

Small Grants, Big Impacts

Shoring up Stewardship

This is the fifth year of Long Island Sound Study funding for the American Littoral Society's (ALS) fall beach cleanups in the Sound's watersheds. "This is a great occasion for people to get out and clean up our local beaches," says **Kimberly Zimmer**. Participating volunteers will learn about marine pollution and what they can do daily to solve the problem of floating debris. If you'd like to become a beach captain, contact ALS at 718.471.2166.

A Harbor Estuary Program mini-grant will allow the New York Aquarium to offer Project BEACH – Beach Ecology and Care of Habitats – to five Brooklyn elementary classes. Says **Laura Bartovics**, "BEACH is an innovative marine science education program that emphasizes the importance of stewardship of the shore and promotes community awareness through its hands-on approach to coastal ecology."

The public *can* help protect New York's waters. That's the formula for success used by the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) and NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program (HEP) as they continue to fund individual small grant programs. These programs, administered by NYSG, offer \$4-5K in seed monies to non-profit organizations, local governments, public agencies, schools and school districts for projects that emphasize the Sound and Harbor as living environmental and social resources.

"One of our primary goals is to support and encourage the efforts of citizen stewards who motivate people to actively participate in the Harbor's restoration," says **Laura Bartovics**, NYSG's HEP outreach coordinator. **Kimberly Zimmer**, Sea Grant's LISS educator, adds, "We are pleased that the Sound's program continues to attract quality projects that encourage public awareness, involvement, and education around this national treasure."

Along Long Island Sound

Now in its eighth year of providing these grants, the LISS has allocated \$200K for 73 projects since 1995. Last November, an additional \$55K was earmarked for 12 community projects throughout the Sound's New York and Connecticut watersheds. The projects focus on teacher training, interpretive models, aquaculture, habitat restoration, community outreach and education, controlling floatable debris, and a festival celebrating the return of shad.

One project, overseen by Friends of the Bay, is bringing bilge sock education to Oyster Bay and **Cold Spring Harbor** ① boaters (see map, p. 17). This is being conducted via distributions of socks and brochures at local yacht clubs and speaking engagements such as this past May's Bay Day.

So what's a bilge sock? It's a 3x18-inch sausage-shaped tube containing special fibers capable of absorbing up to two quarts of oil and fuel from a boat's bilge

compartment, preventing discharge into surrounding waters. Once used, bilge socks that are not dripping oil can be disposed of in a garbage can. If they contain bioremedial bacteria, though, they must be discarded at a marina, automotive repair shop, or any other place that recycles oil. These bacteria will continue to break down the oil and fuel in the bilge sock.

"This grant gives us a unique opportunity to partner with inboard motorboat owners to prevent boat bilge discharges from harming marine and aquatic organisms and degrading water quality," says Zimmer. She estimates that if 80 percent of these boat fuel absorptives distributed are installed this year, up to 800 quarts of oil will have been kept from polluting New York's Oyster Bay and Cold Spring Harbor.

In another effort, the North Shore Audubon Society will help a community "go native." They will remove non-native plantings at Garvies Point Preserve in Glen Cove, such as Norway maples and multi-flora roses, and replace them with native species. This restoration will enhance the organization's existing outdoor educational program, which includes fresh water ecology, biology, geology, and wildlife observations. It is anticipated that more than 3,000 people will have participated in these programs once the restoration is completed.



Several of Long Island's Friends of the Bay display a sausage-shaped bilge sock along Oyster Bay Harbor during May's kick-off event to distribute 500 of these boat oil absorptives to area boaters. The Friends modeled their efforts after a similar, highly successful program in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts.

Photo courtesy of Kimberly Zimmer

Educating the next generation is a big theme, too. A variety of teacher-related projects are underway as well. The **Manhasset Bay** ¹⁰ Shoreline Trail Program allows elementary school children to approach the Long Island Sound from different perspectives - as an environmentalist, a water pollution specialist, a politician, and a community member. In another LISS project running through this fall, Save Our Sound offered about a dozen **Mt. Vernon** ⁹, NY teachers hands-on strategies for engaging inner-city third to sixth graders in the stewardship of the Sound.



View of the Hudson River and Jersey City, NJ ∞ from the River Project at Pier 26 in Lower Manhattan. This pier is the site of a series of free summer educational events: open houses with outdoor science activities and demonstrations, seminars, conferences, and lectures. Funded through an HEP mini-grant, these events link to ongoing research at the Project's field station and educational programs such as marine biology internships for high school students.

Photo courtesy of Laura Bartovics

New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary

The NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program's public involvement and education mini-grant program began encouraging citizen participation in the protection and restoration of the estuary in 1991. In three grant cycles from 1991 to 1994, more than \$150K was awarded to fund 42 projects. Last year, the mini-grants were restarted with a \$25K NYSG-administered allocation. Bartovics' goal was to "expand the program to support a greater number and diversity of education and stewardship projects."

The 11 projects funded this year focus on bolstering water restoration efforts, and educating local citizen groups, teachers, and students on a variety of coastal ecology and stewardship issues. Also targeted is a reduction in stormwater runoff from non-point sources (NPS), a major contributor to water pollution in the Harbor. This NPS pollution comes from various places, including the homes and yards of watershed residents.

Thanks to HEP monies, Mariners Marsh Conservancy is organizing two volunteer clean-ups. Volunteers will remove debris in and around **Staten Island's** √ Bowman/Newton's Creek, which connects Mariner's Marsh to the Kill Van Kull.

HEP mini-grants will also help get the word out about the River Project's series of events at Pier 26 in **Manhattan** ≈ . Organizers anticipate a 150% increase from last year's 800 attendees. The detrimental effects of non-point source pollution were at the forefront of a Weequahic Lake drainage area storm drain-marking event held in New Jersey this past May.

Douglaston's Alley Pond Environmental Center is working with middle school teachers, students, and their families in Queens, NY to increase public awareness about protecting the **East River** ≤ and **Little Neck Bay** ≥ . Another HEP mini-grant allowed Randall's Island Sports Foundation to offer its Kids Island Club nature program to three Washington Heights/Inwood and Harlem middle school classes this spring.

— Paul C. Focazio



Numbers refer to sites where projects are now underway in Long Island Sound and the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary.

For more . . .

on these and other funded LISS and HEP small grants, log-on to nyseagrant.org. A request for the next wave of LISS small grant project proposals is now underway. HEP's 2003 mini-grants will include funds to sponsor Harbor-wide events on National Estuaries Day, October 27, 2003.