

# Celebrating The East End's Most Valuable Asset

## Water conservation, protection subject of Indy-sponsored festival

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Once taken for granted, clean water, whether it be for drinking or recreation, is now on everybody's minds.

With algal blooms that used to be a rare occurrence now a regular occurrence in our bays and ponds, and the groundwater below our feet under attack from leaking septic systems, fertilizers, pesticides, and any number of other toxins, there is growing consensus that the time to act is now.

In response to those concerns and with an eye toward celebrating and preserving the East End's most valuable asset, The Independent will host the Water Views Festival on June 2 at Guild Hall in East Hampton.

The day will bring together expert speakers who will present on issues as diverse as sustainable landscaping to the effects the toxins appearing in our water can have on human health.

A team of water experts will hold a panel discussion, and there will be family-friendly activities highlighting local initiatives, an eco-expo, and food tastings. Best of all the event is free to the public.

The four keynote speakers include East Hampton's Edwina von Gal, a landscape designer and founder and

president of the Perfect Earth Project. To von Gal, a beautiful lawn is a bio-sustainable and toxin-free lawn. In 2016, *Architectural Digest* described her organization as one that "seeks to free the world from chemicals, one lawn at a time."

Michael Ogden, the founder of Natural Systems International in Santa Fe, New Mexico, will also speak. His company provides expertise on biotechnology and engineering for a wide range of water projects from the treatment and reuse of wastewater, storm water management, the restoration of large, impaired bodies of water, and finding ways to protect and increase the supply of potable water around the world.

One of the innovations NSI is currently advancing is the creation of artificial or "constructed" wetlands to treat wastewater in much the same way as nature uses wetlands to filter pollutants from the water.

Another speaker will be Beth Rattner, the executive director of the non-profit Biomimicry Institute, which focuses on mimicking the way nature "solves" problems with the goal of both protecting the world and developing jobs for the future economy.

The fourth speaker, Dr. Aly Cohen, is a rheumatologist, integrative medicine specialist, and environmental health expert who specializes in ar-

thritis, immune system disorders, and women's health. She has collaborated with the Environmental Working Group to create a presentation for physicians and other healthcare professionals on endocrine disrupting chemicals and their relationship to human health and has lectured on the subject in communities and schools.

Dr. Christopher Gobler, a marine biologist and director of the New York State Center for Clean Water Technology, at Stony Brook University, will serve on a "State of Our Waters" panel with Dorian Dale, the director of sustainability for Suffolk County. Other panelists will be announced.

Gobler is well known on the East End for his annual "State of the Bays" talks in which he discusses the environmental health of the bays, citing the scientific studies of his graduate students as well as his work in assessing the threats facing local water bodies, including Georgica and Wainscott ponds. The Center for Clean Water Technology has focused on creating innovative technology to protect water quality, including developing new wastewater treatment systems for private homes to replace traditional septic systems.

In his role as sustainability director, Dale has worked on a number of Suffolk County initiatives, including the "Reclaim Our Waters" program, which

seeks to mitigate the nutrient loading that has degraded wetlands and their surrounding ecosystems and threatens the groundwater.

The Water Views Festival will be held from 10 AM to 3 PM. Talks and presentations will be held from 10 AM to noon, with the eco-expo and food tastings taking place from noon to 3 PM.

Space is limited. Reservations can be made at [waterviews@indyeastend.com](mailto:waterviews@indyeastend.com).

## Calling All Students!

Students on the East End, from pre-K to high school seniors, are invited to submit a water-themed short story or poem on what water means to them. One winner will be chosen and have their work published in *The Independent's* May 29 issue and presented at the Water Views Festival on June 2 at Guild Hall in East Hampton.

Stories should not exceed 300 words, and can be as short as a couplet. Please make sure to include your name, age, grade, and your school (or if you're homeschooled).

Deadline is May 15. Start writing! Submit to [waterviews@indy-eastend.com](mailto:waterviews@indy-eastend.com)

Focus on the Environment series: Water Views



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