

Climate Master Volunteers: Supporting Climate Literacy, Adaptation, and Resiliency in New York Communities

Climate change is one of the most urgent issues facing coastal communities — from sea level rise and flooding to drought and other long-term consequences. Swift action is needed to address and incorporate climate science into planning at all levels of government. Some coastal communities, however, lack the capacity to do so.

In 2018, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) partnered with the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions (CICSS) to implement a one-year USDA Northeast Climate Hub planning grant to assess the need for an innovative outreach model to support New York State Climate Smart communities. NYSG activities began with a literature search to better understand existing and effective adult volunteer climate science programs, followed by co-developing, planning, and conducting focus groups and regional workshops to gather input on such a model.

A focus group in the Hudson River Valley included community leaders from two mid-Hudson coastal communities: Kingston and Saugerties, and representatives from Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Hudson River Maritime Museum. On a regional level, NYSG conducted a focus group of Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant program personnel engaged in climate science extension.

NYSG assisted design and facilitation of a stakeholder workshop in New York City during the 2018 Climate Week NYC. The week-long event drew more than 100 representatives of government agencies, NGOs, municipalities, educators, and universities. Input re: the potential for developing a local climate stewardship program was collected in facilitated breakout groups.

Based on interest expressed in 2018, and with additional funding, NYSG is now developing a curriculum for an education program that will engage and train volunteers to be called Climate Stewards, akin to university adult volunteer programs such



Rockaway Waterfront Alliance Environmentor Program Coordinator Julie Schroder, left, and program student Isabel Colon presenting at the Local Climate Action Summit in New York City, September 2018. Photo: NYSG/Helen Cheng

as Master Gardeners. These Climate Stewards will share information to increase climate change literacy through a variety of programs and projects addressing climate science, mitigation and adaptation tailored to local communities' interests.

The Climate Stewards volunteer curriculum will be completed and pilot-tested for implementation in 2019.

Partners:

- Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions
- USDA Northeast Climate Hub
- University of Maryland

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

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.

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