

Cooperative Habitat Protection Partnerships



EQUIPPING LOCAL COMMUNITIES WITH THE TOOLS AND INFORMATION NEEDED TO PROTECT COASTAL AND MARINE FISH HABITAT

GREAT SOUTH BAY LONG ISLAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

CHPPs is working with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Western Suffolk Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to foster community stewardship of threatened marine resources off the south coast of Long Island, New York. The project funds a local high school marine education program for one year to build awareness, knowledge and better stewardship of local marine resources.

Fish and shellfish are important to local economies and social make-up of communities and perform important functions within ecosystems. The Great South Bay once supported a thriving oyster industry but today's low abundance of filter feeding shellfish has disrupted the Bay's complex food web, causing harmful algae blooms that shade out seagrass meadows and interfere with the survival and growth of shellfish.



TNC has acquired a significant underwater land holding in the Great South Bay called the Bluepoints Bottomland. A management advisory council has identified hard clams and seagrass meadows as vital ecological features that should be protected. Recognizing that many threats to these resources originate outside the protected area, a key strategy is to foster better community stewardship in the Great South Bay environs.

NOAA CHPPs, TNC and BOCES have collaborated to work in the local school district to combine classroom lecture and instruction with hands-on participation in improving the marine environment. The program called, "Farming the Sea; A Hard-Shell Clam Mariculture Project" uses shellfish aquaculture as a focal point to teach students about bivalve biology, marine ecology and the importance of clams as a source for food and livelihoods. A highlight of the program is the hands-on opportunity for students to build mariculture rafts to grow clams from seed and restock their coastal waters with the thousands of hard-shelled clams they produce.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

1. Increased public knowledge of coastal and marine issues
2. Built local stewardship through direct participation
3. Implemented a portion of a habitat management plan
4. Protected habitat through increased abundance of biofiltering hard clams

For more information, please visit:

www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/CHPP

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