



Bob DeLuca, president of Group for the East End, gathered today on the Peconic Riverfront with members of a coalition formed to advocate for the passage of an extension of the Community Preservation Fund. *Photo: Denise Civiletti*

## ‘You should flip over this ballot’: Coalition group announces campaign to push for 2-percent transfer tax extension

by Denise Civiletti Sep 8, 2016, 5:52 pm

[Tweet](#) A ballot proposition to extend the East End’s 2-percent real estate transfer tax is one all voters should flip over — literally.

That’s because a measure to extend the tax to 2050 and allow some of the revenue to be spent on water quality projects will be the back of the ballot this November. The front of the ballot will only display candidates for elective office; propositions will appear on the back.

A coalition of more than 50 environmental and civic groups has formed to get the word out that voters need to flip the ballot over and vote “yes” to extend the transfer tax this year.

“You should flip over this ballot,” L.I. Pine Barrens Society executive director Richard Amper said today at a press conference on the Peconic riverfront.

With the extension comes the authorization for the five East End towns to use up to 20 percent of the revenues for water quality projects — something activists and elected officials alike say is crucial to improve and protect the impaired Peconic Estuary.

Since its inception in 1999, the 2-percent transfer tax currently has raised more than \$1.1 billion for the Peconic Bay Region Community Preservation Fund and preserved more than 10,000 acres on the East End, according to Assemblyman Fred Thiele, who authored the legislation.

The tax has been overwhelmingly approved by East End voters three times: the original version in 1998, an extension to 2020 in 2002 and an extension to 2030 in 2006. The extension before voters this year —

through 2050 — authorizes its use for water quality protection measures.



Community Preservation Fund author Fred Thiele, said the change to allow expenditure of the fund on water quality measures is needed to 'to changing times.' *Photo: Denise Civiletti*

“The threshold question is, if we protect the land but we can’t use the water, have we really protected the East End community’s character?” Thiele asked today. “Everybody here has come to the conclusion that the answer to that is no,” he said, gesturing to the elected officials and members of the coalition group who joined him on the riverfront boardwalk.

“If we have all of these lands protected, but because of legacy development and the mistakes that were made in the past, you still can’t go fishing, or you can’t go swimming, or we’re consistently dealing with algal blooms and toxic substances in the water, we haven’t done our job,” Thiele said.

“That is really why we have to adapt to changing times and that’s what we’ve done with the CPF,” he explained.

Sen. Ken LaValle, sponsor of the legislation in the State Senate, noted that the East End community has always strongly supported the transfer tax.

“A number of years ago, it was brought to our attention that the Peconic was being polluted by cesspools on its banks,” LaValle said.

“Now that dialogue has switched from how to protect our land, which is always critically important, to now, water quality,” LaValle said. “I look to people in all five East End towns to get focused and get this passed.”

Standing with the state lawmakers today were Riverhead Supervisor Sean Walter, East Hampton Supervisor Larry Cantwell, Riverhead Councilwoman Jodi Giglio and representatives of the Group for the East End, the Nature Conservancy, L.I. Pine Barrens Society, New York League of Conservation Voters, Peconic Land

Trust, Defend H2O, Peconic Baykeeper, the Coalition of Southampton Civic Organizations, the Wading River Civic Association and Amagansett Springs Aquifer Protection.

“It’s appropriate that we’re standing her at a spot where last May and June we took out 750,000 pounds of not-quite-dead bunker,” Walter said.

“We have experienced all sorts of problems with Peconic River. You go up a little west of here and you’ll see the freshwater part of the ecosystem is really being impacted by nitrogen,” he said.



Dead bunker line the shore at Riverhead Moose Lodge last year. *File photo: Peter Blasl*

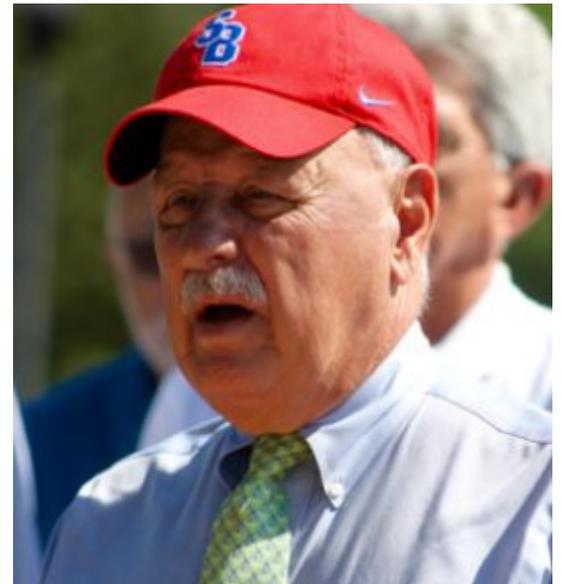
“We support

Thiele’s vision of allowing this to be used for water quality and we look forward to overwhelming support for this proposition in the Town of Riverhead.”

All five East End towns have passed local laws to put the proposition on the ballot for a vote in November.

Southold Town Supervisor Scott Russell, who could not attend the press conference due to a scheduling conflict, said afterward that he believes the extension is “essential to ensuring that preservation programs continue to achieve the same level of success that they have had in the past.”

Other local community groups in the coalition include: North Fork Environmental Council, Mattituck-Laurel Civic Association, North Fork Audubon Society, Peconic Green Growth, The Group to Save Goldsmith Inlet, Jamesport-South Jamesport Civic Association, Northville Beach Civic Association, Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition, Bayview Pines Community Association, Flanders Citizen Advisory Council, Long Island Environmental Voters Forum and Save the Sound.



Sen. Ken LaValle: ‘It was brought to our attention that the Peconic was being polluted by cesspools on its banks.’

*Photo: Denise Civiletti*