

Long Island Sound Mentor Teacher Program Extended to NY

In 2011, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) began a successful Long Island Sound educational initiative with teachers on Long Island in New York state.

According to a Public Perception Survey conducted by the Long Island Sound Study (LISS), watershed residents were lacking knowledge about Long Island Sound, and its watershed or drainage basin, tidal wetlands, and water quality. To increase the knowledge of watershed residents, LISS provided funding for Connecticut Sea Grant to start a Long Island Sound Mentor Teacher Program in 2002. This Program engages certified educators in sharing their successful strategies for implementing Long Island Sound concepts into existing curricula at professional peer development workshops.

In 2011, the Program was extended to K-12 educators on Long Island by NYSG.

Long Island Sound Mentor Teacher Program workshops align with the content standards of the New York Science Frameworks and/or National Science Education Standards. Their format can be easily implemented into existing



K-12 educators identify macroinvertebrates during a workshop focused on watersheds. Photo: Larissa Graham, NYSG

curricula. The workshops include a field training component within the Long Island Sound watershed and all participants receive a tote bag of the supplies and resources needed to conduct the activities with their students.

The first New York workshop, entitled *The Wonders of the Wetlands*, focused on wetland loss in Mt. Sinai Harbor. Educators learned how to utilize Long Island's natural resources as an outdoor classroom, apply inquiry-based techniques to teach ecology, and effectively organize a field study in a wetland ecosystem.

The second workshop - *Your Watershed Connection* - focused on the Nissequogue River watershed that flows into Long Island Sound. K-12 educators conducted water quality tests and followed spring water from the crest of the subwatershed into the Sound.

A total of 24 workshops in Connecticut and New York have educated more than 300 formal and informal K-12 educators and, through them, more than 14,000 students. Funding has been secured to continue these workshops in 2012.



Long Island Sound Mentor Teacher Program participants test water quality at a local harbor experiencing wetland loss. Photo: Larissa Graham, NYSG

This project meets the performance measures of Sea Grant's Healthy New York Coastal Ecosystems focus area.

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