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New York Sea Grant fisheries specialist David B. MacNeill, left, and Paul Bowser of the Aquatic Animal Health Program at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, show the fish-killing disease viral hemorrhagic septicemia on a monitor. Their research and outreach project on the virus earned the National Sea Grant 2010 Research Application Award.

Lake projects for 2010 a success

SEA GRANT: Programs focus on education, outreach on issues affecting Great Lakes

By **NANCY MADSEN**
 TIMES STAFF WRITER
 MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2011

New York Sea Grant is celebrating the success of 2010 programs, which increased education and outreach on Great Lakes issues.

Sea Grant Extension at Cornell University, Ithaca, has issued a series of impact statements for projects completed by the coastal science extension organization in 2010, available on the organization's website.

In the Great Lakes region, six projects addressed a wide range of environmental issues affecting Lake Ontario and its tributaries.

"When a program is up and running, we want to show success at a critical point when we're getting information on its effectiveness," said David G. White, Great Lakes program coordinator with Sea Grant. "Then we look at 'here's the next twist or opportunity to build on the research or get the information out in a different way.'"

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One project was educating boaters on preventing the spread of invasive species. More than 1,400 New York boaters pledged to be environmentally sound after visiting the 2010 Discover Clean and Safe Boating exhibit at events throughout the freshwater shoreline region.

The 2011 edition of the campaign includes a fishing boat, a canoe and national Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers information on how boaters can reduce the spread of unwanted invasive species.

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"With the Clean and Safe Boating program, we visit a variety of events and encourage boaters to think beyond the traditional — what's stuck on the trailer, boat and motor — and remember that anything that comes in contact with invasives on one body of water can transmit them to another body of water," Mr. White said. "So we have to be careful with fishing poles and line, bait buckets, swim fins and boots. It's a different twist on what we would normally think of."

The success of the program is shown by the attention the boating and marine industries have paid to the invasive species issue.

"It's a credit to the folks engaged in any of those activities," Mr. White said. "They're all a part of it, including the community leader, boater, fisherman, recreation user of the water, anyone who lives, works or plays in those waters."

The other key project was a collaboration of Sea Grant's fisheries specialist David B. MacNeill and Cornell University researcher Paul Bowser on viral hemorrhagic septicemia, or VHS, a virus that kills fish. The project won the first-ever National Sea Grant Research Application Award.

"The work in VHS is very important here in the north country because of the transport of bait fish and other products across the Canadian border and to other lakes," Mr. White said. "We were getting a good baseline of information on what we're talking about with VHS, the biology and background of the species."

The information they gathered from Mr. Bowser, who has a doctorate, allowed them to share information on the fish affected, how VHS is transmitted and how to address that transmission with interested audiences.

"When we know what is the ecological, environmental, economic impact for the community, we can share with those audiences and make that part of their decision-making process," Mr. White said.

Both projects included different means of sharing information, whether it is public outreach at events, workshops, user group meetings, teacher training or video releases. Information on Sea Grant's projects are available on its website.

"At each turn, depending on the issue, we're always identifying and working with partners to get that information out to the folks," Mr. White said.

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New York Sea Grant: www.seagrantsunysb.edu

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