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An Open Letter to Steven Bellone, Suffolk County Executive

By: Marshall Brown

Publication: The Membership of Save The Great South Bay

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To: Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone
From: The Membership of Save The Great South Bay
Re: Water Quality on Long Island

Dear Mr. Bellone,

We of Save The Great South Bay applaud your leadership in helping to shine a light on the major issue threatening all of Long Island's bays, rivers, ponds, its very drinking water, and with that our way of life. With the release of The Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan, the public at large, the 1.5 million people who live in Suffolk County and the 1.35 million in Nassau County, can begin to understand the collective threat we face from nitrogenous waste in our groundwater.

The public release of the report was truly a watershed moment. It was also a call to action. The now over 1100 members of Save The Great South Bay are ready to do their part to raise awareness about the threats our waters face, and to seek, in partnership with local officials and other environmental non-profits, solutions that would help preserve Long Island as a desirable place to live for our children and grandchildren.

There are things people can do now and today that can make a difference –

1. High nitrogen fertilizer, whether used in farming or on our lawns, is fuel to the fire, raising groundwater nitrogen levels and intensifying algal blooms.
2. Pesticides poison our waters, with 117 found in our waters.
3. Unused pharmaceuticals need to be disposed of properly, or inevitably they seep into our groundwater and then eventually into the aquifer.
4. Household products — cleansers, paint, sprays — can't be put out with our regular trash.

The major issue of course is the seepage from hundreds of thousands of septic tanks, mostly in Suffolk. As the work of Prof. Gobler and his research team has shown, this nitrogenous

waste is the major culprit in triggering the brown, rust, red, and blue green algal blooms that have decimated our marine habitats and wiped out our shellfish industries, while at the same time causing nitrogen levels in the aquifer to rise dramatically. Replacing this 19th Century infrastructure through some combination of sewerage and 'green' septic system will cost billions. The costs of doing nothing, though, are monumental. Literally hundreds of billions of dollars of real estate value is at stake. Our future is very much worth the investment.

With the release of the report and its public announcement yesterday, we can all agree on the diagnosis. The problem is clear. In the weeks, months, and years ahead, we very much look forward to working with the county and with the other environmental non-profits, civic groups, and research institutions that constitute The Long Island Clean Water Partnership (The Nature Conservancy, The Citizen's Campaign For The Environment, The Group For The East End, and The Pine Barrens Society, and many dozens of others) so that we can together implement solutions to our water problems and with that help to build a sustainable Long Island.

I have included your email here — county.executive@suffolkcountyny.gov ^[1] — so that others can register their thoughts and appreciation.

With deep appreciation and respect,

Marshall Brown
Founder
Save The Great South Bay

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Links

[1] <mailto:county.executive@suffolkcountyny.gov>

[2] <http://www.savethesouthbay.org/2014/01/an-open-letter-to-steven-bellone-suffolk-county-executive-thank-you-for-highlighting-how-long-island-is-under-threat-from-ground-water-polluted-by-septic-tanks/#>

[3] <https://twitter.com/share>