

NY Sea Grant Provides Professional Development for NYC Teachers

During 2008 New York Sea Grant (NYSG) launched a series of teacher professional development workshops in New York City (NYC). The training sessions helped more than 450 teachers learn to use free or low-cost geospatial resources to study habitat restoration projects in the NY-NJ Harbor area.

Funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program supported a team effort by NYSG, Cornell University's Institute for Resource Information Sciences and NYC's leading educational institutions. One-day workshops were held in partnership with the American Museum of Natural History and the Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) New York Aquarium.

Seven USEPA Harbor Estuary Program restoration projects profiled on the NYC Open Accessible Space Information System (OASIS) website provided the basis for instruction. Working together in small groups, participating teachers selected wetland restoration project sites based on interest and proximity to their schools. They completed a series of activities and lessons using maps, aerial photos and Internet data. The instructional materials helped teachers "journey" through time, building a sound understanding of the history and changes to the NYC coastline and current efforts underway to restore important wetland areas.



Above: Teachers examine topographic maps of NYC coastline; (left) geospatial workshop instructors Susan Hoskins, Cornell University; Nordica Holochuck, NY Sea Grant; and Merryl Kafka, New York Aquarium, explore Coney Island Creek. Photos: New York Aquarium, Susan Hoskins

By day's end, the teachers increased their overall understanding of the NY-NJ Harbor habitats and geospatial resources and were better prepared to share this knowledge with students.

Workshop content meets NYC Science Scope and Sequence standards. A field component or a presentation led by partner institutions hosting the workshop serves to enhance teachers' relationships with valuable local educational sites and resources.

Four additional workshops are planned for teachers in the NYC metropolitan area for 2009.

New York Sea Grant is a cooperative program of the State University of New York and Cornell University. Sea Grant Extension administration is located at 112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

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