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## The Plum Island National Monument Campaign

<b>Application Date</b>	5/31/2024		
<b>Applying Organization</b>	Save the Sound	<b>Grant Type</b>	Member Directed
<b>Requested Amount</b>	\$50,000.00	<b>Project Name</b>	The Plum Island National Monument Campaign
<b>Contact Name</b>	Jen McCaffery	<b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b>	NY
<b>Contact Title</b>	Foundation Relations Manager	<b>Project State/Province</b>	NY
<b>Contact Email Address</b>	jmccaffery@savethesound.org	<b>Project Multiple Locations</b>	
<b>Notes</b>		<b>Status</b>	Submitted
		<b>Created By</b>	Jen McCaffery, 5/29/2024, 12:44 PM

### Organization Details

<b>Organization Name</b>	Save the Sound	<b>Annual Operating Budget</b>	\$11,925,000.00
<b>Applying Contact</b>	Jen McCaffery	<b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>	501c3 Organization
<b>Staff Size</b>	55	<b>Main Phone</b>	(203) 787-0646
<b>Total Membership</b>	5,000	<b>Website Address</b>	http://www.savethesound.org
<b>BIPOC-led</b>	No	<b>Address</b>	127 Church St., 2nd Floor New Haven, Connecticut 06510 United States
<b>C-Suite Staff</b>			

### Proposal Questions

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| <p><b>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</b></p> <p>The mission of Save the Sound is to protect and improve the land, air, and water of Connecticut and the New York communities around Long Island Sound region . We have been making transformative environmental change in Connecticut and coastal New York for more than 50 years, using science, the law, and people power. Our programs include Lands Protection; Ecological Restoration; Water Quality; Climate and Energy; and our Legal Program. In the</p> | <p><b>2. Final Success</b></p> <p>We are seeking the permanent preservation of Plum Island (somewhere between 822 and 840 acres; actual acreage dependent on a future survey) for ecological conservation, historical preservation, and the discovery and celebration of our shared cultural heritage.</p> |
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past 12 months, we have helped conserve 5,500 acres of open space. Our core strengths include policy development and advocacy, coalition-building, and, when necessary, litigation. We collaborate with stakeholders and work with communities, actively seeking out projects that benefit environmental justice areas. We advocate for policies and regulations to protect the safety and well-being of all and see to it that environmental laws currently on the books are enforced.

### 3. Location Details

Located off the eastern end of Long Island in New York, Plum Island offers a critical haven for wildlife and is part of a chain of islands so rich in ecological diversity that it has received numerous official recognitions. The island is home to the Plum Island Animal Disease Center, which has kept the island off-limits to most human visitors. As such, the island has become a haven for endangered wildlife where at least 228 bird species have been sighted—nearly one-quarter of all North American bird species north of Mexico.

The federal government is now decommissioning the animal disease research center and moving the research center off Plum Island and Save the Sound has been fighting for more than a decade to protect it, first by preventing the sale of the island to the highest bidder and now by ensuring that it is designated a national monument.

The island is home to significant ecological and cultural resources, including federally threatened and New York State-endangered piping plovers, the largest seal haul-out site in New York, and two properties on the National Register of Historic Places: Plum Island Lighthouse and the Fort Terry army barracks and weapons batteries. The descendants of the early inhabitants of the island, the sovereign Montaukett Indian Nation, also value the island as an important part of their cultural heritage.

The island has been kept mostly undisturbed for nearly 70 years, and the New York Natural Heritage Program has documented more than 1,000 species on the island, including birds, fish, mammals, and other species, of which 111 are classified as being of conservation concern. The island and its waters have also been designated as 1) an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society; 2) an Important Coastal Resource in the Coastal Barrier Resources Act; 3) a Significant Coastal Habitat Site by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and 4) a Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Protection Area by New York State.

### 4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

We are grateful for the invitation to apply for this grant from Carla Fox of the Public Lands Fund and are seeking \$50,000 in support from The Conservation Alliance to help realize our common goal of protecting biodiversity and conserving critical habitats.

