

At the Helm April 2009

There is so much new developments going on with the Coastal Steward that I hope I don't forget anything. First, Congressman Tim Bishop informed us that he was able to get the \$155,000 appropriations bill passed and signed by the president for us to build the oyster reef in Port Jefferson Harbor. Part of the money goes toward buying a landing craft that will facilitate building the oyster reef and will also be a tremendous asset for the beach cleanups. The National Grid Foundation has awarded us a \$10,000 grant for four beach cleanups. Unfortunately, Suffolk County is unable to give us any grant this year, a sign of the economic times. We submitted a large grant application to NOAA for 2.25 million dollars for stimulus funding. When awarded we will be hiring 11 full time employees to run the Sponsor-A-Beach Program for all marine coasts in the state of New York. The money will also allow us to purchase six landing craft, six four wheel drive pickup trucks, a Bobcat and rent a facility to operate from.

We are now in the final discussions and or developing a contract with the towns of Brookhaven, East Hampton and Southold to run the Sponsor-A-Beach Programs for them. The way this will work is the Coastal Steward will solicit sponsors, recruit volunteers, coordinate with municipalities, direct the beach cleanups, collect and post the data of what is removed from the beach, give certificates of appreciation to volunteers and sponsors, place a sign at the site if the owner allows it, and give the town 10% of the sponsorship. The town will provide a dumpster and either recycle or landfill the debris. This is a win, win situation for everyone including the environment, residents, towns, sponsors and the Coastal Steward organization.

We have had three beach cleanups already this year. The first was at Pike's Beach (bay side) in West Hampton sponsored for third year by the Hornstein Family, the second was at Mt. Sinai Harbor (Port Jefferson side, sponsored by the Village of Port Jefferson) and the third was at Mt. Sinai Harbor and the Long Island Sound, sponsored by the Mt. Sinai Harbor Advisory Committee (we had about 200 volunteers, a record turnout). The next beach cleanups are at Mt. Sinai Harbor/Long Island Sound on May 9th and then the 2nd Annual Jones Beach – Beach Cleanup on May 17th with our friends from SPLASH joining in on the effort. There are five more beach cleanups scheduled for the fall and we have commitments for more sponsorships.

The shellfish restoration project is gearing up for another big year. The Town of Brookhaven is buying us 100,000 bay scallop and 75,000 oyster seed that we will be raising this season. When the bay scallops reach the right size the town will be moving them from their upwelling system to our cages. At that point we will be releasing approximately 67,000 oysters that are in that gear. The shellfish restoration project kicks into full gear on June 13th and volunteers will meet 9 am until about 4 pm at the Town of Brookhaven, Mt. Sinai Harbor Parks Dept. facility every other Saturday until October 24th.

Our Board of Directors has five new members;

- **Bob Bleistein, Principal SB Group has become one of our Vice Presidents**
- **Drew Pantino, Owner Drew Anthony Photography has become our other Vice President**
- **George Linzee, Director of School Marine and Environmental Programs at The Stony Brook School**
- **Amanda Seppi, Financial Center Manager, Chase Bank, Setauket, NY**
- **Lois Rowman, Assistant District Attorney, Suffolk County**

I have resigned as President to become the Executive Director and Bruce Folz has become the President. Ana Perez remains our Treasurer and Kathy O'Sullivan remains our Secretary. New board members are always welcome as are volunteers and sponsors.

On April 17th we attended Earthstock held at SUNY Stony Brook. This event is always fun and a great way of networking with like minded people.

Our website is being totally redone. I'm looking forward to seeing it up and running in the very near future. Please give me your feedback on it as soon as you can.

My dream of making a difference is very much here. Together we are making a difference.