

Supporting Municipal Natural Resource Protection

Municipal stormwater management and nonpoint source pollution control on Long Island are of vital importance to protecting estuarine resources. Polluted runoff has been identified as a primary cause of Long Island Sound, South Shore Estuary Reserve, and Peconic Estuary impairments. Among the issues, pathogen-contaminated beaches pose threats to human health, with far-reaching affects on the economy, while sediment causes wetland degradation and disappearance of wildlife.

The New York Sea Grant (NYSG) Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) Program has been responding to these issues since 2001 by providing technical expertise and assistance concerning EPA Phase II Stormwater Program compliance to nearly 100 Long Island municipalities. Using its primary tools, which include a list serve, consultations, presentations, and written feedback, NYSG NEMO has helped Long Island municipalities to improve their Phase II stormwater programs.

Following NYSG NEMO outreach, communities have improved construction and post-construction requirements, and procedures for site plan review and inspections. Changes include an ordinance for retention of rainwater from new driveways, and erosion and sediment controls for projects smaller than an acre. Nassau County strengthened its drainage requirements and encourages low-impact development. Further, counties, towns, and villages have initiated storm drain retrofit projects.



The health of Long Island's estuarine resources is vital to New York's economy. Photo: Eileen Keenan, NYSG NEMO

NYSG NEMO also provided written feedback on stormwater program progress reports, hence, strengthening Long Island stormwater management in a multitude of ways. Examples include development of sustainable funding mechanisms, a septic system inspection program, and equipment procurement. Further, interdepartmental work groups have been established to ensure optimal coordination.

Lastly, given today's challenging economic times, perhaps NYSG NEMO's most enduring impact has been its facilitation of cost-effective inter-municipal stormwater management. Over the years, the number of such cross jurisdictional efforts has grown, with the most recent effort currently getting underway in the Peconic Estuary drainage area on the Island's East End.

*New York Sea Grant is a cooperative program of the State University of New York and Cornell University.
Sea Grant Extension administration is located at 112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.*

*This project summary was written by Eileen Keenan, NYSG NEMO Program Manager,
631-444-0422, ek72@cornell.edu, www.nyseagrant.org.*