

SOUND UPDATE

NEWSLETTER OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY

Making a Difference in Long Island Sound

By Amy Mandelbaum

I had the opportunity to take part in an educational sail aboard the *Christeen*, the oldest oyster sloop in the United States. The *Christeen*, operated and maintained by The WaterFront Center in Oyster Bay, NY, serves as a floating classroom that provides students and the general public with a unique hands-on experience while enjoying the beauty of Oyster Bay Harbor and Long Island Sound. While aboard the boat, I worked alongside the other passengers and skilled WaterFront Center staff to raise the sails. It was hard work - pulling the lines and making sure they were secure. But once the sails were set, we were off to explore the bay.

As I reflect on my sailing experience, I can't help but make the connection between the raising of the sails, and the sense of accomplishment that followed, to the hard work that volunteers and professionals do every day to help protect and restore Long Island Sound.

As an Outreach Coordinator, I meet many people doing great work around the Sound, from volunteers to professionals, all from different walks of life. Even though they are different, they share a common goal of giving back to their communities and making a difference to protect and restore the Sound. It inspires me to hear their stories and see how they are improving their communities. As such, this issue of *Sound Update* provides several examples of the numerous people doing great work around the Sound.

We hope to feature another round of individuals again next year. If you would like to share your story of how someone is making a difference around the Sound, please contact me at 631-632-9216 or acb328@cornell.edu.

—Mandelbaum is the Sound Update Editor and New York Long Island Sound Study Outreach Coordinator at New York Sea Grant



SAILING ABOARD THE *CHRISTEEN*, you learn about Oyster Bay Harbor's past, how its rich shellfishing history continues to this day, and the Sound's abundant marine life.

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Sound Update provides readers with news about the Sound and the Long Island Sound Study.



Find the Long Island Sound Study on Facebook

Retired NYSDEC Manager Helps Restore River Herring

By Victoria O'Neill

Alewives (*Alosa pseudoharengus*), also known as river herring, are anadromous fish, meaning they spend the majority of their lives out at sea and only enter freshwater systems along the northeastern United States in the spring to spawn. During their travels, Alewives are an important food source for a variety of mammals, fish, and birds. From mid-March through May, these fish can be seen making their way up the many rivers and streams found throughout the Long Island Sound coastline and beyond. Unfortunately, over the last hundred years, alewife populations have decreased throughout their range. Spawning runs in Long Island Sound tributaries have been lost or severely diminished due to overfishing, habitat degradation, poor water quality, and, most importantly, the installation of impassable structures, such as dams, weirs, and culverts, that prevent fish from reaching their spawning grounds.

On Long Island, an effort has been made by the New York State Department of

NYS DEC



Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), Seatuck Environmental Association, Peconic River Fish Restoration Commission, the Peconic Estuary Program, the South Shore Estuary Reserve, the Long Island Sound Study, and many other partners to bring back the alewives. One of the biggest supporters and contributors to this effort over the years has been retired NYSDEC Section Chief of Finfish and Crustaceans, **Byron Young**. Prior to being Section Chief, Byron served as the Unit Leader for the Anadromous Fisheries Unit at NYSDEC for 23 years, rising up through the ranks from Field Biologist. While at NYSDEC, Byron was an original member of the Long Island Diadromous Fish Work Group, established in 2004, and he assisted with numerous Long Island Sound and Peconic River habitat restoration projects.

Since his retirement in 2006, Byron has volunteered his free time and extensive fisheries knowledge to continue to support the alewife population growth on Long Island. He works

with the partners every spring to conduct the Long Island Volunteer Alewife Survey, a program for citizen scientists to identify and collect information on remnant alewife spawning runs. Byron assists with presentations at the volunteer training workshops for the Survey, runs educational programs for the public at established fish passage locations, and takes the time to meet with other volunteer surveyors during the season to answer their questions. In addition, Byron assists partners with fish passage project planning, surveys Long Island for potential remnant alewife spawning run locations, and collects biological data on thousands of alewives each year at known alewife spawning runs on the Island. The five years of alewife data he has collected for the Peconic River is the largest data set for alewives on Long Island. Byron's work has significantly contributed to the success of fish passage projects and alewife spawning success throughout Long Island. His enthusiasm and dedication to the cause continues to energize volunteers, politicians, and partners alike.

