



Connecticut Fund  
for the Environment

Save the Sound®

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### **30 plunge into frigid Sound to help save Plum Island**

*Saturday fundraiser brought together conservationists, students, elected officials*

New Haven, Conn. – A long-planned “polar plunge”-style fundraiser at Old Saybrook Town Beach got a shot of drama from unexpectedly cold temperatures, strong winds, and high waves this weekend. Students from Old Saybrook High School, area officials, and representatives of a regional environmental organization—some in costumes—packed into a heated school bus for a press conference Saturday morning before running into a frigid Long Island Sound to raise awareness and support for protecting Plum Island.

The “Plum Island Plunge for Plovers” has raised \$3,700 for Connecticut Fund for the Environment and its bi-state program Save the Sound’s multi-year battle to save Plum Island from sale and private development. Donations are still coming in.

“I’ve met thousands of folks all around the Sound who want Plum Island preserved, but this is something else,” **said Chris Cryder, special project coordinator for CFE/Save the Sound**, decked out as one of the harbor seals that rest on Plum Island’s rocky shore. “To see dozens of people voluntarily turn out in weather like this to make a statement about the island’s importance is inspiring.”

**Rosie Rothman, co-president of Old Saybrook High School’s Interact Club**, explained that the plunge was a perfect fit for the Interact Club’s mission of community service and the Ecology Club’s mission of environmental protection. “Afterwards, we couldn’t feel our toes for a while, but we still had fun,” she said. “With a windchill in the single digits, it was definitely a challenge, but our members still showed up. I think that speaks to our dedication to the cause. It is our hope that our legislators take decisive federal action to protect Plum Island from development that would be detrimental to the wildlife that depends on it, including 111 species of conservation concern.”

“I was very proud to see so many Old Saybrook High School students participate in the polar plunge, on a freezing March day, to support efforts to preserve Plum Island,” **said Rep. Devin Carney (Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Westbrook)**. “Plum Island is an important natural resource for the Connecticut shoreline and Long Island Sound. By preserving it, these students, and many others, will be able to enjoy its natural beauty for many years to come.”

**Carl P. Fortuna, Jr., first selectman for the Town of Old Saybrook**, joined the hardy souls jumping into the Sound. Addressing the assembled attendees, he reminded them of the region’s land conversation victory in saving The Preserve, and said, “The Town of Old Saybrook fully supports the conservation of Plum Island and its rightful place in the public domain upon the

decommissioning of scientific activities. The importance of Plum Island as a flora and fauna host has been amply demonstrated. It is now time for our legislative and executive branches to swiftly put an end to any speculation that this resource will be privately developed. I applaud the bipartisan efforts to conserve Plum Island.”

**Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy** sent letters in support of the effort.

Plum Island, an 840-acre, federally-owned island in the eastern end of Long Island Sound, is home to threatened and endangered birds like the piping plover and roseate tern, as well as other rare species. Seventy Connecticut and New York organizations work together as the Preserve Plum Island Coalition, partnering with grassroots activists and champions in Congress to halt sale of the island. CFE/Save the Sound has also brought an action in federal court claiming that the government’s decision to sell the island violates numerous federal environmental laws.

Fundraising will remain open through the end of the month. Members of the public may donate to support CFE/Save the Sound’s work at [www.bit.ly/plum-plunge](http://www.bit.ly/plum-plunge).

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CFE/Save the Sound's Chris Cryder, in seal costume, speaks at the press conference (photo: Laura McMillan)



Plunging in (photo: Judy Preston)



Supporters (photo: Judy Preston)