



Long Island South Shore Estuary Learning Facilitator (sSELF) Project

The New York State Marine Education Association (NYSMEA)
In cooperation with the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Office

January 2008

The sSELF project was designed to empower up to ten school and/or community groups to be active stewards of their local estuarine environment through education and monitoring. The Long Island South Shore Estuary encompasses 325 square miles of shallow bays and tidal tributaries located along the south shore of Nassau and Suffolk Counties in New York.



The South Shore Estuary Reserve watershed includes a variety of land uses from urban to suburban to rural. Increased scientific monitoring of the estuary's water quality and fostering citizen appreciation, education and stewardship of its resources are important objectives of the Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan adopted by New York State and the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council in 2001. As originally proposed, an Estuary Learning Facilitator (ELF) from the sSELF program would visit the schools, work with the groups and

facilitate a monitoring/action project at a particular site of interest to the group. The sSELF program would supply the materials and equipment necessary and train the group members. The original request was for \$22,500. \$8,000 was awarded by the Environmental Resource Monitoring Foundation (ERM,) for 2007. The equipment supplied and the number of compensated hours was modified to fit the actual award. \$6,000 was expended for equipment and supplies, and \$2,000 allocated for ELF work hours

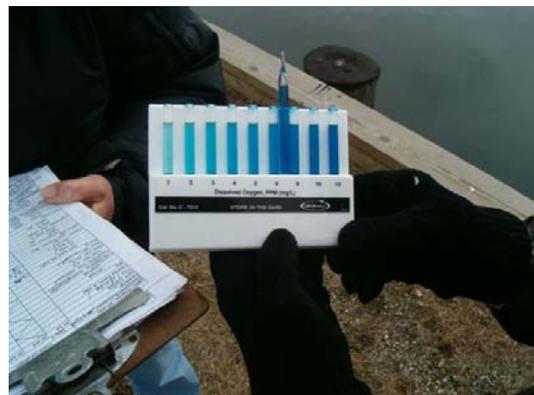
We are pleased to report that ten groups representing a diversity of educational interests have joined in the program at this point. There are seven high school groups in the program that are supervised by one or more teachers at each school. The groups include Biology, A.P. Environmental Science, Research classes or after school clubs. These high schools include: Bay Port-Bluepoint, Sayville, Patchogue-Medford, West Islip, North Babylon, Farmingdale and Bayshore. The Research class at East Islip Middle School has joined the program. Operation SPLASH, an estuary advocacy group based in Freeport that has been primarily focused on education and restoration activities joined the sSELF monitoring program in cooperation with the Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District. In addition, a group of interested high school freshman students, organized as *the Great South Bay Buddies*, supervised by one of the parents, began monitoring in June.



Participating groups were solicited using the NYSMEA (www.NYSMEA.org) and Reserve (www.estuary.cog.ny.us) websites. Handouts were distributed at events at which the two organizations set up informational tables. The program was announced in several mailings of the NYSMEA Announcements list serve. In addition the handouts were distributed at the NYSMEA annual conference. Reports on the progress of the program and assistance in recruiting

participants were made at NYSMEA board and member meetings, Reserve Council and Reserve Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings. The program was also described during a presentation at the National Marine Education Association annual conference in Portland Maine in July.

Each of the participating groups was visited twice at their schools by the project estuary learning facilitator (Lou Siegel), who demonstrated the monitoring equipment to be used and provided a PowerPoint presentation on the estuary and monitoring strategies. Prospective monitoring sites were visited either before or after the presentation and photos and maps were included in the presentation. In addition, a group presentation was given to potential leaders. Another presentation was made to a Dowling College graduate class of science and math teachers.



The program has been well received by both leaders and participants. We have been very satisfied with the response to the program. Significant preparation time was necessary to determine appropriate monitoring protocols and to recruit the teachers. The determination as to which monitoring methods to use were based upon past experience and research by the facilitator, and consultation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Town of Hempstead Water Quality laboratory and others. A number of project participants who were originally contacted



during the Spring of 2007 expressed strong interest, but were unable to get started until the new school year began in the Fall. Several other teachers/group leaders have expressed an interest in joining the program in the future. Each of the project participating groups has committed to replacing the consumables used in the monitoring activities although assistance through future funding would be an asset to the program. At this time, project monitoring data is being electronically submitted by the groups on an ongoing basis and the results can be accessed electronically. A list serve for the group leaders has been established for the ELF to maintain contact with and between the leaders. Data, photos and the activities of the groups will continue to be posted on both the NYSMEA and Reserve web sites.

Additional funds are being sought for 2008 to expand the program to additional schools in the estuary reserve area, increase the number and accuracy of parameters being monitored, and organize a project conference to provide a forum for participants to present their data and interact with professionals in the field to enhance mentoring.





Elizabeth Mikucky-Fleury and Ernie Rossano of the Long Island ERM office have been apprised of the project progress throughout the year. They have attended several related events, and have graciously agreed to identify ERM speakers who will give appropriate presentations to the groups. In all distributed materials and at presentations, the sSELF project was presented as being supported by the ERM Foundation in cooperation with NYSMEA and the South Shore Estuary Reserve office.

Both the project group leaders and participants have expressed that this program affords the participants with the opportunity to engage in a meaningful activity that is consistent with efforts of the Reserve comprehensive management plan implementation partners, while they are actively learning more about it. The sSELF Program has provided NYSMEA with the opportunity to codify several aspects of its programs which had been carried out on an informal basis in the past. It also enabled the Reserve program to facilitate advancement of several of the objectives in the Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan. Significant project hours were also contributed by the ELF and Reserve program staff in addition to those compensated by the grant. We look forward to continuing and expanding the activities of the sSELF program in the future.



www.NYSMEA.org

www.estuary.cog.ny.us

For further information about the sSELF Program contact:

Lou Siegel, Science Coordinator
South Shore Estuary Reserve Office
300 Woodcleft Avenue, Suite E
Freeport, New York 11520
516 378 2451 Lou.Siegel@dos.state.ny.us