

# Model Town: Expansive Dunes Keep Barnegat Light Undamaged

## To the Editor:

Those of us who have lived a long time on Long Beach Island know the history of our storms. We knew we were, sooner or later, going to get a storm like Sandy. We've had worse. In 1962, a nor'easter devastated our Island and washed scores of houses and cars into the bay, where they remained for many months. The storm even created a new inlet to the sea at Harvey Cedars.

Knowing that these powerful storms can strike our island, the question becomes: "How effectively have town leaders prepared for the inevitable giant storm? Did these elected officials do everything possible to ensure the safety of citizens and protect property during a giant storm?"

Only one Island town escaped damage from Hurricane Sandy. Only one town had adequate protection on both the ocean and bay side. That town was Barnegat Light. Take a drive up there and check it out with your own eyes. You will see no stacks of building debris along the streets. There are no chewed-up beaches, and bay flooding did no visible damage. They were prepared. So what steps did Barnegat Light take that spared that town from storm damage?

The first thing they did was restore their dunes to the way they were 200 years ago.

From the end of any street the dunes rise and fall for about an entire half a mile until they reach the surf. Sometimes they are a story and a half high; sometimes they drop down into little bowls or valleys. The dunes are covered with deep-rooted native vegetation such as beach grass, bay heather and beach plum that

hold the soil. The same type of dune is found at Island Beach State Park, which is on the island just to the north of Barnegat Light. These old-fashioned native dunes are the perfect defense against almost any storm, and they held back Sandy's storm surge.

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*Artwork by Irene Bausmith*

## *The Marsh*

Stand and listen.  
Hear the branches crackling,  
the whisper of the reeds.  
See the grasses  
lit by the low western sun,  
the snow nestled on the edges

teasing the water.  
The air sparkles with crystals,  
and glows in pinks and blues.  
The marsh in all its glory  
will return from the wrath of the storm.

**Irene Bausmith  
Manahawkin**

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## Letters

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A second line of protection in Barnegat Light is in the attitude people have to native plants. Most property owners there cultivate deep-rooted native plants including red cedar, holly, bayberry, honeysuckle and so on. This is in contrast to other Island towns, where it seems as if property owners start spraying weed killer on any plant that springs out of the ground; they favor barren gravel, and there is nothing to hold down the soil.

Finally, Barnegat Light did not develop its bay wetlands. The bay wetlands are what slow down bayside waves and water surges. The wetlands did their job and prevented water damage from this last hurricane.

It is a sure and certain bet that we will get another storm like Sandy. We just don't know when. It may be next month, next winter or years from now. We must prepare, keeping in mind the damage from this storm. Everyone has seen the physical debris, houses off their foundations, ruined appliances and furniture piled along streets. The destruction runs to millions of dollars.

But there's more. Property values have gone down about 20 percent, and it will probably be five years before they return to their pre-storm levels. Additionally, New Jersey insurance companies are permitted to drop a percentage of their clients yearly without giving any reason. Naturally they will be dropping their biggest homeowner policy risks here on LBI. As for the rest of us, they will raise the rates on our homeowner policies. Insurance companies do not like to lose money.

Every town on LBI needs to follow

of natural dunes, the only kind that are really effective. Those dunes used to exist along the whole Island until developers bulldozed them to provide a "clean ocean view." What a dumb idea that was! Build Barnegat Light-style dunes along the whole Island. If any oceanfront property owners refuse to grant easements, use eminent domain to condemn the properties. Then sell the properties but keep the easements.

Paying for the new dunes is easy. Instead of building the extravagantly expensive second bay bridge, which we don't need, use the money for real dunes, which we do need. The current Band-Aid dunes towns are throwing up are a waste of money! They'll only wash away again in a strong storm and we'll end up rebuilding them and spending more than if we had built real dunes in the first place. Why is it that politicians never think to do the job right the first time? They just do the job over and over at taxpayer expense. Maybe that's our fault. Maybe it's because we don't elect the right can-do people with vision to office.

If that's the case, we'd better change things before we have to deal with a storm like Sandy again. Because it is certain that we will have to deal with another monster storm in the future.

Jonathan Wright  
Surf City

## 2 Percent Solution

To the Editor:

I can't believe that we're going through this lunacy with Congress again regarding ending the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest 2

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