

At the Helm November 2011

Another great season is now coming to an end. On October 22nd and 23rd, 30 volunteers bagged, washed and stacked 30 cubic yards of shell material for next seasons very ambitious Shellfish Restoration Project (SRP), and we put down 43 racks of oysters for the winter. Go to the photo gallery to see what we did. We have also had seven major beach cleanups that removed over 21.4 tons of garbage off our Long Island beaches.

We are changing the scope of the grant that we received from NOAA through Congressman Bishop to build an oyster reef to taking that same shell material that we were going build the reef with and instead put it in tanks with 15 million oyster larvae to set on it. Once the oysters cement themselves to the shell material, they will be put out in our racks in Mt. Sinai Harbor for at least a month, hopefully longer and after that we will be releasing them into Port Jefferson and Mt. Sinai Harbors. The survival rate won't be as high because they won't be protected after we release them, but we can expect to get at least 5-10% survival. That means that 750,000 to 1.5 million oysters will be cleaning up to 37.5 to 75 million gallons of water per day in our harbors and providing approximately 2-3 million dollars to our local economy. The SRP will also be raising 75,000 to 300,000 oysters in our racks next season. The new landing craft proved to be a tremendous asset, making us a lot more efficient.

The Adopt-A-Beach Program (AABP) continues to remove amazing amounts of debris from 11.5 miles of our beaches. The 21.4 tons we removed was done with the help of 362 volunteers. Two very disturbing numbers that were documented were the 61 syringes and the 3294 bio discs that came from a sewage treatment plant in New Rochelle. The plastic bio discs were found all over the north shore of Long Island. They are used to grow bacteria on because they have a lot of surface area and they bacteria naturally break down the sewage at the treatment plants. See the photo gallery for pictures of them. I personally filled a 5 gallon spackle bucket in about a half an hour at the Port Jefferson Harbor inlet over a 50 yard stretch. The syringes are evidence that heroin use is on the rise. There were also hundreds of small zip-lock bags; more evidence of drug use is increasing in our area.

The Town of Brookhaven and the Coastal Steward now have an official agreement to work together and share resources. They continue to constantly help us in our efforts with the beach cleanups and the SRP. We could not accomplish what we do without their help.

Our newest sponsor, Blue Island Shellfish Farms and several of our volunteers participated in the Seafood Festival this past September 24th and 25th at the Maritime Museum in West Sayville. We served lots of lobsters, clams, oysters, crab cakes and other seafood. There were over a hundred volunteers from the Sayville High School helping out. Blue Island Shellfish Farms made a very generous donation to us after the event. We look forward to doing it again next year.

Our “End of the Season Party” is scheduled for Thursday December 1st at the Village of Port Jefferson Village Center, just up the hill from Danfords. We decided to go back to what the party was originally intended for – as a thank you to all of our volunteers and sponsors. There still will be door prizes and a few raffles but we will not be doing a lot of fund raising. Of course we will be having our now famous oyster recipe contest which is always a lot of fun. There will also be a buffet, beverages and a pot luck dinner, so please bring something. I hope to see everyone there.