

The Sportfishing Education Center: A New Way to Explore the Marine Waters

Gene Young, NYFTTA President

The Sportfishing Education and Aquaculture Center was opened in 2002. Located at Cedar Beach Marina on Ocean Parkway in the Town of Babylon, this facility was constructed through the efforts of Assemblyman Bob Sweeney (of Lindenhurst), and New York Fishing Tackle Trade Association (NYFTTA). The mission of the Center is to provide an arena to promote saltwater recreational fishing and teach angling ethics. The Town of Babylon donated the land, and the facilities are being operated by NYFTTA. Several groups with a marine conservation interest are affiliated with the Center, and they are working together to coordinate the programs. They include (however not limited to): Long Island Beach Buggy Association, New York Sea Grant, I Fish NY, and Cornell Cooperative Extension.

The Sportfishing Education Center educates residents in coastal communities, especially children, about the marine resources and ecosystems in local waters. The members of NYFTTA believe that recreational fishing develops a heightened awareness about the values of the marine environment. With this in mind, the Center's educational tools include a fishing museum, library, Rod And Reel Loaner Program, and an aquaculture demonstration laboratory.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program helped to create a marine education curriculum for school groups that visit the Center. This curriculum covers many of the standards that have been established by New York State Department of Education. Marine education classes may be booked by contacting Cornell Cooperative Extension at (631) 587-2873.

The aquaculture facility features a demonstration laboratory that is being used to rear killifish. This laboratory was designed by Dr. Gene Kaplan, a Hofstra University professor. The laboratory is being used to explore the feasibility of rearing marine finfish for the market, in lieu of harvesting from wild stocks. Demonstration tanks are being used to hold freshwater fish, striped bass, summer flounder, trout, and a variety of other species. Aquaculture may be a partial solution to address the continued decline in marine fish population.

A touch tank is available where visitors can have closer interactions with marine life.

The Center operates a Rod And Reel Loaner Program. This program is presently being conducted from several locations around Long Island,

including public libraries. Its objective is to promote the sport of recreational fishing and create an interest in marine issues.

Other programs being offered at the Center include Casting for Recovery, a not-for-profit program that supports breast cancer survivors. This program was first introduced by the efforts of Assemblywoman Ginny Fields, and it provides fishing opportunities to the participants as part of their weekend retreat.

The Center also serves as a meeting place for groups that are interested in learning about marine issues. Representatives from the Marine Resources Advisory Board, Marine Trades Association, Recreational Fishing Alliance, and United Boatmen of New York, met at the Center, to learn about fisheries issues and voice their opinions.



Upcoming attractions being planned for the Center include a fishing pier that will be built along the State channel, to give anglers access to some of the finest fishing grounds in Great South Bay. It will also be used to place interpretive signs that describe the wetlands and wildlife in the area.

You may follow these directions to visit the Center. If you are traveling on Sunrise Highway (west), take Robert Moses Causeway to Ocean Parkway (west). Follow Ocean Parkway (west) to Cedar Beach Marina on the right. If you traveling from western Long Island, take Meadowbrook Parkway (south) or Wantagh Parkway (south) to Ocean Parkway (east). Follow Ocean Parkway (east) and Cedar Beach Marina will be on your left. Continue to the U-turning lane to head west, to access Cedar Beach Marina.

Contact the Outreach Coordinator at (631) 587-2873 to obtain more information about the programs and the operational hours.