



Kids Explore! Kids Do! Kids Teach!

By Kimberly Barnes

It is a beautiful sunny morning in July, and at Hammonasset State Park thirty New Haven youth are knee-deep in the Long Island Sound. They are not your usual skim-boarding, sun-bathing set. "I found a blue mussel!" someone exclaims. From down the beach comes a yell -- "Is this what Irish Moss looks like?" They are participants in Solar Youth's Citywide Steward Program on a marine life scavenger hunt. Every summer since 2000, Solar Youth has brought together up to thirty New Haven youngsters, ages 9 to 13, to explore their local ecosystem, solve environmental problems, and raise public awareness about a wide range of environmental issues. For the past two summers, Stewards have focused on the theme of watersheds, specifically the Long Island Sound watershed.

Solar Youth, Inc. is a New Haven-based non-profit youth development and environmental education organization founded in 2000. Its mission is to provide opportunities for young people to develop a positive sense of self and connection and commitment to others through programs that incorporate environmental exploration, leadership, and community

service. Our target audience is youth who reside in New Haven's low income communities. These youth are faced with incredible challenges such as poverty, crime, and violence in their communities, and are in great need of positive support and opportunities to succeed.



Stewards Juan Figueroa and Algon Dill cleaning out a storm drain behind their building run by Mutual Housing of South Central Connecticut. Photo by Hanifa Washington.

This summer's Citywide Stewards had tremendous successes within Solar Youth's unique program model: Kids Explore! Kids Do! Kids Teach! After a New Haven watershed tour, a trip to Outer Island, canoeing on the Quinnipiac River, and a series of hands-on lessons about watersheds and pollution (Kids Explore!), youth planned and carried out three community service action projects (Kids Do!). First, they orchestrated a cleanup of the Wintergreen Brook to reduce the amount of nonpoint source pollution that reaches the Long Island Sound via the West River. Next, youth took to the streets of New Haven with a Water Conservation Jeopardy game to educate the public about ways to reduce water usage. Finally, Stewards organized a "Pick Me Up" mailing party, sending out youth-designed postcards to discourage littering. At the end of the program, youth held a Public Education Forum for friends and family to teach about all they learned and accomplished (Kids Teach!).

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This issue is devoted to LIS Public Outreach

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Sound Update is published by the public outreach program to inform the public about issues pertaining to the Long Island Sound Study.



Gameliel Moses and Solar Youth Steward Michael Valentine in front of Hill Central School in New Haven. Photo by Joanne Sciulli.

Message from the Director

Public outreach, involvement, and education (POI&E) are related but distinct, often diverse, activities. Each is a critical component to developing effective strategies for the restoration of Long Island Sound. And each is needed to build and sustain public dialogue, understanding, and support for them. None is a discreet product that can be completed and checked off. Rather each requires a long-term commitment, reinforced and renewed. This issue of Sound Update provides examples of POI&E for Long Island Sound, conducted by a variety of organizations for a variety of purposes. Each highlights a successful effort characterized by strong public participation.



Ron Gelardi provides a guided nature walk along the Nissequogue River in November. Photo by Robert Freudenberg.

All these activities can benefit from a greater understanding of what the public knows, perceives, and values about the environment. Appreciation for how public values and perceptions vary by geographic area, economic status, age, and other factors can help organizations tasked with communicating with and involving the public better target their efforts. That's why the Long Island Sound Study funded the Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research to conduct a public perception survey of Long Island Sound watershed residents.

The survey targeted residents who live in the watershed areas that directly border the Sound's coastline. In Connecticut where the watershed extends well beyond the coastline, survey respondents were confined to those who lived in communities within 15 miles of the coast. The coastal communities included in this survey reflect a mix of urban and suburban communities and comprise roughly half of the entire watershed population.

A survey questionnaire was developed to shed light on residents' knowledge, attitudes, and impact on water quality in the Long Island Sound to evaluate local residents' current practices and gain information that could help in the development of future outreach campaigns. Questions were developed through a collaborative process between the Center for Survey Research staff and the Long Island Sound Study staff, with assistance from an Advisory Board. While the survey results are still being finalized, some general conclusions are evident.