Save the Sound has been working to preserve Plum Island since 2011. The island's diverse habitats and wildlife became threatened when a shortsighted act of Congress in 2009 authorized auctioning off the island to the highest bidder. Thanks largely to our concerted advocacy, that mandate was repealed in December 2020, but the fate of the island remains uncertain.

The Department of Homeland Security, which currently holds Plum Island for management of the animal disease research center, has commenced decommissioning of the laboratory facilities. We are doing everything we can to steer the island into permanent conservation status. Initially we focused on New York State as the desired future owner of the island, but two years ago, we shifted toward seeking preservation of Plum Island a national monument. Since the General Services Administration would offer Plum Island first to other federal agencies, we began advocating that the Department of Interior decide which of its agencies might best own and manage Plum Island as a national monument.

We now believe the best strategy for protecting Plum Island is by declaring it a national monument for ecological conservation, historical preservation, and the discovery and celebration of our shared cultural heritage. Toward that end, the funding we are requesting from The Conservation Alliance will support the coordination, public education, and communications needed to secure permanent protection for the island. This will include our work with the Preserve Plum Island Coalition (PPIC), which we lead, and whose 130 partner organizations are working together to provide information to the White House to create a national monument through

the 1906 Antiquities Act simultaneously with bipartisan legislation (H.R. 1584) introduced in 2023 in the House of Representatives. Funds will also support educational efforts; staff coordination with the members of the PPIC, stakeholders, agencies, and policymakers; and initial steps toward a stakeholder effort to create a stewardship and maintenance plan for the island.

Our implementation plan includes: 1) Meeting with government officials to familiarize Congress, the Biden Administration, and federal agencies with PPIC's vision for a new national monument (funded outside of this grant); 2) Continued outreach to and coordination with the 130 PPIC member organizations; 3) Tracking and sharing with partners the environmental review process being launched at the federal level as part of the research center closure; and 4) Strategic communications using social media, advertisements, PSAs, earned media, member emails, newsletter articles, and sharing information more broadly with the public and others via gatherings, webinars, and communication distributions.

We advocate for future island access to be ecologically sustainable and managed according to a resource-centered plan. The project is within a comfortable driving distance to the Public Lands store in Melville, New York, which will attract people who love the outdoors and could become a community hub for organizing fundraisers and volunteer events in support of Plum Island. Project benefits will extend to visitors and tourists in the Long Island Sound coastal region. Protecting the island will also have a historic preservation aspect, encompassing such assets as the Plum Lighthouse and Fort Terry, and help preserve the cultural heritage of the Montaukett, the early inhabitants of the island.

Access to Plum Island for the public has been severely limited since the mid-1600s, when the Montaukett were dispossessed of it. The island's status as a mysterious place where people cannot go should be transformed to one where people can celebrate and protect its ecological riches, learn its fascinating history, and honor cultural heritage, sacred sites, and traditions. Permanent protection for Plum Island would offer opportunities for confronting and reversing long-standing inequities.

We seek to protect Plum Island for the animals that call it home and to provide public access in the form of passive

recreation such as bird watching, photography, nature appreciation, and the study of wildlife. We plan long-term stewardship of the island, so it continues to provide a refuge for wildlife, permits scientists to study its unique habitat, and allows humans to observe and appreciate its ecosystems. We envision a visitor center and small museum at the government-owned Plum Island ferry parcel at Orient Point in an existing building, which visitors could visit by ferry.

#### 5. Key Decision Makers

The introduction of The Plum Island National Monument Act last year builds on growing support at the federal level to preserve the island. Under the Antiquities Act, either Congress or the President can confer status as a national monument.

In late 2022, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Senators Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) secured a provision in the federal budget expressing unequivocal support for safeguarding Plum Island. In January 2023, a group of nine Congressional staffers and federal officials visited the island and voiced a commitment to permanent conservation.

In March 2023, Congressman Nick LaLota (R, NY-1) introduced H.R. 1584. Earlier this year, Louise Harrison, Save the Sound's Long Island natural areas manager and the organizer of the PPIC, testified before the House Committee on Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee in support of the legislation.

H.R. 1584 now has nine co-sponsors from New York, Connecticut, California, and Georgia. But the legislation needs additional champions in Congress from across the United States. Our supporters have sent more than 1,120 messages from voters in 12 different states, so far, to U.S. representatives urging them to co-sponsor the legislation since August 2023.

