



PECONIC BAYKEEPER

Water. warriors

Volunteers and staff members work together to tend oyster cages for Peconic Baykeeper. Dozens of organizations on Long Island help protect our water resources.

Plenty of groups offer ways to help protect the vital coastal resource

BY TOM SCHLICHTER

Special to Newsday

Long Island outdoors lovers are often looking for environmental organizations to volunteer with come spring. Especially attractive are grassroots societies that endeavor to promote, protect and improve our coastal water resources.

"This really is important work," says Robyn Silvestri, executive director of Save The Great South Bay, which runs creek cleanups, restores oysters, plants bay-friendly habitats and provides both

education and advocacy opportunities. "Many of us grew up fishing, boating, clamming and enjoying these beautiful waters. A healthy bay, we believe, fosters a healthy community."

WHAT ARE WATER SOCIETIES?

There are dozens of such groups and organizations on Long Island. Some focus their efforts on a local basis, while others partner with larger regional or even national chapters. Most are nonprofits that depend on grants, donations and volunteers to complete their tasks.

Like Silvestri, Courtney Garneau, chairperson for the Eastern Long Island chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, focuses her organization's water protection and improvement efforts on a specific area: the South Fork.

"For us, it's about promoting healthy beaches and clean water where people can recreate," Garneau says. "We do beach cleanups and create ocean-friendly gardens, but we also work through the legislature to advance our cause."

WHAT ELSE DO THEY DO?

The Surfrider Foundation's Blue Water Task Force partners with Peconic Baykeeper, an organization dedicated to protecting and restoring Long Island's swimmable, drinkable and fishable waters from the Twin Forks through the Great South Bay. It

also partners with the Concerned Citizens of Montauk to provide testing results throughout the year that let people know if the waters are safe.

While grassroots water protection organizations are generally easy to find on a local basis, larger not-for-profits like Save the Sound and The Nature Conservancy offer plenty of volunteer opportunities as well. Save The Sound works with several Long Island water groups to monitor North Shore waters and is involved in ecological restoration projects.

With The Nature Conservancy, "Improving the health of Long Island's bays and harbors is a top priority for our New York operation," says NY Ocean Program Director Carl LoBue. The Nature Conservancy leads efforts to protect and restore natural coastal properties, rebuild populations of forage fish and improve water quality by



George Hoffman of the Setauket Harbor Task Force takes water samples.

SETAUKET HARBOR TASK FORCE

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

There are many organizations dedicated to protecting, improving and restoring Long Island waters. Here's a sampling of a few especially active groups with volunteer sign-up opportunities:

- **Save The Great South Bay:** savethegreatsouthbay.org
- **Eastern Long Island Surfrider Foundation:** easternli.surfrider.org
- **Save The Sound:** savethesound.org
- **Peconic Baykeeper:** peconicbaykeeper.org
- **The Nature Conservancy:** nature.org
- **Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor:** coalitiontosavehempsteadharbor.org
- **Coastal Steward:** coastalsteward.org/contact-us.html
- **Citizens Campaign For The Environment:** citizenscampaign.org
- **Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County Marine Program:** ccesuffolk.org/marine
- **Friends of the Bay:** friendsofthebay.org
- **Salonga Wetland Advocates Network:** liswan.org
- **Setauket Harbor Task Force:** facebook.com/SetauketHarbor

advancing science, policy and financing that's needed to modernize Long Island's sewers and replace our outdated cesspools with innovative

clean water alternatives.

This past year, The Nature Conservancy purchased more than 600,000 oversized oysters from Long Island shellfish farmers struggling from low sales due to COVID-19 and helped stock them at shellfish restoration areas in Oyster Bay, Bellport Bay, Moriches Bay and Shinnecock Bay.

In western Long Island Sound, the Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor (CSHH), a nonprofit environmental organization in existence for 35 years, sets its sights on identifying, eliminating and providing solutions to environmental threats in local waters.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

CSHH coordinates three monitoring programs and other activities, including participating in Save The Sound's Unified Water Study for Long Island Sound Bays and Harbors, and can always use volunteers and donations.

"We encourage the public to become stewards of the environment and to help in furthering conservation efforts," says Carol DiPaolo, programs director. Currently, the group is monitoring water quality in Tappen Marina in Glenwood Landing around seed clams, which are being raised by the Town of Oyster Bay.

"We are hoping that, eventually, clams raised in Hempstead Harbor will be used to increase the harbor's shellfish population and help clean our waters."

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