

National Geographic Lauds Long Island Sound Stewards K-College Citizen Science Program

New York Sea Grant's Long Island Sound Stewardship (LISS) Initiative protects ecologically, recreationally and economically important areas. The Sound Stewards program initiated in 2008 by the LISS NY Outreach Coordinator promotes stewardship among K-12 and college students through citizen science projects in 33 designated significant Long Island Sound Stewardship Areas.

Promoting Life-Long Stewardship

In 2016, National Geographic's "Next Generation Environmental Leaders" featured the Sound Stewards program. Sachem North High School students in Ronkonkoma, NY, were recognized for hands-on learning experiences focused on the ecology of estuaries, and for the value of their data on chemical, physical, and biological changes in Sunken Meadow Creek to decision making about the estuary. For example, their data on elevated nitrate levels led to a grass planting to help filter nitrates.

New York Sea Grant works closely with partners, including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, and LISS, to develop citizen science research projects that allow students to learn about Long Island Sound issues, while collecting data of use to partner agencies. For example, more than nine years of data has been collected from projects at Sunken Meadow State Park in the Nissequogue River Stewardship Area.

To date, more than 3,800 K-college students have been engaged in this citizen science programming that has led to further restoration of important habitats in the Long Island Sound ecosystem. Additionally, a \$2.5 million National Fish and Wildlife Foundation/Department of the Interior grant award was received to expand education and outreach, among other restoration efforts, at Sunken Meadow State Park.



Environmental science students study the biology of the creek at Sunken Meadow State Park as part of the Sound Stewards program.

Photo: Amy Mandelbaum, NYSG/LISS

The 5-minute "A Day in the Life of the Nissequogue River" video created by Sachem North High School environmental science students is posted on YouTube.

Partners:

- Long Island Sound Study
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Healthy NY Coastal Ecosystems & Habitats and Environmental Literacy & Workforce Development

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.

New York Sea Grant Extension,
112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853

*This project summary was written by Long Island Sound Study Outreach Coordinator Amy Mandelbaum
631-632-9216, acb328@cornell.edu, www.nyseagrant.org*

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