Watershed concepts are not well known. Roughly a quarter of all residents knew the meaning of the term watershed, or knew that phosphorous and nitrogen promoted excess plant and algae growth in nearby waters. Residents were also poorly informed about the destination of water in storm drains, and seem unaware that sewage and surface water runoff comprise the leading sources of pollution in the Long Island Sound.

Residents more commonly participate in non-water activities at the Sound than water activities on or in the Sound. Interestingly, residents more commonly use the Sound by sitting at the beach, having a picnic, enjoying the view, and hiking or walking than water activities such as swimming, boating, or fishing. This highlights the value of public access in providing low-cost, high value activities.

Those who use the Sound appreciate it more and see it as healthier than those who use it less. This suggests that experience of the Sound can improve the public's perception of its quality. It may also reflect that residents who live in more impacted areas of the Sound use it less.

There are high levels of environmental concern. Residents express high levels of concern about the health of the environment, in spite of not being generally well informed about environmental matters. Most importantly, most residents believe they do not do anything to worsen water quality in the Long Island Sound. But even those who believe they do damage water quality in the LIS engage in the same harmful watershed related behaviors as others. This points out that the public have the potential to become more engaged in personal behaviors that can benefit the quality of Long Island Sound.

These are just a few examples of the valuable information that the survey provides. This information will be invaluable in helping to improve public outreach, involvement, and education related to Long Island Sound and its watershed. Stay tuned for the full report release.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Russo".

Public Participation and the LIS DMMP

By Mel Cote

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), working with the states of Connecticut and New York, continue to make progress toward development of a dredged material management plan (DMMP) for Long Island Sound. Public participation in this process will begin once the Corps completes a draft Project Management Plan, which will outline the activities to be undertaken in the DMMP, later this Spring.

In June 2005, EPA issued final rulemaking to designate the Central and Western Long Island Sound dredged material disposal sites for dredged material from harbors and navigation channels in the Long Island Sound region. To address concerns about the potential impact of dredged material disposal on water quality and fisheries habitat, the rule includes restrictions on the use of the sites that are intended to reduce or eliminate open-water disposal in the future.

One restriction links continued use of the sites to the completion of a regional DMMP for Long Island Sound. A DMMP is a comprehensive planning process and decision-making tool to address the management of dredged material for a specific harbor or navigation project, group of related projects, or geographic area.

In September 2004, prior to the final rulemaking, EPA, the Corps, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the states of Connecticut and New York began a series of meetings and teleconferences to discuss development of a DMMP for Long Island Sound. Due to the large scope of the project and strong public interest, they formed a Steering Committee of high-level agency officials to provide overall project direction. They also formed an interagency Project Delivery Team to assist with the development of the DMMP.

Based largely on the Corps' experience with the DMMP for the Port of New York and New Jersey, the Project Delivery Team estimated that it would cost approximately \$16 million and take 5-7 years to complete the Long Island Sound DMMP. The governors of the two states sent a joint letter to the Corps requesting its assistance with the DMMP and also asked their respective congressional delegations to seek federal funding to support this effort.

The President's federal fiscal year budget for 2007 includes \$1.7 million for the Corps to initiate the DMMP. Since the start of FY07, on October 1, 2006, the Corps has been developing a draft Project Management Plan for review and approval by the Project Delivery Team and Steering Committee. Once the Project Management Plan is approved, the Project Delivery Team will present the plan to the public to seek its input. The Project Delivery Team will then begin to collect information and data that will form the basis of the DMMP, and will make this information available to the public through a variety of mechanisms.

To assist with the public participation component of the DMMP process, the Long Island Sound Study provided \$100,000 in FY06 funds. EPA intends to use these funds to conduct public information meetings and other outreach activities to inform the public of the agencies' initial efforts on the DMMP, to solicit feedback on these efforts, and gain input on future direction. These public participation activities are presently on hold pending completion of the Project Management Plan by the Corps, because the Project Management Plan serves as the initial work plan for the DMMP and would be central to any public presentations.

Mel Cote works for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Region I and is the Manager of the Ocean and Coastal Protection Unit.

Long Island Sound Study Welcomes Louise Harrison

Our hopes of refilling the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Liaison position to the Long Island Sound Study by the end of 2006 collided with reality. We survived the crash and are now happy to announce that Louise Harrison has been selected and began working on March 19th to advance our efforts on land stewardship, habitat restoration, and aquatic nuisance species. She comes with

a strong background of working at the state, local, and nonprofit levels. Louise helped develop the New York State Coastal Zone Management Program and recently served on the committee developing the Long Island North Shore Heritage Areas. Louise will be located in the EPA LIS Office in Stamford. Please welcome Louise to the program.



Flax Pond, Setauket, NY one of the inaugural stewardship areas with a blanket of snow in February. Photo by Matthew Graff.

New York's Coastal Cleanup

By Barbara Cohen

Every year thousands of volunteers descend on Long Island Sound to remove trash and debris both on land and underwater. Since 1997, when the Long Island Sound Study started supporting the American Littoral Society (ALS) to focus on the Sound, over 16,000 volunteers have scoured over 100 miles of shoreline, collecting more than 400,000 pounds of debris. The volunteers

industrial tubing! The American Littoral Society contacted two manufacturers of the tube scrubbers, made contact with possible offending companies that use them, and in subsequent years the number of these scrubbers found on Long Island Sound diminished significantly. Beach captains and park managers are being asked to be alert for a reoccurrence. If it were not for the volunteers documenting the items they find and American Littoral Society staff investigating the source of their findings, tube scrubbers may have continued to be discharged into the Sound.

It is not too early to start thinking about participating in the 2007 beach cleanup or registering as a beach captain at a shoreline convenient to you. The cleanup this year will be on September 15, 2007. Contact Barbara Cohen at ALSBeach@aol.com, by phone at (800) 449-0790, or by visiting the website at www.alsnyc.org for more information on how to get involved. If you would like to see how New York measures up against other states visit www.oceanconservancy.org.

The Annual New York State Beach Cleanup would not happen without the tremendous support of many partners, funders, generous donations, and thousands of volunteers.

Barbara Cohen works for American Littoral Society and is the New York State Beach Cleanup Coordinator.



Debris found in the wrackline during 2006 beach cleanup.
Photo by Mark Parker.

record the type, quantity, and weight of the trash they collect. After ALS analyzes the findings they are forwarded to The Ocean Conservancy, the umbrella organization for the International Coastal Cleanup, to compile, analyze, and track the data collected from around the world. During the past twenty-one years, this event has involved more than six million people worldwide.

The cleanup is not just about collecting trash and cleaning our precious beaches, but about pollution prevention and education as well. The items collected are our trash and we are the solution to this pollution. American Littoral Society has been working with the Bottle Bill Coalition to press for legislation in New York that would put a nickel deposit on containers for non-carbonated beverages of water, iced tea, juice, and sports drinks. Currently beverage bottles rank number four on the American Littoral Society's top ten list, not far behind smoking-related items. This bill would also designate that unredeemed nickels flow to the New York State Environmental Protection Fund. Encouraging recycling is one way to reduce the amount of debris polluting our beaches and endangering our wildlife.

The cleanup also results in data that can aid in prevention for example, the 2003 cleanup data received from Long Island Sound identified unusual items similar to objects found in California. Volunteers from Asharoken to Miller Place were documenting hundreds, and in 2004 thousands, of 1 ½ inch green, cylindrical, plastic objects. What were they? After much research their function was discovered: tube scrubbers used for cleaning



The 2006 beach cleanup at Short Beach in Smithtown, NY. Photo by Robert Freudenberg.

Connecticut's Coastal Cleanup

By Mark Parker

September 30, 2006 was a special day for Connecticut's largest shoreline park. The early morning sun dawned crisp and clear at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, CT. It was National Estuaries Day; a day that often coincides with the International Coastal Cleanup Day (held on September 16th, 2006) sponsored by The Ocean Conservancy. First out on the beach were members of 'Friends of Hammonasset,' a private organization of volunteers who dedicate their time and energies to helping preserve and take care of this beautiful park of tidal wetlands, sandy beaches, and rocky coastal shoreline. During the Hammonasset cleanup, coordinated by Save the Sound, 40 volunteers scoured the beach, dunes, and rocky outcrop area known as Meigs Point to pick up 168 pounds of trash that filled 23 bags. Much of this marine trash had been washed up by the tides or blown in by the winds.

