

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Safe Access for Everyone, (SAFE), forms to promote a safe beach environment for all East Hampton residents

East Hampton, NY - Today, a new organization, Safe Access for Everyone (SAFE), launches its campaign for safe enjoyment of our beaches that is fair to all residents of East Hampton. SAFE was formed to educate the public about East Hampton's beach safety, sanitation and environmental hazards, and wasteful government spending on lawsuits that deny these concerns. SAFE is committed to generating solutions to these problems that are free, safe and fair to all residents.

Congested SUV beach driving and parking, keg parties and primary dune destruction on infamously nicknamed "Truck Beach" in Napeague threaten the safety of East Hampton's children and families. While SUV users accept beach-driving limits elsewhere in East Hampton, it occurs year-round, even on summer days at Truck Beach, and is irrational in such a densely populated area. SAFE invites pedestrian use of the populated beach, and asks that SUVs move to an uninhabited part of the same stretch of beach; a free, simple solution that works for everyone. Despite this logical solution, the Town is at substantial risk of spending millions of taxpayer dollars defending the unrestricted SUV use in court, even though it curtails SUV beach driving elsewhere in East Hampton.

"You would never tell your child to go play on Montauk Highway or in a parking lot," says SAFE spokesperson Cindi Crain, a single mother of a 7-year old boy and a full-time

Amagansett resident. “But that’s what the Napeague beach has turned into. Why are SUVs more important than the safety of our kids? Allowing hundreds of cars and trucks on the beach where so many local children play is not safe, and there are easy, free alternatives to solving the conflict.”

Many other organizations throughout the world have challenged the logic of beach driving in densely settled areas, such as Coastal Care who describes beach driving in heavily populated areas as, “aesthetically displeasing and dangerous for beach strollers as well as damaging to the ecosystem.” (www.coastalcare.org) Scores of children and adults have been killed or maimed by SUVs on beaches from Florida to California, as outlined on the SAFE website. Children are entitled to freedom on beaches, not terror from oncoming vehicle traffic.

“Truck Beach” has proliferated within what is now a densely populated area, where 140 local families with small children must dodge speeding SUVs and squeeze between tightly parked trucks in order to get to the shoreline. The SUV enthusiasts use the beach, dunes and adjoining residences’ backyards as their toilets. Area families suggested prohibiting SUV daytime summer use as it does on other Town beaches, or to moving the vehicles to unpopulated stretches of beach, such as at nearby South Flora/Dolphin Drive or adjacent Napeague State Park (both of which have well-defined vehicle beach access points). The Town and Trustees refused, and now have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars defending a lawsuit in court—and may spend tens of millions more—to create a highway and parking lot on the densely populated oceanfront beach. Such spending is wasteful and frivolous when free, nearby options exist to create safer beaches for all users.

“SUVs are not an East Hampton tradition; they have only existed a couple dozen years, a blip in East Hampton’s long history,” says Crain. “Our beaches have been used by pedestrians for *hundreds* of years. Thus the recent beach driving fad is not a ‘traditional right’ that trumps longer-standing pedestrian-safety concerns.”

The vehicles crowd Napeague beach, with upwards of several hundred cars overwhelming the beach at peak times. Every year the SUVs spurn Federal environmental laws and drive on nesting areas of Piping Plovers, an endangered bird species, risking obliteration of eggs and chicks. In addition, the East Hampton Waterfront Advisory Committee, the East Hampton Town Board, the East Hampton Town Planning Department, the East Hampton Town Natural Resource director and the New York State Division of Coastal Resources declared in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (East Hampton’s “coastal management blueprint”) that the SUVs using the access point to Truck Beach have “decimated” primary dune and have “opened a flood corridor “ that in a catastrophic storm could lead to the destruction of East Hampton homes. Despite this, the Town is not only defying its own laws by not rebuilding the dune, it is spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars—potentially millions—to continue to further destroy it, giving unfair and undue preference to beach drivers over other beach users. SAFE believes East Hampton’s human life and environment comes first.

“The town should stop wasting taxpayer money on an illogical position and move the SUVs to a nearby unpopulated beach further east,” says Crain.

Concerned Citizens of Montauk, The Nature Conservancy, The Amagansett Dunes Association, The East Hampton Beach Preservation Society, Group for the South Fork, The South Fork Natural History Society, the Village Preservation Society of East Hampton, and the Wainscott Citizens Advisory historically have united against the

significant dangers SUV driving in populated areas present. SAFE now joins this admirable group of environmental and safety stewards.

More on SAFE can be found online at:

Web: www.safebeach.org

Facebook: Safe Access For Everyone

Instagram: [safeaccessforeveryone_eh](https://www.instagram.com/safeaccessforeveryone_eh)

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S.A.F.E.'s mission is to:

1. Keep our children safe from beach vehicle traffic by moving vehicles to uninhabited beach areas.
2. Keep East Hampton residents safe in catastrophic storms by rebuilding primary & secondary dunes decimated by SUV traffic, and support the rebuilding of downtown Montauk dunes only in ways consistent with the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (East Hampton's waterfront blueprint and source of coastal law)
3. Keep East Hampton families safe from beaches rife with human & animal waste, garbage and illegal fire debris; demand beach drivers and beach goers take their waste and trash with them.
4. Keep wildlife safe by stopping SUVs from running them over and destroying their habitat and keeping their habitat clean.
5. Keep East Hampton taxpayers safe from tax hikes or a bankrupt government due to excessive legal bills and extremely large condemnation awards.



Above: A pickup truck driving dangerously close to kids at Napeague beach.