

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

April 25, 2022

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We write to request your support and the assistance of the administration in securing the preservation of the federally owned land off the eastern tip of Long Island's North Fork known as Plum Island. We urge you and the administration to consider and utilize all available executive and administrative tools at your disposal to ensure the permanent protection of Plum Island and its management for conservation by the Department of the Interior.

For more than a decade, state, local and federal officials and a broad stakeholder coalition – including Indigenous nations, businesses, and numerous other regional experts – have been working together to save Plum Island from unwarranted development. Progress was made at the end of 2020 when the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (PL 116-260) repealed a law that circumvented traditional land disposal processes, effectively removing Plum Island from the auction block and making way for a new, permanent protection solution. The community has expressed clear interest in permanent federal conservation management for the irreplaceable ecological, cultural and historical resources that Plum Island contains.

Protecting Plum Island is squarely within the goals outlined in the Biden administration's "America the Beautiful Initiative," including supporting locally-led conservation efforts and protecting biodiversity and historic and cultural resources. An ecological gem, Plum Island is home to over 111 species of conservation concern including federally-threatened and NYS-endangered piping plovers, along with approximately 228 other bird species that use the island for breeding or migratory purposes and one of the most significant seal haul-out sites in southern New England, and the largest one in New York. It also holds nationally-significant artifacts and historic buildings, including the National Register of Historic Places' Plum Island Lighthouse (1869) and the National Register of Historic Places' Fort Terry (1897) army barracks and weapons batteries.

With your support, the decommissioning of the Plum Island Animal Disease Laboratory by the Department of Homeland Security can present an opportunity to move forward with a vision for managing Plum Island in a way that prioritizes the conservation of the island's remarkable natural, cultural and historic resources.

We appreciate the administration's commitment to conserving our shared lands and waters and our irreplaceable natural and cultural resources. Much of the story of America is represented in the amazing lands, wildlife, waters, and people of the Long Island Sound, including Plum Island.

We encourage you and the administration to take action in line with the “America the Beautiful” goals by permanently protecting Plum Island including through a National Monument designation or any other measure that leads to comparably protective conservation outcomes.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator