

# CURRENTS

## *Celebrating New York's Estuaries*

*For National Estuaries Day, celebrated each year in late September, three of NYSG's marine district extension staff participated in activities geared to inform New Yorkers about the importance of the estuarine environment.*

### *Along Long Island Sound*

In recognition of National Estuaries Day, Saturday, September 25, 2004, The Waterfront Center ([www.thewaterfrontcenter.org](http://www.thewaterfrontcenter.org)), in cooperation with the Kips Bays Boys and Girls Club and the Boys and Girls Club of Oyster Bay – East Norwich, hosted an exciting day for children to learn about and protect estuaries. Kids kayaked, cleaned up the beach, and seined for the plants and animals that live in the marine habitat.

To make the event most meaningful, organizers created a program that included implementing a stewardship activity that the children created themselves. The Waterfront Center, directed by **Amy Cross**, hopes to increase public awareness of the Long Island Sound and motivate people to participate in the Sound's restoration.

As part of National Estuaries Day, the Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee kicked off its "My Pet Protects Hempstead Harbor" campaign, a campaign that not only educates people about the damage pet waste can do to the harbor, but provides the means for them to do something about it.

"Dogipot" Pet Waste Disposal Stations newly installed in key locations around the harbor will help ensure that residents do the right thing. With several nearby trails, parks, beaches and sidewalks, there is an easy path for bacteria and viruses from pet waste to enter the harbor. To block that path, each station has a dog waste bag dispenser and an educational sign attached to a single pole. The campaign's slogan is "Protect Hempstead Harbor - It's Your Doody!" These stations will serve as a pilot program for possible expansion to other member municipalities from the Committee. Both projects were funded through the small grants program.

— **Kimberly Zimmer-Graff**  
Long Island Sound Outreach Coordinator



**Phillip Coffin, (center with green hat) New York Restoration Project, celebrates National Estuaries Day by leading local kids in a seining activity at Swindler Cove Park on the Harlem River.**  
Photo courtesy of NYRP

### *In New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary*

Building on the success of last year's events, the Harbor Estuary Program once again sponsored a harbor-wide celebration of National Estuaries Day. New York Sea Grant coordinated planning, produced educational materials and administered \$25,000 in funding for the events. More than sixteen organizations in the metropolitan region hosted family-oriented events designed to bring the area's residents to the water to experience the estuary.

Among the activities offered were canoeing on the Gowanus Canal; catch-and-release fishing on the East River; a nature photography workshop for kids in Brooklyn; a Teacher's estuary education open house in Manhattan; water quality testing demonstrations in the Bronx; seining for aquatic organisms in Yonkers; ecological boat tours on the Hudson River, Harlem River and Jamaica Bay; and many more. Participants in these activities have responded with such enthusiasm that this celebration of the Harbor Estuary is likely to become an annual event.

— **Laura Bartovics**  
Outreach Coordinator  
NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program

# EstuaryLIVE in the Peconics



**Riverhead High School students cheer on the efforts of New York Sea Grant's Peconic Estuary Program educator Shana Miller (front row, left in blue) and PEP's Suffolk County Coordinator Laura Bavaro (front row right in green).**

Each September over the past couple of years, the Estuary Live Webcast has been the featured event for National Estuaries Day. This year, Peconic Estuary in New York's eastern Long Island was one of seven featured estuaries from around the country. New York Sea Grant's **Shana Miller**, Technical Outreach Specialist for the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) was one of the participating naturalists as the event went live via the Web the morning of September 23 from the Suffolk County Marine Environmental Learning Center in Southold, NY.

Thousands of students nationally viewed Estuary Live, a free interactive field trip to some of the nation's estuaries that students and the public viewed by registering at [www.estuarylive.org](http://www.estuarylive.org). The Peconic Estuary Live web cast was informative, interactive and a true collaboration with participants from the Peconic Estuary Program, NOAA's New York Sea Grant, US EPA, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Suffolk County, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, and the Riverhead and Quogue school districts.

Kicking off the web cast was Peconic Estuary Program Manager **Vito Minei** who explained why The Nature Conservancy named Peconic Estuary one of the "Last Great Places." The EPA's **Rick Balla** explained to students from Riverhead High School and Quogue Elementary School why the Peconic Bay system is an "Estuary of National Significance" and what is being done to protect and restore the "habitats and inhabitants" of the estuary.

Along a splendid stretch of beach on the sunny fall day, **Gill Lankshear's** elementary students got up close and personal with various Peconic critters like horseshoe crab, sea star, whelk and hairy sea cucumber with help from CCE's **Stacy Myers**. **Lance Mion's** marine science students showed their knowledge of the bay's algae under the direction of **Laura Bavaro** of the Peconic Estuary Program and DEC's **Karen Chytalo** both of whom actually munched on some of the bay's sea lettuce.

Introduced by the lively host of the web cast, **Gayle Marriner-Smith**, CCE's **Chris Pickerell** donned a wet suit and used an underwater camera to give a fish-eye view of the bay. **Steve Schott** gave students a tour of the eelgrass greenhouse and explained how this important grass acts as a nursery in the Peconics, why it has been depleted, and what is being done to restore it.

At the shellfish hatchery, bayman **Fred Fiedler** told students first hand about the ecological, economic and cultural importance of shellfish. CCE's **Gregg Rivara** discussed how brown tide algae virtually wiped out a once nationally significant bay scallop shellfishery. Helped by **Mike Patricio**, kids got a glimpse of shellfish larvae through microscopes. Aquaculturist **Otto Schmid**, CCE's **Kim Tetrault**, and Quogue fourth graders demonstrated the workings of CCE's successful "SPAT" program which aims to encourage community members to become stewards of the environment by restoring shellfish to the bays around which they live.

— **Barbara A. Branca**

**Miller (right) explains to a Riverhead high school student on the live broadcast how boaters can help keep the Peconics clean. The student is holding a bilge sock, which can absorb up to two quarts of oil and fuel from a boat's bilge compartment, preventing discharge into surrounding waters.**

**Photos by Paul C. Focazio**



## How to Protect an Estuary

**New York Sea Grant's Shana Miller and a chorus of school kids signed off the web cast with these recommendations to protect Peconic estuary:**

### The don'ts:

- ▶ Don't litter
- ▶ Don't release balloons

### The do's:

- ▶ Participate in beach clean-ups
- ▶ Practice catch and release fishing
- ▶ Use bilge socks on boats
- ▶ Tell others about estuaries

Throughout the web cast, students from 31 classrooms around the country sent a steady stream of questions, many of which the naturalists answered on air as time allowed. EstuaryLive is sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the U.S. EPA's National Estuary Program and many other local sponsors. The September 23 web cast also featured estuaries in North Carolina, Weeks Bay, Alabama and Waquoit Bay in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.