

July 15, 2012



Ms Susy King
c/o NE Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission
Boott Mills South
116 John Street
Lowell, MA 01852-1124

RE: HEP Stewardship Final Report

Project Title: Rockaway Waterfront Alliance Aqua 101 Youth Stewardship Program

Project Goals: The major goals of the proposed Aqua 101 project will be for educational purposes to: 1) improve the 59th street beach to bay corridor through marine debris removal, shoreline habitat restoration, wildlife monitoring, oyster gardening, and maintenance of green infrastructure and tree care; 2) engage Rockaway middle and high school students in educational programming that would address and develop solutions for the Rockaway community's growing environmental and crisis, characterized by waterfront pollution and wildlife displacement; 3) inspire and equip local youth as environmental ambassadors and lifelong stewards of the Jamaica Bay and Rockaway waterfront; 4) increase the number of residents that volunteer in shoreline stewardship; and 5) increase residents' access to and use of the waterfront for recreational/educational activities

Project Summary: Rockaway Youth Stewardship Program is a year-round intensive, service learning, environmental stewardship program offered from July 2011 to June 2012, for 50 local Rockaway youth, ages 12 - 18, along the Beach to Bay corridor of Beach 59th St. in the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens, NY. Students will utilize the waterfront along the bay and ocean shoreline and the 59th St. corridor, as an outdoor environmental classroom to take part in marine debris removal, habitat restoration, tree stewardship, rain water collection. As they learn about the estuarine habitat of Jamaica Bay and the Rockaway shoreline, students will identify environmental hazards that exist around the Beach 59th street corridor and develop and implement strategies to reduce environmental hazards.

Course of Action: RWA led the Aqua 101 Youth stewardship program every Tuesday and Wednesday (afterschool and during the summer) with 50 local students from Kappa Vi, Scholars Academy, Frederick Douglass Academy, PS43, Rockaway Park High School for Environmental Sustainability under the guidance of RWA Program Educators: Nim Lee, Iemanja Brown and Mark Hoffacker and mentors/partners: Don Riepe, and Mickey Cohen of American Littoral Society, John Rowden of Audubon Society, REI, Marlen Waaijer and Doris Harris of Norton Basin Stewardship Group, John McLaughlin of NYC DEP, Gina Baldwin of Queens Botanical Garden, Indo Caribbean Alliance and Howard Kreft of the Urban Park Rangers to participate in maintenance of trees along the Beach 59th St beach to bay corridor, marine and beach debris removal, monitor RWA's oyster gardens, assessing data on the wildlife in the area and promoting stewardship for the NY/NJ Estuary and Jamaica Bay.

Accomplishments:

Through the stewardship program there were measurable improvements in the appearance along both the shoreline and the B.59th Street beach to bay corridor. Students watered, mulched and pruned for more than 170 street trees in a 10 block radius of this area. In addition, RWA attached a rain barrel system that harvested more than 8,00 gallons of water that was used to water these street trees.

The shoreline of Sommerville Basin and Rockaway Beach were also improved by the removal of over 800 bags of trash and 3,000 lbs of concrete, asphalt and construction debris dumped along the shoreline. We also saw changes in the 50 youth participants' knowledge, attitudes and behavior towards their environment,

conservation, and their role as environmental stewards. These changes included increases in their knowledge of the estuarine habitat of Jamaica Bay and the Rockaway shoreline; knowledge of and personal experience implementing strategies to eliminate or reduce these environmental hazards through the use of the waterfront for recreation including kayaking, swimming snorkeling and surfing; personal participation in oyster gardening aquaculture, and conservation; their confidence and ability to communicate about environmental issues with peers, family, community and policy makers; their awareness of a range of careers in environmental science and stewardship and "soft" employability skills such as time management, attendance, punctuality, team work, follow through on assignments, conflict resolution; and their understood commitment to life-long environmental stewardship. We also saw changes in the families attitudes and behavior through their involvement and attendance in community event led by the youth and participation in paddles and clean ups.

Project evaluation:

We evaluated the students knowledge and awareness at the beginning and end of the after school and summer programs through written evaluations to measure their growth and learning. In addition to these program we led 6 monthly clean ups; 3 at Dubos Point (beach 64th St and Norton Basin (beach 36th St) on Jamaica Bay and 3 at Beach 59th St along the Rockaway Beach boardwalk; covering 4 miles of shoreline on Jamaica Bay and an additional 3 miles on the Atlantic Ocean shoreline. All the clean ups were attended by both youth in our program as well as neighbors and volunteers; 50 additional volunteers joined in these efforts this year.

We took before and after photos to document the visual changes in the area, posted articles/photos on our website (www.rwalliance.org) and in the local Wave newspaper. We kept attendance records to document the students participation and tracked the amount of debris collected at each clean up; collecting a total of 3,000 lbs of marine debris including abandoned boats, docks, concrete and construction debris, and 4,000 lbs of assorted trash (800 bags) that was bagged and sorted for recycling.

We also hosted 4 community workshops for neighbors at the Firehouse to teach the public how to set up a rain barrel system to collect water, composting, and tree stewardship. These workshops were attended by more than 50 people from the local community. RWA also hosted more than 5 bike tours and 4 free community paddles out of Dubos Point for the public to get the opportunity to have access to learning about the natural environment of Jamaica Bay.

Lessons learned: We faced some obstacles in terms of getting NYC DEP to take part in collaborating with us to do a shoreline planting of spartina. After repeatedly not getting replies from email or calls we arranged for a meeting with DEP commissioner Carter Strickland to discuss the issue and get more involvement from DEP.

We also had to repeatedly call NYC Dept of Sanitation to pick up selected debris and on many occasions had to wait for days before the debris was collected.

We also faced terrible mosquito investment again this year. While the city sprayed a few times this summer it was at it's worse this year. We hope that through discussions with DEP to get their help in resolving this issue.

Photos:

Pic#1 Paddle on Jamaica Bay with Indocraibbean Alliance

Pic#2 RWA youth and volunteers at RWA clean up maintaining trees along Beach 59th St beach to bay corridor

Pic#3 RWA youth monitoring oyster garden

Pic#4 Neighborhood Compost workshop

Pic#5 Mickey Cohen with group of students on Jamaica Bay horseshoe crab count

Pic #6 RWA students net seining for marine life

Articles:

Wave newspaper article on Aqua 101 program

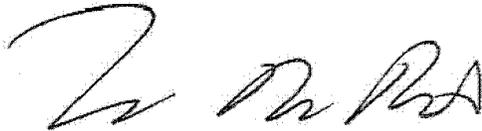
Wave newspaper on school trip with Mickey Cohen and the spawning of the horseshoe crabs

Wave newspaper article on clean up with neighbors and Indo Carribean Alliance

Go to www.rwalliance.org - click on the flickr page; look at the summer 2012 program collection to see our all photos of the Aqua 101 Youth Stewardship Program.

Thank you for NY/NJ HEP's continued support of the RWA youth programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeanne DuPont". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "D".

Jeanne DuPont, Executive Director