

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 12, 2012

Mr. Phil Youngberg
Environmental Manager
General Services Administration
10 Causeway Street, Room 925
Boston, Massachusetts 02222

Dear Mr. Youngberg:

As the Members of the Connecticut Congressional Delegation, we greatly appreciate the Government Services Administration's (GSA) and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) diligent review of the significant and sensitive environmental aspects of Plum Island and the impact of various development scenarios should Plum Island be sold. We are pleased that in proceeding toward the sale of Plum Island pursuant to the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act of 2009 (P.L. 110-329), GSA conducted a study and drafted an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that accurately acknowledges the moderate to major impacts of development on Plum Island's unique ecosystem. To ensure that sensitive lands are appropriately protected in any sale, however, we believe that the EIS should more clearly delineate the areas of the island that would remain protected from further development and indicate the specific federal laws and regulations that would provide such protections, and that any sale should be expressly conditioned on compliance with such laws and regulations.

The environmental importance of Plum Island cannot be overstated. The draft EIS documents the vast number of species that may be impacted by the development scenarios, including at least two endangered species – the piping plover and the roseate tern. In addition, development on Plum Island may affect the endangered Atlantic Ridley Sea Turtle and three other endangered or threatened species listed in New York State. In 2006, the Long Island Sound Study – a collaboration of federal, New York, and Connecticut state agencies and environmental organizations – included Plum Island as a Long Island Sound Stewardship site. This designation recognizes the ecological and recreational importance of this parcel to Long Island Sound.

The draft EIS accurately acknowledges the environmental importance of Plum Island, indicating that development of Plum Island could have a moderate to major impact on land use and visual resources, air quality, water resources, and biological resources. Of Plum Island's approximately 840 acres, the EIS's suitability analysis found that only 195 acres are suitable for further development, including approximately 170 acres that have already been developed to some extent. Our understanding is that the remaining 645 acres – nearly 77% of Plum Island, including 96 acres of freshwater wetlands and 101 acres of beach/dune systems – were found unsuitable for development. Additionally there are historical structures on the island that are subject to preservation laws. Once no longer under federal control, Plum Island lands would be

subject to local zoning as well, and there are indications that Southold, New York is already working to develop appropriate land use rules. We believe that the GSA and the DHS, in its final EIS, should more clearly detail the parcels of land protected from development, and the specific laws or regulations that provide protection for these parcels or historical structures. This would provide both notice for potential purchasers and reassurance for the public who want to see these lands preserved.

For many years, Plum Island has served as home to an important research facility that helps protect American agriculture from potentially devastating animal diseases. As the Department of Homeland Security embarked on its plan to build a new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Kansas, a facility with a broader mission to protect animal and public health that will eventually replace the Plum Island center, Congress directed the GSA to sell Plum Island, and to direct the proceeds to the construction and operation of the new facility. We recognize that the GSA, in selling Plum Island, does not have the authority to impose its own conservation and environmental restrictions beyond those protections otherwise provided for in law. Nonetheless, we believe that the GSA can play an important role in protecting the significant environmental and historical aspects of Plum Island by providing clearer information on critical existing protections and by expressly requiring that any purchases abide by such restrictions. Such action would be fully consistent with the Congress's authorization of the sale of Plum Island "subject to such terms and conditions as necessary to protect government interests."

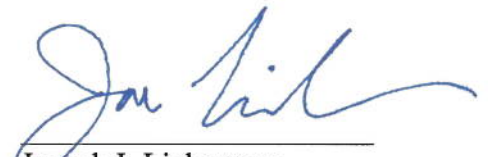
This recommendation would be consistent with the environmental impact concerns in the comments filed by the following: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; the Office of Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell; the Environmental Protection Agency – Boston office; U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Department of Commerce; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; the Office of Congressman Tim Bishop; Thomas Aisles, AICP, Director of Planning for Suffolk County; and Edward Romaine, Suffolk County Legislator.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate



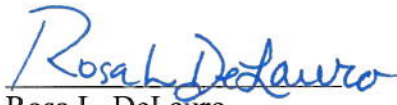
Joseph I. Lieberman
United States Senate



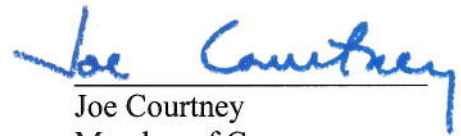
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



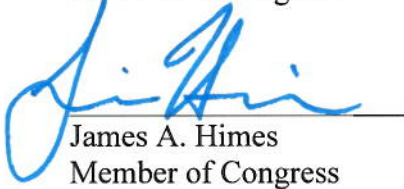
Christopher S. Murphy
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



James A. Himes
Member of Congress