Later in the day, local officials, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection staff, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's assistant secretary for oceans and atmosphere, Timothy Keeney, State Attorney General Blumenthal, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner McCarthy, and others gathered to celebrate the restoration of tidal wetlands at the Park. A partnership of Save the Sound, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), The Duck Stamp Program, and NOAA had collaborated to restore tidal flow to 6.3 acres of diverse habitat including marshes, ponds, and channels. This project was the 500th of Restore America's Estuaries and the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program. To mark the occasion, Restore America's Estuaries presented Save the Sound and its partners with a plaque to honor the project.

Thanks to these volunteers and 912 others on September 16, more than 4,900 pounds of trash were collected from 42 miles of Connecticut's Long Island Sound shoreline. Many thanks go out to all the volunteers who helped to restore the habitat around Long Island Sound.

Mark Parker works for Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and is the Long Island Sound Study Outreach Coordinator.



Participants in the Connecticut cleanup. Photo by Mark Parker.

Continued from page 1.

Last summer, teenaged alumni of the Citywide Stewards Program took part in a new youth employment program that also focused on the Long Island Sound watershed. Nine teens were hired and trained to deliver hands-on lessons about water, watersheds, and the Long Island Sound to younger children. Three days a week, teams of two Youth Educators traveled to other summer camps in New Haven, reaching more than 75 children ages 6 to 12. Teen participants learned valuable leadership skills within a workplace environment. And by sharing their own wonder and excitement, Youth Educators successfully inspired interest in water and watersheds, and helped students build an understanding of water as a vital resource. Both summer programs received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Long Island Sound Futures Fund. For more information about Solar Youth, visit www.solaryouth.org.

Kimberly Barnes is the Student Conservation Association Intern for Solar Youth.

Conference Announcement

Saturday, April 28, 2007
Trumbull Marriott
Trumbull, Connecticut



Expand Your Comfort Zone
Long Island Sound Study's Watershed and Buffers Municipal Assistance Conference

To provide innovative tools to community land use decision-makers in Connecticut and New York that can enhance watershed management, buffer protection, control of stormwater, and open space preservation.

www.longislandsoundstudy.net/watershed



Friends of the Bay Receive QAPP Approval

By Kyle Rabin and Pat Aitken

Since the mid-1990's, Friends of the Bay (FOB) has been monitoring the water quality of the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor (OB/CSH). The monitoring program was initially created to fill the void left when Nassau



Friends of the Bay water quality volunteer Carla Panetta lowers a quanta sonde to measure the dissolved oxygen content, temperature, and salinity of the water in the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Estuary. Photo courtesy of Friends of the Bay.

County cutbacks forced its Department of Health to drop dissolved oxygen testing. Today, Friends of the Bay's monitoring program helps to preserve the harbor complex by increasing awareness of threats to water quality, especially the impact of low dissolved oxygen levels. Dedicated volunteers – about fifteen – help to conduct weekly monitoring of basic water quality parameters at nineteen locations in Oyster Bay, Mill Neck Creek, and Cold Spring Harbor. Friends of the Bay's monitoring runs take place every Monday morning from April to October.

Over the past year, FOB has been in the process of upgrading and expanding the water quality monitoring program (WQMP). A primary component to this effort is the development of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and related measures to more effectively address water quality issues, increase the credibility and usefulness of

the collected monitoring data, and qualify for federal funding for the WQMP.

Across the country, volunteers are monitoring the condition of streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, estuaries, coastal waters, wetlands, and wells. The number and variety of these projects and programs are continually on the rise. So, too, is the complexity of the monitoring volunteers conduct and the uses of the collected data.

Today, one of the most difficult issues facing monitoring programs that are dependent on volunteers is data credibility. Potential data users are often skeptical about volunteer data they may have doubts about the goals and objectives of the project/program, about how volunteers were trained, about how samples were collected, handled and stored, or about how data were analyzed and reports written. A key tool in breaking down this barrier of skepticism is the QAPP.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the QAPP is a document that outlines the procedures that those who conduct a monitoring project or program will use to ensure that the samples participants collect and analyze, the data they store and manage, and the reports they write are of high enough quality to meet project/program needs. It is an invaluable planning and operating tool that outlines the methods of data collection, storage, and analysis. It serves not only to convince skeptical data users about the quality of the project's findings, but also to record methods, goals, and project implementation steps for current and future volunteers and for those who may wish to use the project or program's data over time.

Funding from the 2006 Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant program helped Friends of the Bay to complete and implement a QAPP. In late spring 2006, FOB received EPA-approval on the QAPP for our open water body monitoring program. Fuss & O'Neill, Inc. assisted FOB in achieving this important step.

With the implementation of a QAPP, Friends of the Bay's water quality monitoring program is the strongest it has ever been. As a result, the program can better serve the communities surrounding the OB/CSH estuary by doing more to protect, preserve and restore this extraordinary ecosystem and resource.

For more information regarding Friends of the Bay's water quality monitoring program go to: http://friendsofthebay.org/programs/programs_01_wqm.htm

Kyle Rabin is the Executive Director and Pat Aitken is the Water Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator for Friends of the Bay.

QAPPs

Monitoring projects funded by EPA must have an approved QAPP in place before sample collection begins. However, even programs that do not receive EPA money should consider developing a QAPP, especially if data might be used by state, federal, or local resource managers. A QAPP helps the data user and monitoring coordinators ensure that the collected data meet their needs and that the quality control steps needed to verify results are built into the project or program from the beginning.

The EPA Region I and II's Volunteer Monitoring Program can and will assist any organization wishing to develop a QAPP for their monitoring program(s) or project(s). For more information, in Region I, which serves CT, contact Diane Switzer switzer.diane@epa.gov or Nora Conlon at conlon.nora@epa.gov and for Region II, which serves NY, contact Paula Zevin at zevin.paula@epa.gov.

Protecting the Jewel in Our Backyard

By Megan Brown and Kelly Kilgus

Director
Mark Tedesco

Program Specialist
Joe Salata

Communications Coordinator
Robert Burg

Connecticut Outreach Coordinator
Mark Parker

New York Outreach Coordinator
Kimberly Graff

Layout Editor
Kimberly Graff, New York Sea Grant (NYSG)
ksz1@cornell.edu

Editors
Karen Chylato, NYSDEC
Rick D'Amico, NYSDEC
Mark Parker, CTDEP
Robert Burg, NEIWPCC
Joe Salata, EPA LIS Office
Paul Stacey, CTDEP
Mark Tedesco, EPA LIS Office

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EPA LIS Office
Stamford Government Center
888 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, CT 06904-2152
(203)977-1541
Fax: (203)977-1546

New York Sea Grant
146 Suffolk Hall
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, NY 11794-5002
(631)632-9216
Fax: (631)632-8216

www.longislandsoundstudy.net
www.epa.gov
www.ct.gov/dep
www.dec.state.ny.us

Today's children will become tomorrow's stewards of the planet's oceans and watersheds. Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration (MAIFE) has built its reputation on providing hands-on educational experiences that encourage students to form a lifelong connection to the waters that sustain our environment. Yet, our experiences have shown that very few children know even the most basic facts about the Long Island Sound, despite its close proximity. Through learning comes caring. By educating the public about the dangers facing Long Island Sound, we instill in them a sense of responsibility for this vital natural resource and for the global environment.

In 2004, MAIFE received a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Long Island Sound Study, which dramatically expanded the reach of a successful educational program that teaches children about marine science and the need to protect the unique estuarine environment that is Long Island Sound. The project, titled "Protecting the Jewel in Our Backyard: the Long Island Sound Curricula Outreach Program", educated approximately 2,000 elementary school students and their teachers in Hartford and New Haven public schools about the Long Island Sound watershed and the species that call it home.