#### 6. Elevate Voices

The PPIC has coordinated with the Montaukett Indian Nation throughout the process of advocating for the preservation of Plum Island. Plum Island is an important part of the Montaukett's cultural heritage and part of their historical territory. The conservation of the island would allow for careful study of the island and would provide an opportunity for understanding Plum Island's Indigenous past through non-invasive archaeology. Sandi Brewster-walker, a member of the Montaukett, said in a recent interview with The Suffolk Times that: "As the original stewards of Plum Island, the Montaukett people are dedicated in playing a key role in the future of the preservation and interpretation of this cherished land and its cultural, sacred sites. The underdeveloped part of Plum Island contains thousands of years' worth of Montaukett history, and we want to research and preserve it."

Save the Sound has also been an ally and messenger on issues concerning equity and intersectional justice on other projects. Our Ecological Restoration Team worked with Junta for Progressive Action on our PhotoVoice Project in Fair Haven, a neighborhood in New Haven, where we convened community members to document and share environmental issues both of concern and to celebrate, culminating in a traveling community display. And our Water Quality team partnered with Environmental Leaders of Color in training BIPOC youth to sample macroinvertebrates in streams in Mount Vernon, New York. Finally, in Hamden, Connecticut, we are helping residents of the Newhall neighborhood advocate for remediation of the contaminated Six Lakes property with the goal of turning it into a public park.

We were also awarded a federal grant to help conduct outreach for the Long Island Sound Study Environmental Justice Needs Assessment, and routinely share opportunities with our network of BIPOC groups to meet legislators and participate in policymaking.

**7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes**

In the next year, we plan to: 1) Encourage more co-sponsorship the legislation to declare Plum Island a national monument; 2) Continue to meet federal and elected officials to share PPIC's vision for permanent conservation of the island; 3) Increase communications through press releases, blog posts, earned media, editorials, and action alerts to supporters; 4) Achieve passage of The Plum Island National Monument Act; 5) Work with federal agencies to develop a long-term stewardship plan for the island.

**8. Evaluate Your Progress**

We see a pressing need for immediate conservation of the island's sensitive environmental, historical, and cultural resources. We ultimately seek the establishment of a public-philanthropic partnership, as well as targeted public-private partnerships, that engage the Department of Interior, Indigenous stakeholders, the State of New York, regional and local entities, and the community with the amazing richness of plant and animal species, people's cultural heritage, and the history of Plum Island. Properly managed, Plum Island can showcase a full reckoning of America's history, from times of ecological abundance to those of significant cultural disservice. We plan to protect and enhance Plum Island's remarkable ecological value; unite people with preservation, interpretation, and educational opportunities; and celebrate the rich cultural heritage and history of people interacting with the island over the millennia for present and future generations to enjoy.

**9. TCA Funding Plan**

We plan to use the funding from The Conservation Alliance to support advocacy, coordination, public education, and communications needed to secure permanent protection for Plum Island. This will include leading the PPIC, whose members are working together to provide information to the Biden administration. Funds will also support educational efforts; staff coordination with the members of the PPIC, stakeholders, agencies, and policymakers; communications support; and initial steps toward a stakeholder effort to create a stewardship and maintenance plan for the island. Grant funds will not be used for lobbying.

**10. JEDI Efforts and Impact**

Environmental justice is central to the work of Save the Sound. Over the past year, we have advocated at the legislatures in both New York and Connecticut for measures that would benefit populations affected by environmental injustice. In New York, we supported the NY HEAT Act, which would help residents save on their energy bills while also ensuring that state oversight of gas utilities will lead to the reduction of emissions. In Connecticut, our team was instrumental in generating grassroots support to update the state's environmental justice statute to allow the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Siting Council to deny permits for new facilities based on cumulative environmental and public health impacts. As mentioned above for the Six Lakes project, we are also working with residents to restore and conserve for public use 102 acres of contaminated forest and wetlands in Hamden.

**11. Confidential Items**

No, nothing in our proposal must be kept confidential.

**Other Relevant Application Details**