

Newsday

Preserve the treasure that is Plum Island

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By The Editorial Board



Environmentalists want the wildlife on Plus Island protected. The lighthouse is seen here in 2005. Photo Credit: AP / Bill Davis

Plum Island National Park. Sounds good, doesn't it? It certainly would be an appropriate designation for such a special place off our coast.

New York senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and their Connecticut colleagues, have proposed turning the 840-acre gem over to the National Park

Service or the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, in lieu of selling it, after its animal disease research center is moved to Kansas in 2022. It's a terrific idea.

But adding Plum Island to the national park system would be a complex and likely long process. So it's vital that Congress in the meantime pass a bill sponsored by Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-Shirley) to block the sale of Plum Island. The federal government had planned to use proceeds from an auction to help build the new facility in Kansas, but Congress already has appropriated the money needed. And although Southold Town has written zoning restrictions that ban residential development, a shrewd developer could buy the island, wait for turnover in Southold's government, and then push to rescind those restrictions.

Plum Island is a treasure with a rich history, threatened or endangered species, and Long Island's largest seal colony. Stop its sale, then preserve it forever. —

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