

Mon 6/19/2023 9:53 PM

Dear Village of Plandome Manor BZA,

I am writing on behalf of the South Shore Audubon Society to oppose the proposed 300 cubic yards of fill at Leeds Pond. We are a local chapter of the National Audubon Society representing approximately 1500 households in Nassau County.

Leeds Pond is an important breeding grounds for Wood Duck and a variety of herons and egrets as well as a wintering grounds and staging area for migrating waterfowl. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's database eBird records 152 bird species using Leeds Pond Preserve.

We have lost 2/3 of North American birds, or 3 billion birds, since 1970, and another 1/3 will be lost in coming decades due to climate change and habitat loss unless we act now. These birds are the canaries in our coal mine, indicators of the health of our environment.

A polluted Leeds Pond will empty into Long Island Sound and pollute an entire watershed on which the lives and livelihoods of over 8 million people depend. More than 10% of the US population lives within 50 miles of Long Island Sound, which contributes an estimated \$5.5 billion per year to the regional economy.

The Long Island Sound watershed is one of the region's largest estuaries, with an area 1320 square miles and a shoreline of 600 miles. It provides breeding and foraging areas for 120 species of fish as well as countless species of birds, including Audubon priority species such as American Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers, Saltmarsh Sparrows, and Roseate Terns.

The pollution from Leeds Pond would degrade coastal marshes and the natural flood protection they provide. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, coastal marshes provide \$23.3 billion in flood protection annually. Our vital coastal ecosystems benefit birds and are the best line of defense for communities facing stronger, more frequent storms.

Further increasing their value, tidal wetlands serve as spawning, nursery, and feeding grounds for shellfish, finfish, and waterfowl. They provide nutrient cycling and nitrogen removal, which improves water quality. They play a critical role in carbon sequestration. When marshes decline, habitat is lost, water quality deteriorates, and communities experience more frequent flooding.

Ecosystems are fragile. 300 cubic yards is a massive amount of soil filled with nitrogen- and phosphorus-containing compounds that have been shown to lead to toxic algae blooms. If allowed to pollute Leeds Pond, cleanup will be expensive if not impossible.

South Shore Audubon agrees with the many voices of the community who are urging the BZA to do everything environmentally necessary to save Leeds Pond: removing 100% of fill, eliminating sources of silt and toxic runoff, and restoring Leeds Pond to its natural splendor.

Community voices should not be ignored. Public Comment should be OPEN at the next July 20th BZA meeting, Transparency is essential for the health of the environment and community.

Sincerely,

Brien Weiner  
Board of Directors  
South Shore Audubon Society