As part of this project, MAIFE conducted outreach classes at eight schools, introducing students to the characteristics of an estuary and the physical and behavioral adaptations of invertebrates native to the Long Island Sound. Students were then afforded the opportunity to immerse themselves in the environment they studied in the classroom by participating in coastal field studies. These trips invited the students to explore some of the region's most spectacular – and threatened – natural habitats, such as sandy beaches,

salt marshes, rocky shorelines, and the riverbeds that are interconnected with Long Island Sound. It is one thing to read in a book about the "rotten egg" smell of a productive salt marsh or the spongy feel of the peat when others jump up and down, but quite another to experience it first-hand and engage all of your senses in coming to understand an environment.

Participating students were also able to visit the Aquarium so that the students and teachers could continue their exploration and research by viewing the many exhibits. All of these activities were aimed at increasing awareness about the need for restoration and preservation of Long Island Sound and showing the impact individuals can have on it. Students came away from this program understanding that they really can make a difference for their local environment.

Students and teachers alike enjoyed and learned from the experiences offered to them through the "Jewel" project. Some participating teachers commented that "the children were fascinated by the animals and remembered a great deal of the material presented" and "it gave the children a real appreciation of what they have so close to home."

Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration are divisions of Sea Research Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. MAIFE's mission is to inspire people everywhere to care about and protect our oceans by exploring and sharing their biological, ecological, and cultural treasures.

Megan Brown is Grants Coordinator and Kelly Kilgus is Director of Education for Mystic Aquarium and Institute for Exploration



Long Island Sound Mentor Teacher Program

By Diana Payne

Through funding from the EPA Long Island Sound Study (LISS), Connecticut Sea Grant initiated the Long Island Sound Mentor Teacher (LISMT) program in 2003. The program began as a means to distribute Long Island Sound resources to the K-12 formal and informal education audiences. The premise of the program is that instead of investing funds in the development of new curricula, why not take what has been produced and help teachers use the resources in the classroom? According to years of educational research, the best way to accomplish this is the “teach the teacher model” - to have teachers who already incorporate Long Island Sound and watershed issues into their curricula show other teachers how they do it. Experienced, creative, and enthusiastic teachers are recruited each year to lead LISMT sessions.

LISMT sessions are focused by grade-level clusters, typically grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Session content and activities are aligned with the Connecticut Frameworks, often with a focus on science. The mentor teachers leading each session determine the content, date, and location of the workshop. Appropriate resources (human, print, digital) are located and obtained with the help of Connecticut Sea Grant staff. By increasing the visibility and use of existing Long Island Sound resources by the K-12 educational community, the general awareness and understanding of Long Island Sound as an important regional natural resource is strengthened, and educators learn creative ways to incorporate water and marine-related concepts into all curricular disciplines.

The LISMT program has reached more than 100 educators through 10 workshops in only 4 years. Based

on information provided by participating teachers, the program has reached nearly 5,500 students through these workshops. To date, the program has reached 28 school districts (35 towns), including some of Connecticut’s most diverse and underserved communities.

This year, an evaluation of the LISMT program was conducted. Results show that teachers find the program quite valuable. Most comments focused on the quality and variety of resources. Because the current education climate is driven by standards and assessment, content and specific topics presented in the classroom are often decided at the state or district level. Teachers responding to the LISMT evaluation find that they are able to incorporate components of several resources directly into their present curricula. One participant specifically noted the use of publications (e.g., Connecticut Sea Grant’s *Wrack Lines* magazine and the EPA LISS publication *Sound Health*) in class as students “read articles, analyzed graphs, and discussed the topic (hypoxia).”

A proposal has been submitted to fund another series of LISMT workshops for 2007-08. If funded, session dates and locations will be posted to the Connecticut Sea Grant web site www.seagrant.uconn.edu, so check back regularly at the start of the next school year. Mentor teachers are recruited from Connecticut, but all formal and informal educators who work with teachers and students in grades K-12 and have an interest in Long Island Sound and its watershed are welcome to attend!

Diana Payne works for Connecticut Sea Grant and is the Education Coordinator.



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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