

NYSG Advancing Great Lakes Education: From Algae to Zooplankton

New York Sea Grant (NYSG) continued its commitment to educating the next generations of Great Lakes citizens by working with more than 140 teachers and 13,500 students in 2015.

Utilizing the “teach-the-teacher” approach, NYSG engages teachers in experiential learning and provides them with information and classroom-tested curriculum developed by Sea Grant and NOAA. The teachers are encouraged to infuse Great Lakes information on topics from algal blooms to zooplankton into their classrooms and to prompt student interest in protecting the environment.

During the 2015 school year and summer, NYSG created and implemented eight professional development workshops that took teachers into the field and focused on interactions with scientists and environmental specialists. The teachers learned about food webs by sampling pond life at Beaver Meadow Nature Center, took a canal boat down the Erie Canal to learn about invasive species, and experienced the Great Lakes in a variety of hands-on ways.

A grant from NOAA allowed NYSG to partner with the National Weather Service (NWS) to educate the teachers about Great Lakes climate change through workshops at the NWS office near Buffalo. The teachers had the opportunity to experience weather forecasting in the computer lab and learn the difference between weather and climate from NOAA scientist Judith Levan.

The stewardship activities generated from these workshops included development of environmentally-themed school bulletin boards and informational flyers, cooperative learning experiences among classes, home energy audits, and other innovative projects.



Above: Teachers attending a 2015 teach-the-teachers workshop learn with Warning Coordination Meteorologist Judith Levan of the National Weather Service, Buffalo. Photo: Helen Domske/NYSG

These NYSG workshops empower teachers to help their students become the next generation of well-informed Great Lakes citizens. In turn, this extension of science-based learning increases coastal literacy on a broad basis, increases knowledge of coastal habitat issues and prompts action to improve water quality and restore and protect freshwater coastal habitat areas in New York state.

Partners:

- US Environmental Protection Agency
- Center for Great Lakes Literacy
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Buffalo Audubon Beaver Meadow Nature Center
- National Weather Service – Buffalo
- US Fish and Wildlife Service

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.

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