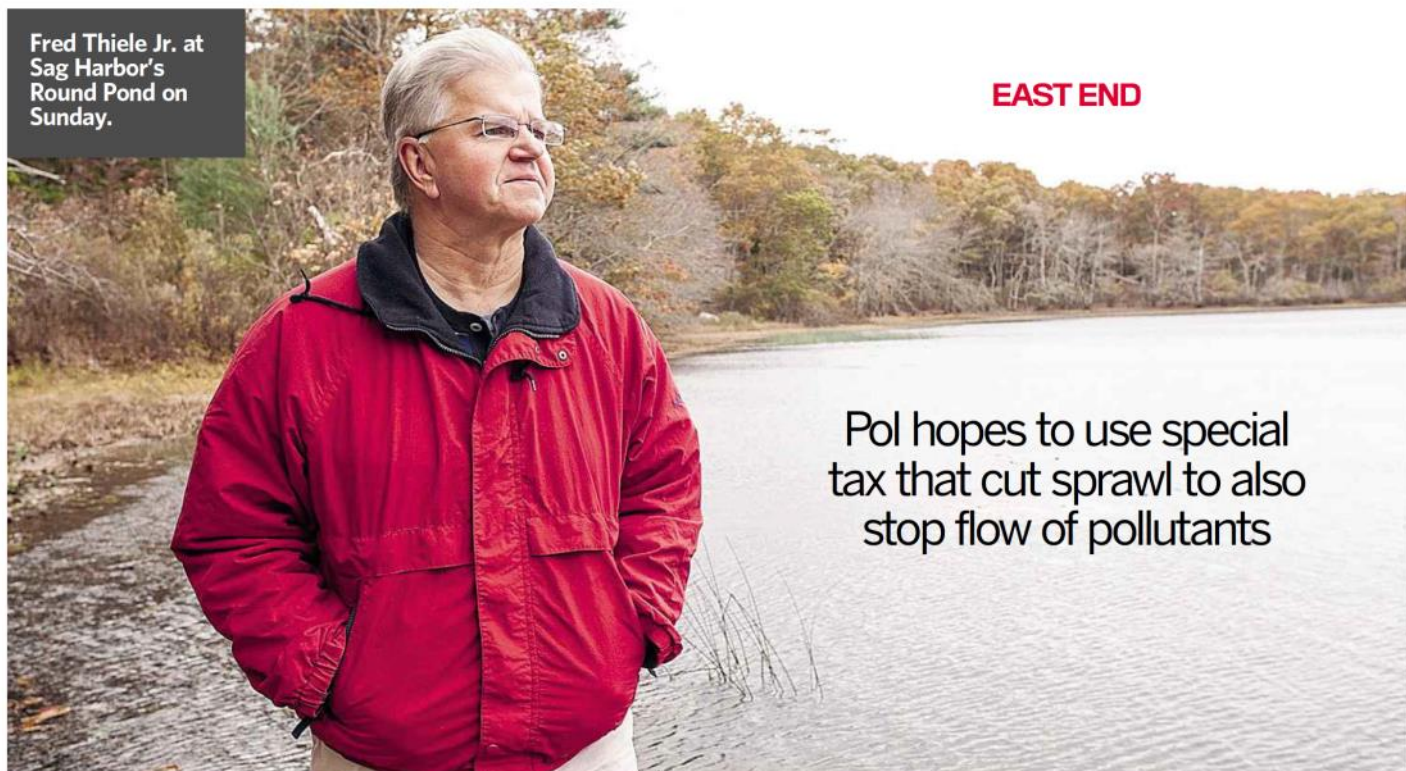


## OUR TOWNS

A23

Fred Thiele Jr. at Sag Harbor's Round Pond on Sunday.

EAST END



GORDON M. GRANT

Pol hopes to use special tax that cut sprawl to also stop flow of pollutants

# FUND STREAM SOUGHT TO PROTECT WATER

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The backer of a law credited with halting the spread of densely built suburbia into eastern Long Island now wants to use it to stop pollutants from flowing into the region's waters.

Assemb. Fred Thiele Jr. (I-Sag Harbor) said he wants the 16-year-old special tax that has generated nearly \$1 billion for land preservation on the East End to also pay for high-tech wastewater-treatment systems and other antipollution measures.

Thiele, a 19-year incumbent who won re-election Tuesday, said he is talking with environmental, civic and business groups about expanding the scope of the Community Preservation Fund and wants to in-

roduce legislation by the end of the year. Changing the law would require referendums in five eastern towns.

Expanding the use of the tax funds could help the East End towns overcome financial hurdles that have stalled wastewater-treatment projects elsewhere on Long Island, Thiele and environmental advocates said.

"It makes perfect sense for it to be used to tackle Long Island's and the East End's most important challenge: protecting water," said Richard Amper, executive director of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society.

The East End, like most of Suffolk County, widely depends on septic systems and cisterns instead of sewers, so waste often flows directly from those systems into waterways

such as Peconic Bay.

East Hampton:	<b>\$266 million</b>
Southampton:	<b>\$558 million</b>
Riverhead:	<b>\$47 million</b>
Southold:	<b>\$66 million</b>
Shelter Island:	<b>\$21 million</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$958 million</b>

Source: Assemb. Fred Thiele Jr. (I-Sag Harbor)

Scientists blame nitrogen in the waste for feeding the toxic algal blooms that seasonally appear across Long Island and are getting increasing attention from Suffolk elected officials.

"There's clearly a problem that has to be addressed and it's going to take money to do it," Thiele said.

He was the architect of the 1998 Community Preservation Fund law that allowed East Hampton, Southampton, Riverhead, Southold and Shelter Island to add a 2 percent special tax on real estate purchases and tap the revenue to buy land. Exemptions, including for first-time home buyers, vary from town to town.

The program, which has benefited from the booming high-end real estate market, has preserved more than 10,000 acres of farms, fields and forests on the East End.

Thiele said he also wants to extend the tax for 20 years beyond its 2030 expiration date, a move he estimated would generate an additional \$1.5 billion.

New sewers are unlikely to be constructed on the East End due to the region's relatively low population density and suspicion from environmentalists and civic groups that view sewers as harbingers of suburban sprawl, Thiele said.

But the preservation funds could help the towns install smaller-scale alternative systems and pay for drainage infrastructure, wetlands restoration and pump-out stations for boats.

Because Southampton and East Hampton, home to the region's most expensive waterfront properties, generate roughly 85 percent of the program's revenue, the five towns may be allowed to pool a portion of their funds for antipollution projects, he said.