

# Helping Hudson River Marina Owners



**Cornwall Yacht Club, one of many private yacht clubs and public marinas that dot the Hudson.**

The Hudson River is a dynamic environment. Sand, silt, debris and other particles are carried and dumped by the river's tides and currents. Marina owners along the river are often faced with a decision—whether or not to dredge the river bottom to deepen mooring areas and channels. But dredging is a highly regulated activity. Marina owners must apply for permits to do so. They must also comply with testing procedures to ensure that the materials dredged up will be disposed of in an environmentally safe manner.

A way to help marina owners make informed decisions about dredging may come through the Hudson Valley Marine Sediment Contamination Data Project, part of the Hudson River Action Plan that is known as the Hudson River Mariners Project. Part of this project includes a report produced with input from the NYSDEC's Division of Water and written by **Dr. Richard Bopp** and graduate student **Michael Wood**, both of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. NYSG's **Nordica Holochuck** started a dialogue with marina owners and introduced the project to Hudson boating community leaders at organization meetings over the winter of 2001-2002. The writing team took a hard look at data regarding contaminants in dredge materials from up and down the Hudson. "Marina owners are very interested in having this kind of information," says Holochuck.

Project manager **Larry Wilson**, a biologist with the NYSDEC Division of Fish, Wildlife and

Marine Resources agrees. "The Hudson River Mariners project was done to find the known levels of contaminants along the river. They range from 'background' to 'hazardous' and are usually somewhere in between. By making the known levels of contaminants available to marina owners, they can anticipate some of the problems they might have with new dredging," says Wilson. The outreach aspect of this report is to explain the process of dredging to marina owners and walk them through the permitting process. It also aims to provide testing requirements, the costs entailed, and what different test results mean to the marina owner.

"Nordica Holochuck is doing an excellent job of informing the public," says Wilson. "She is a great resource for the marina community." Wilson anticipates partnering with NYSG's Holochuck on other Hudson River projects such as public education about floatable debris.

The report identifies what contaminants are likely to be found in areas of the Hudson, and which ones won't be. For example, if it is known that cadmium is not found in an area of the river, then it's possible to reduce testing for cadmium on that site. If dredge material tested is safe, then the marinas can dispose of the dredge spoils in a cost-saving way, like using it to build parking lots. But if dredge material tests high for certain contaminants, marinas have to dispose of it in a more costly manner in confined disposal facilities. Says Holochuck, "Ultimately this report's impact will be to save time and effort on the part of marina owners and reduce the expense of unnecessary testing."

— **Barbara A. Branca**



**This pristine Hudson tributary is likely free of contaminants, but still adds sediment as it joins the river. A new report shows marina owners exactly which parts of the Hudson River have tested high for which contaminants. Photos courtesy of Nordica Holochuck**