—O'Neill is the Long Island Sound Study Habitat Restoration Coordinator at New York State Department of Environmental Conservation/ New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

NOAA



BYRON YOUNG COLLECTS DATA on the alewives he observes. This data is essential in the planning of future fish passage projects in the Long Island Sound watershed.

Steve Heins



NYS DEC

Getting Landscapers to Go Organic

By Robert Burg

Teaching homeowners that it is possible to reduce fertilizer use on their lawns without compromising appearance is an important component to most strategies to reduce nitrogen runoff in heavily-populated coastal estuaries. But in many communities in the Long Island Sound region, a significant amount of fertilizer is applied directly by landscapers who

provide the service to homeowners.

This realization has prompted **Jenna Messier**, the Organic Land Care Program Director at the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut (CT NOFA), to target this group by helping them learn how to maintain their customers' lawns with environmentally-friendly practices. The NOFA Organic Land Care Program provides landscapers with a low-cost, short course that explains the ecological benefits of organic lawn care services,

including reducing excessive use of nitrogen and phosphorus, and how to market these services to their customers while increasing profits. Coming soon, this program will be available online.

"The landscapers in the program," said Messier, "are hard-working, small business owners who want to do the right thing but are concerned about taking on the risk of trying something new." With their feedback, Jenna sought to identify which barriers they perceived as preventing them from having the confidence to implement organic lawn care services. Once compiled, she worked to tackle the barriers with information, examples, and support. The primary example of this outreach was the creation of an Organic Fertilizer Fact Sheet, which CT NOFA created and sent to all lawn students after discovering through data analysis that even seasoned land care professionals were having



Amy Mandelbaum

trouble measuring and quantifying fertilizer applications. This means less fertilizers will be applied when people are trained to make accurate calculations and applications.

With assistance from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, Jenna is keeping track of the 160 participants who attended the workshops in 2013 and 2014 and is beginning to see improved lawn care practices based upon their responses. So far, of the landscapers who have responded to the final surveys, more than two-thirds say that they have effectively reduced their annual applications of synthetic nitrogen, phosphorous, and herbicides, while maintaining turf with organic products. Landscapers also responded that demand for organic lawn care services has increased by 186%.

—Burg is the Long Island Sound Study Communications Coordinator at New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

Learn More

CT NOFA's Organic Land Care Program provides landscapers with a low-cost short course that explains the ecological benefits of organic lawn care services. To learn more, visit:

<http://www.organiclandcare.net/>

At this page, you will find information on the program and resources for homeowners and landscape professionals.



JENNA MESSIER DEVELOPED the CT NOFA's Organic Fertilizer Fact Sheet to assist landscape professionals in the measurement of their fertilizer applications.

Bringing the Sound to the Classroom

By Judy Preston

Lynn Reedy is the full-time Instructional Technology Specialist for pre-K through grade six students at Stafford Public Schools. Stafford Springs, Connecticut, along the border of Massachusetts, is located within the Long Island Sound watershed. Lynn works with her students to connect them to the world through technology. When a middle school teacher sought her assistance to enhance the Long Island Sound curriculum, Lynn suggested doing a webinar and initiated contact with the Long Island Sound Study. Four years later, the partnership between Stafford Middle School and the Long Island Sound Study has solidified. The students are involved in a webinar, followed by a visit to Bluff Point Coastal Reserve, a Long Island Sound

Lynn Reedy



In addition to webinars, Lynn works with district faculty to enhance the curriculum by creating various online projects. She also connects students to other faraway places, such as a museum in Nebraska, to talk about the transcontinental railroad and a Skype visit with park rangers in Yellowstone National Park. On their most recent visit to Bluff Point and Long Island Sound, students created their own movie of the experience using donated flip cameras. Lynn assists her students in creating a school newsletter, where they collaborate on Google Docs, and in her lean spare time, also oversees after-school computer clubs in both the elementary and middle schools.

