F O R  I M M E D I A T E  R E L E A S E *
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BAAAAACK AGAIN, LIKE THEY NEVER LEFT! TRUST FOR GOVERNORS ISLAND WELCOMES THE RETURN OF ITS ICONIC SHEEP LANDSCAPING SQUAD

Five sheep—Evening, Chad, Philip Aries, Bowie and Jupiter—have returned to their posts on at Hammock Grove to munch on invasive plant species

Now in its fourth year, sheep in this program have cleared over 14 acres of invasive plants since 2021, saving Island gardeners thousands of hours in manpower

NEW YORK (May 16, 2024)–For the fourth consecutive year the Trust for Governors Island is welcoming baaaaack a team of upstate sheep to stroll the Island’s grounds to eat invasive species of plants and preserve its ecosystem’s heterogeneity. The five sheep–Evening, Chad, Philip Aries, Bowie and Jupiter–returned to the Island this week from their home at Friends of Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm in Albany. They will spend the spring and summer in Hammock Grove, munching away on invasive plant species like phragmites, bindweed and mugwort.

Since this program first started in 2021 the sheep have eaten roughly 14.5 acres worth of invasive plant species, starting with a whopping 8.26 acres that first year. The sheep ate three acres of plants in 2022 and 3.22 acres in 2023.

This work freed up thousands of work hours for the human beings that make up the Governors Island horticulture team, allowing them to focus on more important tasks. That included building and landscaping new pathways in Hammock Grove that visitors to the Island can enjoy, among other items.

“Every year we are excited to welcome our sheep friends to their summer home on Governors Island, not only because they are amazing creatures and beloved by our visitors but also because they put in the hard work that allows our horticulture team to focus on more important tasks than mowing lawns and pulling weeds,” said Clare Newman, President and CEO of the Trust for Governors Island. “We encourage New Yorkers and visitors from all over the world to take a quick ferry ride to Governors Island, see the sheep in action, enjoy the best view in New York City and take in everything this wonderful place has to offer.”

“We are thrilled to continue to partner with Governors Island, and our flock is happy to be back at work in Hammock Grove,” said Kim Tateo, Executive Director and Farm Manager of Friends of Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm. “It has been incredible to witness how, over the past four years, the sheep have been able to improve the plant diversity in Hammock Grove and help create a healthier habitat for all visitors to Governors Island. We are excited to offer more public engagement with the sheep this year, allowing them to educate New Yorkers on the innovative services they provide both here on the Island and at their home upstate.”
The sheep issued a joint statement expressing their elation on returning to Governors Island for the fourth year.

“Baaaaaaa, baaaaaa, baaaaaa,” they bleated. “Baaaaa, baaaaaa!”

Mugwort, phragmites, bindweed and other invasive plant species have a competitive nature and crowd other plantings on Governors Island, essentially creating a monoculture. The sheep eating these herbaceous plants helps to break down and weaken them, preventing them from flowering and the seeds spreading.

Sheep are also uniquely suited to the work on Governors Island, more so than goats or other animals, since their culinary tastes do not include tree bark. The sheep will eat around the young trees in Hammock Grove and focus on phragmites and other delicacies, while goats would devour virtually any plant life they could get their hooves on—invasive or not.

Several public engagement events will be held on Governors Island in partnership with Friends of Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm, featuring live sheep herding, Q&A’s with our shepherds, and hands-on wool activities, with dates to be announced on www.govisland.org/things-to-do.

In November 2023, the Trust launched the Governors Island Nature program, which fosters visitor engagement with Governors Island’s 120 acres of natural and built open spaces and promotes horticulture practices employed by the Trust’s team that support biodiversity—of which the landscaping sheep are an ideal example. In addition to helping maintain healthy, biodiverse habitats in Hammock Grove, the sheep allow our team to minimize use of herbicide along with mowers and other tools powered by fossil fuels.

Through learning, public programs, and stewardship projects, Governors Island Nature aims to educate New Yorkers about horticulture and the impacts of climate change on our natural surroundings, while promoting Governors Island as a sanctuary for all beings. In-person events and activities are accompanied by a suite of digital resources that includes an interactive tree map, a “Plant Watch” page, and more.

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**About the Trust for Governors Island**
The Trust for Governors Island is the nonprofit corporation created by the City of New York that is responsible for the redevelopment and operation of 150 acres of Governors Island. The Trust’s mission is to realize the full potential of Governors Island for the inspiration and enjoyment of all New Yorkers, demonstrating a bold vision for public space. For more information, visit www.govisland.org