

## NYSG Developing the Next Generation of Great Lakes Stewards

New York needs a well-informed citizenry, properly educated regarding Great Lakes issues. New York Sea Grant (NYSG) is dedicated to developing the next generation of Great Lakes stewards by working with students to have them conduct environmental stewardship activities, and by instructing teachers on the importance of having their students get involved with environmental activities.

### NYSG Responds

In 2013, NYSG engaged 30 undergraduate students enrolled in a Great Lakes Ecology course at the University of Buffalo (UB) in Great Lakes stewardship. The students provided 10 hours of stewardship activities, including:

- coastal clean-ups,
- invasive species removal,
- native species planting, and
- pharmaceutical take-back programs.

NYSG also engaged 45 educators in learning about the importance of stewardship activities for 4,000 of their middle and high school students in NY. The students worked with nature centers, fish hatcheries and community groups.

### Steward Projects Make Learning Authentic

The UB college students' activities helped to improve several acres at Tiff Nature Preserve in Buffalo through the removal of invasive species and planting of native trees to enhance the environment.

The students reported on their stewardship projects; many indicating that the activities helped to make their course learning relative and authentic. They expressed pride in their accomplishments and acknowledged the positive impact their efforts had on their local Great Lakes environment.

NYSG coastal education training has seen teachers get students out in the Great Lakes shoreline environment to clean-up beaches and waterways, take and test water samples, work on eliminating invasive species such as water chestnut, mark elm trees for Emerald Ash Borer control, and teach community members about the importance of



High school students test water they collected as part of a stewardship education activity, photo: Kim Linkinhoker

properly disposing of unwanted or unused medications.

Through these NYSG-prompted activities, the students learned about the Great Lakes and have seen how humans can negatively impact the environment, but, more importantly, by experiencing how their actions can make positive changes, they now understand they can personally play a part in protecting the environment.

This hands-on learning encourages interest in supporting future clean-up efforts, joining environmental groups, taking actions to control the spread of aquatic invasive species, and initiating other stewardship activities.

**Partners:** Tiff Nature Preserve, University of Buffalo, Western NY school districts, local resource managers

### *The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Healthy New York Coastal Ecosystems.*

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*

*Coastal Education Specialist Helen Domske*

716-645-3610, hmd4@cornell.edu, www.nyseagrant.org 1/14