

## Truck Beach Alternatives?

| July 20, 2011 - 2:22pm

No one would have designed it this way — 100 trucks lined up on the beach at Napeague. But they are there now, and figuring out what to do about it is the difficult question.

The “truck beach” phenomena and the lawsuit it spawned is a colossal headache for the East Hampton Town Trustees, who manage the beach in question, as well as for the members of the town board who also have been cited. While four-wheel-drive permits may have historical roots in the traditional practices of whaling, commercial fishing, and seaweed or salt hay gathering, using Napeague as a recreational paradise evolved only in the last 10 years or so.

If those residents who drove onto the sand at the end of Marine Boulevard for a day of sun and relaxation were doing it decades ago, they were keeping it under the radar. Now, like most anything good, the secret is out, and dozens upon dozens of vehicles turn that section of ocean shore into one long party on hot summer weekends. Like many enjoyable pursuits, once enough people discover it, there are bound to be conflicts. In some ways, East Hampton Town has not managed its growth very well. What would the trustees’ reaction have been if they were asked to open up a half-mile or more of beach to trucks, creating a de facto bathing beach minus the lifeguards and the facilities. Make no mistake, it wouldn’t have happened, at least not the way that beach is now.

Eliminating truck beach would be politically risky, to put it mildly. Many of its biggest fans can be counted on to vote in the November town elections, and nothing motivates turnout like taking something cherished away from voters. This must have been the calculation of the property owners who sued, asserting ownership of the extensive portion of the beach above the high tide line. They must have guessed that elected officials would not have the courage to take on the issue.

Walking along this stretch of beach several times on weekends this summer, it was easy to see both its attraction for those who park there and the annoyance of those whose houses overlook the scene (some of whom, incidentally, are year-round residents, too, just like many of the truck beachers). These homeowners should not have to endure living adjacent to what appears to be a parking lot. Conversely, although 100 trucks is just too many, those who would like to join friends in a great big tailgate party on the beach should have a place to do so.

Regardless of the merits of the case now before the Suffolk Supreme Court, town officials and the trustees should seek a solution that both sides could endorse. Satisfying everyone may not be possible, but coming up with a reasonable alternative or two to the parts of truck beach that are directly in front of houses just might be.

### **Need to Know**

---

[Montauk Beach Project Will Proceed, Town Says](#)

[Protests Against Army Corps's Project Continue in Montauk](#)

[Whooping Cough Case Reported at Springs School](#)

[Rally Planned in Montauk as Town Mulls Next Move on Seawall Project](#)

[Three More Arrests in Montauk](#)