

Advancing Living Shorelines for New York State

Living shoreline is a broad term encompassing a range of shoreline stabilization techniques along estuaries, bays, tributaries, and other sheltered shorelines. . . made mostly of native material, incorporating vegetation or other living natural elements with harder shoreline structures such as oyster reefs, rock sills, or anchored wood (NOAA).

Many states are encouraging and promoting living shorelines for erosion control, resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of coastal projects incorporating this method. However, living shorelines are rarely used in New York's marine district due a lack of familiarity with this approach and inconsistencies in existing regulations that make it difficult to obtain permits for these projects.

Living shorelines can mitigate coastal erosion while providing environmental benefits but their use in New York's marine waters is limited due to regulatory obstacles and technical information gaps.

NYSG Responds

New York Sea Grant (NYSG) leads an ongoing effort to increase awareness of living shorelines, provide technical information on their siting and design, and identify impediments to their use in New York.

In 2016, NYSG was engaged in several activities related to living shorelines, including:

- presentations on issues associated with living shorelines at regional and local meetings and workshops,
- technical review of proposed living shoreline guidance at the request of State personnel,
- assisting the U.S. Army Corps Engineers in identifying potential use of living shorelines in federal shore protection projects,
- providing input to and participating in a Mid-Atlantic regional living shorelines workshop
- continued collaboration with a national engineering organization on developing standards for living shorelines, and
- advising government and private entities on potential living shorelines projects.



*Living shorelines combine natural and structural features to protect the shoreline.
Photo: Jay Tanski, NYSG*

For the first time New York State has issued draft guidelines, which incorporate information from NYSG programming efforts, to foster the use of living shorelines and resolve some of the regulatory challenges. These guidelines should make it easier for applicants to obtain permits and increase the number of living shoreline projects implemented in New York.

Additionally in 2016, New York Sea Grant was asked to co-author a national book on living shorelines to be published in 2017.

Partners:

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- American Society of Civil Engineers Coastal Ocean Ports and Rivers Institute

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is New York Resilient Communities & Economies

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

*This project summary was written by
Coastal Processes & Facilities Specialist Jay Tanski
631-632-8730, jjt3@cornell.edu, www.nyseagrant.org*