Lynn grew up spending summers at the beach – Lords Point, Misquamicut, and so was surprised that many Stafford students did not have an awareness of their state's coastal boundary. "To learn about and extend their experience [of Long Island Sound] beyond the classroom wall – it's an amazing opportunity" she insists. "We're giving these kids an experience that they might not otherwise get." To sum up the experience for both students and Long Island Sound Study staff (and Lynn Reedy's role in making it happen): "It's awesome!"

—Preston is the Connecticut Long Island Sound Study Outreach Coordinator at Connecticut Sea Grant

Stewardship Area. This year, over 120 students from Stafford Middle School made the trip to the Sound.

Technology will be the way of the future for these students, and Lynn is well positioned to guide them there. She has been instrumental in bringing video conferencing equipment into the school district, an extension of having been recognized as a "Leader of Technology" in the state of Mississippi, where she was the state Technology Educator before returning to Connecticut six years ago (she grew up in the town of Preston).



LYNN REEDY ORGANIZES field trips to Bluff Point State Park in Groton, CT for the sixth grade students and their teachers. This provides the students and teachers living in the upper part of the watershed with a hands-on educational experience of Long Island Sound.



Teaching the Environment with a Caribbean Beat

By Georgia Basso

“Growing up, being part of the environment was a part of life,” says **Gamaliel ‘Gammy’ Moses**, Solar Youth’s Program Coordinator.

Gammy grew up in Dominica, a Caribbean island so beautiful and rich in biodiversity it is known as “The Nature Island.” When he was young, Gammy would follow his father, a musician and drum maker, into the rainforest covered mountains and help him make drums and natural sculptures out of ferns.

Today, Gammy brings his love of music and nature to youth in New Haven, Connecticut. He teaches them about the Long Island Sound, watersheds, and pollution through song and movement. Gammy breaks down into a point/non-point pollution song, “Chemicals leaking into a lake, tell the factory that’s not great. So don’t throw trash on the ground, ‘cause it might end up in Long Island Sound.” He smiles. “The kids love that song. We try to teach them that everything is connected. We discuss how to minimize our negative impact and grow our positive impacts on the Sound and in our communities.”

Solar Youth works with youth in New Haven. The organization’s mission is to provide opportunities for young people to develop a positive sense of self through environmental education, leadership, and community service. Gammy Moses inspires students to do just that through his drum beats, lyrics, and commitment to connecting urban kids with their local environment.

—Basso is the US Fish and Wildlife Service Liaison to the Long Island Sound Study

Growing Potatoes While Improving Water Quality

By Robert Burg

Scientists and resource managers know that slow or controlled-release nitrogen fertilizer can reduce the amount of nitrogen used on farms. But the product won’t be of much use unless farmers are convinced that it can be effectively applied on their local soils, in their growing conditions, and without negatively affecting yield. That is where **Marty Sidor**, a third-generation potato farmer on the North Fork of Long Island, has played a crucial role. Marty was one of the first farmers

to participate in a project started by the Agricultural Stewardship Program at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County and the American Farmland Trust to show that the new fertilizer can work in the North Fork of Long Island, a region about 70 miles from New York City with an expanding population of commuters. Sidor and other “early adopters” helped pave the way for more than 25 commercial sweet corn and potato farmers to



MARTY SIDOR participates in the Agricultural Stewardship Program to show that the new fertilizer can work.



GAMMY MOSES teaches students about environmental issues and how they can keep the Sound healthy through music.



participate in the program in 2013. On average, farmers who have used the new fertilizer have reduced nitrogen applications by 20 percent, lessening the risk of nitrogen running off into Long Island Sound and leaching into the groundwater, which is Long Island’s sole drinking supply. “The more you are looking to produce, being on the Island and sitting over the groundwater aquifer, you have to be accountable for that,” said Sidor.

Sidor traces his environmental ethic to his grandparents, who understood that conservation was the key to managing a small family farm. But Marty also brings 21st-century ideas to both the business of farming and stewardship. For instance, Sidor has purchased an on-farm potato chip processing facility to create North Fork Potato Chips and to have a new market to sell his potatoes. The sunflower oil he uses in the chip-making process is repurposed as biofuel in his fleet of trucks, tractors, and other equipment.

