

Grants will help clean up waters in Sound

November 19, 2014 by JOAN GRALLA / joan.gralla@newsday.com

The Long Island Sound will benefit from \$1.3 million of water-improvement grants announced in Port Jefferson Thursday that will help cut nitrogen pollution and boost fishing, officials said.

In Orient, a grant will advance planning for wastewater-treatment systems that would serve homes and are more affordable than sewers or large facilities.

Two Suffolk programs will try to persuade homeowners and farmers to switch to less-costly but more effective and greener fertilizers, federal and state environmental officials said.

Sea Cliff is partnering with other communities to monitor water quality and signs of pollution in the outer and inner Hempstead Harbor.

[advertisement](#) | [advertise on newsday](#)

The new grants also will recreate wetlands in Queens, retrieve bottles and plastic foam containers from the Bronx River and weed out the invasive vine *persicaria perfoliata*, which commonly is called mile-a-minute, in Pelham Bay Park.

"We will also get people outdoors, engaged with the outside world," said Thomas R. Chapman, a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service field supervisor in the New England field office.

Mark A. Tedesco, director, of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Long Island Sound office, said agencies could not rely solely on regulations. "There's a real need to work in communities on voluntary projects that can have real environmental benefits . . . and I think also touch people."

The 22 grants, split between New York and Connecticut, were awarded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Long Island Sound Futures Fund. Since 2005, this pool of public and private money has funded 306 projects.

Fishermen should find it easier to catch Atlantic salmon, American chad, river herring, and American eel, as Connecticut will open more than a dozen miles of rivers by removing barriers so they can spawn, Chapman said.

Reaching out to children, through schools or activities, is critical to ensure they appreciate wildlife and the outdoors, Chapman said.

"We're not doing as good a job educating as we can," he said. The risk is that future generations might only encounter nature in zoos. Or their only experiences might be secondhand, he said, "if it's just older people like me that recount what we saw."

New York's eight grants, which include an educational program for Queens, total nearly

\$465,000.

That climbs to \$1.12 million with matching funds.

Both states will gain from an award to develop ecosystem report cards for the Sound, making it easier to monitor its health, officials said.

Only about 30 percent of Suffolk's homes have sewers, and Glynis M. Berry, executive director of Peconic Green Growth Inc., an environment advocacy group, said it selected Orient for its wastewater project because its residents were supportive, perhaps because they rely on wellwater.

"They're drinking the water they're disposing of," she said.

The grant enables it to analyze costs and treatment methods, and weigh creating a district, she said.

The Perfect Earth Project will devote its grant to explaining the benefits of controlling weeds with timing, lawn height, irrigation and organic fertilizers that slowly release nitrogen, said Sean O'Neill, the group's director of education and outreach.

"It's better for your health, your child's health, your pet's health," he said.

To build public confidence in organic farming, it set up a demonstration garden in Bridgehampton.

Another grant-winner, the American Farmland Trust, will do the same on 15 acres of vegetable fields.

Fertilizers that release nutrients slowly can be applied much less often because one heavy rain will not carry them away, the EPA official said.

That not only lowers pollution, it cuts farmers' fuel and fertilizer bills, while also increasing production, he said. "Once they see that it works, they know how to be good farmers."

[< back to article](#)