



New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

New York State has 3,400 miles of diverse coastline and is the only state in the U.S. bordering both the Great Lakes and Atlantic Ocean. More than 85% of NY's population lives in a coastal region.



New York Sea Grant regional offices provide innovative research, technical assistance, and outreach on such issues as water quality, coastal resilience, marine & freshwater fisheries, invasive species, algal blooms, aquaculture & seafood, coastal literacy, and shoreline community development.

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NYSG Focus Area for this project summary:
Environmental Literacy & Workforce Development in New York

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NYSG's Peer-to-Peer Teachers Program Encourages STEM and Place-Based Environmental Literacy Sharing

Professional development for teachers and outdoor education programming successfully reaches K-12 youth in NY's Long Island Sound region.

Many New Yorkers are unaware of the invaluable resources that Long Island Sound offers, such as critical habitats for rare species. An underutilized natural treasure, the Sound is a powerful outdoor classroom, offering students an environment in which to explore and participate in hands-on STEM activities that enhance learning and the development of new skills.

New York Sea Grant (NYSG) works with educators, schools, and partner organizations to provide

immersive, place-based activities that bring meaning and purpose to learning. Through the peer-to-peer Long Island Sound Mentor Teacher Program, teachers meet and share successful strategies for implementing ocean literacy into existing curricula. Designed for both classroom and field learning, coastal workshops feature lessons and activities that introduce students to new skills, opportunities, and STEM careers. Sound Stewards compliment Mentor Teachers by providing ready-to-implement outdoor education that informs and inspires students. Together, these programs inspire a new generation of environmental stewards equipped with the knowledge and skills to make a positive impact.

Three Mentor Teacher workshops (New York City, Westchester, and Long Island) in 2024 hosted 35 educators and showcased activities such as environmental monitoring, data collection, modeling, and more. Teachers implemented the lessons in their schools and several Mentor Teachers engaged their own students in Sound Stewards' programs.

“Participating in the Long Island Sound Mentor Teachers program and with the Sound Stewards has been a transformative experience for myself and my school. Students and staff here have been on an exciting journey of discovering our local marine resources, careers in marine sciences and STEM, and our coastal community, bringing new meaning to science learning.”
— Denise Aikens, Science Cluster Teacher, PS 583, The Bronx

Providing professional development for teachers and outdoor education for students, NYSG has reached more than 3,000 K-12 students, with visits to the coast to learn about the Sound, participation in hands-on STEM activities, and learning real-world skills needed for a sustainable future.

Project Partners/Funders:

- City Island Oyster Reef
- Long Island Sound Study
- New York City Parks
- New York City Parks Marine Education Center (Mamaroneck)
- SUNY Maritime
- Town of Brookhaven
- University of Connecticut
- Urban Park Rangers
- Western Suffolk BOCES

New York Sea Grant: Bringing Science to the Shore Since 1971



A workshop group led by Mentor Teachers from PS 583 participated in water quality testing aboard the SUNY Maritime Research Vessel. Photo: Lillit Genovesi/NYSG