—Burg is the Long Island Sound Study Communications Coordinator at New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

Solar Youth

Solar Youth

Brian Smith



(Left) JUSTIN SMITH SAILS across from Stamford, CT to Oyster Bay, NY to raise funds for the bioextraction work that Charles Yarish was doing in the Sound. (Right) JUSTIN MEETS Anoushka Concepcion (Connecticut Sea Grant), Brendan Smith, and Charles Yarish.



Brian Smith

Teen Raises Awareness and Funds for the Sound

By Amy Mandelbaum

Living only 10 minutes from Long Island Sound, it was only natural that **Justin Smith's** bar mitzvah project would be about helping to clean and protect the nearby waterway. Justin, an avid sailer of the Sound, decided to volunteer his time to lead a fundraising effort for the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. According to Justin, "I wanted to do a project that would help the environment. I felt that this was the best fit."

He titled his fundraising project, "Sail Across the Long Island Sound." Justin's goal was to raise funds for the bioextraction work that Charles Yarish, a marine scientist at the University of Connecticut, was doing in the Sound, while raising awareness of the need to help clean and protect the Sound.

In 2012, Justin, only 12 at the time, went door-to-door asking neighbors and local businesses in the Town of Oyster Bay if they would consider making a donation. He explained his plans to sail by himself across the Sound, from Stamford, Connecticut to Oyster Bay, New York, to raise funds for Yarish's work. After raising close to \$5,000, Justin set sail on October 20. It took him about four hours to sail

almost 14 miles, from the Stamford Yacht Club to The WaterFront Center in Oyster Bay.

Justin originally started this project to get people's attention about the Sound and to help others realize that the Sound is more than just a bathtub, it's a body of water that we need to help clean and protect for the future. Nearly two years later, Justin is hoping to start his fundraising project up again - this time with a much faster boat.

—Mandelbaum is the New York Long Island Sound Study Outreach Coordinator at New York Sea Grant

Oyster Farmer Looks Toward Improving Water Quality

By Robert Burg

Research in Long Island Sound is showing that capturing nutrients by growing and harvesting native shellfish and seaweed is a viable way to improve water quality in an economically beneficial way. **Brendan Smith**, owner and operator of the Thimble Island Oyster Company in Branford, Connecticut, was looking for a way to diversify his aquaculture operation in a sustainable way. Working with Charles Yarish of the University of Connecticut, Smith started growing sugar kelp (*Saccharina latissima*), a highly valued food source in Asian and health food markets and restaurants, as part of his oyster aquaculture operation. This past year, Smith sold out to local restaurants the first commercial harvest of sugar kelp in Long Island Sound. The sugar kelp takes up nitrogen during the winter to grow, lessening the negative water quality impacts that occur in the summer. Because of his efforts, Smith was chosen in 2013 as one of six "Ocean Heroes" by Oceana and Future of Fish's "Ocean Entrepreneur" of the year.

—Burg is the Long Island Sound Study Communications Coordinator at New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission



BREN SMITH HARVESTS sugar kelp in his seaweed/oyster farm off the Thimble Islands in Branford, CT. Smith started seaweed farming as a result of research being conducted by scientists in the Sound.

Ron Gatreau

Using Art to Learn about the Bronx River

By Amy Mandelbaum

According to **Laura Alvarez**, living near Long Island Sound feels like home. Born in Spain by the Mediterranean Sea, Laura thought she would miss the sea when she came to live in the Bronx. To her, “having the Long Island Sound nearby has been a great experience, and being able to organize different activities in the area, coordinate projects and feel the water nearby, it really makes me feel like home.” Laura has been volunteering along the Bronx River and the Sound at Soundview Park for the past few years.

Laura was instrumental in the creation of a mural in the sprinkler area of the Soundview Park playground in 2012. Coordinating her efforts with Carlos Martinez of Friends of Soundview Park, their goal was to improve the park for the community while creating awareness of the rich marine life in the area. To accomplish such a project, she researched the aquatic life found in the Bronx River and incorporated them into the mural. As she simply states it, “It’s like the bottom of the river is under your feet.” Laura traced the animals onto the floor and then invited local volunteers to assist her in painting the mural. With 40 volunteers in attendance, a wide range of members of the community helped her transform her sketching into a work of art.

