



Utilizing research and best management practices, NYSG Extension helps the public actively participate in improving and protecting Great Lakes' water quality.

Undo the Chemical Brew: Keeping Unwanted Medicines Out of NY's Waters

New York Sea Grant (NYSG) and the Sea Grant programs in Pennsylvania, Illinois-Indiana, and Ohio have partnered to create a highly successful *Undo the Great Lakes Chemical Brew* project, funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Since its inception in 2010, the *Undo the Brew* team has collected 2.7 million pills for proper disposal, and informed more than one million anglers, educators, students, 4-H youth, medical professionals, legislators, and community members about the need to keep the chemicals in pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs) out of the Great Lakes.

In 2012, public presentations, conference sessions, school visits and teachers' workshops educated more than 10,000 New Yorkers about what they can and should do to keep unwanted medicines out of local waters. Many residents are unaware of the danger these chemicals pose, since most pharmaceuticals are not removed through normal water treatment processes.

NYSG outreach to stakeholders, teachers, and anglers associations is an effective vehicle for informing others about the dangers of releasing these substances into the environment. The ripple effect extends learning opportunities exponentially to each of the target groups' own audiences.

Undergraduate students enrolled in the annual NYSG-taught Great Lakes Ecology course at the University of Buffalo tackled the problems associated with PPCPs "going down the drain" in Western New York. Students used social media to reach thousands of their friends and contacts to survey their behaviors and knowledge of the issue. That survey indicated the need

NYSG partners in the effort to keep drugs out of NY waters include Buffalo-Niagara Riverkeepers, Southtowns Walleye Association, Fly Fishermen of Erie County, and the Science Teachers Association of NYS.

NY Sea Grant is a key partner in encouraging the public to help protect water quality in the Great Lakes Basin by properly disposing of pharmaceuticals and personal care products.
Photo below:
Anna McCartney,
PA Sea Grant



for informed learning opportunities about proper disposal of PPCPs.

A series of newspaper, radio and television public service announcements delivered the message to tens of thousands of New Yorkers. A NYSG-produced fact sheet and promotional pieces, encouraged interested citizens to learn more at www.unwantedmeds.org.

Once the public realizes their actions can protect aquatic environments, people willingly take part in drug take-back events or other proper disposal practices. Collectively, NYSG actions focused on raising awareness of this critical environmental issue are encouraging New Yorkers to take necessary steps to help "undo the chemical brew" and protect the waters of the Great Lakes region.

This project meets the performance goals of Sea Grant's Healthy New York Coastal Ecosystems Focus Area.

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

This project summary was written by Helen Domske, Coastal Education Specialist,

716-645-3610, hmd4@cornell.edu, www.nyseagrant.org