In 2013, a year after her mural project at Soundview Park was unveiled, Laura started a

Summer Art and Nature program for teens at the park. As part of this program, Laura invited organizations to come and teach the participants about the different aspects of the Bronx River, and the nature, birds, composting, trees, insects, and history of the area. Using the information that they learned as part of the program, the participants created pieces of art based on the lessons. According to Laura, “It was a great experience for all of us, because if you get the young people to understand the importance of nature, of parks, of the waterfront, they will be [better able to] take care of it when we are not around. They need to take charge of what they have in their neighborhood, and for that, education is key.”

Laura also volunteers her time by helping to organize the Annual Soundview Park Summer Festival. At this festival, there are family-friendly activities that aim to connect the community to the waterfront and the park. Activities include canoeing, face painting, and live music.

The mural at Soundview Park is now two years old, and Laura hopes to get back to the sprinkler area for touch-ups.

—Mandelbaum is the New York Long Island Sound Study Outreach Coordinator at New York Sea Grant



LAURA ALVAREZ leads volunteers in the painting of the Soundview Park mural. The goal of the mural is to improve the park and to create awareness of nearby Long Island Sound.

DIRECTOR

Mark Tedesco, EPA LIS Office

PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Joe Salata, EPA LIS Office

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Robert Burg, NEIWPCC

CT COORDINATOR

Mark Parker, CTDEEP

NY COORDINATOR

Cassandra Bauer, NYSDEC

CT OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Judy Preston, CT Sea Grant

NY OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Amy Mandelbaum, NY Sea Grant

UPDATE EDITOR

A. Mandelbaum, ACB328@CORNELL.EDU

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

R. Burg, J. Preston, C. Bauer

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EPA LIS Office

Stamford Government Center

888 Washington Blvd.

Stamford, CT 06904-2152

Phone: (203) 977-1541 / Fax: (203) 977-8102

New York Sea Grant

146 Suffolk Hall, Stony Brook University

Stony Brook, NY 11794-5002

Phone: (631) 632-9216 / Fax: (631) 632-8216

Visit us at:

www.longislandsoundstudy.net,

www.epa.gov, www.nyseagrant.org,

www.seagrant.uconn.edu, www.ct.gov/deep,

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Update of the CCMP is Closing in on its Final Stage

By James S. Latimer, PhD

It is with great anticipation that the Long Island Sound Study is closing in on the last phase in the update of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). This plan will form the foundation for management activities for the next generation of people living or working around, or visiting Long Island Sound. A core team of experts from the States of Connecticut and New York as well as many federal and advocacy partners have been working to seek input from a spectrum of interested citizens and groups through public and partner meetings, summits, and social media.

In this update, the core team consolidated the extensive progress made under the original 1994 CCMP, with the many recent insights gained from the past 35 years of studying the Sound. The new plan will take into account current and future challenges in order to restore and protect this “fine piece of water” for our children and grandchildren. Recent weather events, such as Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Irene, have reminded all of us who love Long Island Sound that its natural and built environments are fragile and require well-thought-out initiatives to restore what was damaged. As important as restoration is, the updated CCMP will be tailored to ensure that both past environmental burdens and new disturbances will not spoil the Sound’s natural habitats or the vulnerable populations living in cities and towns along the coast.



Victoria O'Neill

The CCMP core team will continue to work with professional partners and engaged citizens of the Long Island Sound watershed to bring to successful fruition this important planning foundation for all the citizens living on, working around, or enjoying the Long Island Sound. It will ensure that all members of the Sound community engage, explore, protect, and restore the Sound for the next generation.

We look forward to your participation in the CCMP update. For more information, please see the following:

<http://longislandsoundstudy.net/Planupdate>

<https://www.facebook.com/LISSplanupdate>

<https://twitter.com/PlanUpdate>

—Latimer is the CCMP Core Team Lead and works at the EPA Office of Research and Development

Judy Preston



Long Island Sound Study
c/o New York Sea Grant
146 Suffolk Hall
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, NY 11794-5002

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