



New York Sea Grant (NYSG) is a collaborative program of the State University of New York, Cornell University, and NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration).

With 3,400 miles of coastlines, New York is the only U.S. state bordering both the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. More than 85% of NY's population lives in a coastal region.



NYSG provides research, education, and extension services enhancing coastal community economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and citizen awareness of NY's marine and Great Lakes resources.

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NYSG Focus Area for this project:
Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development
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January 2026

Engaging Rochester Youth and Residents on Stormwater Marine Debris Reduction

New York Sea Grant connects residents, youth, and local partners to stormwater science to strengthen knowledge and long-term watershed stewardship.

Stormwater runoff transports debris and pollutants into nearby waterways, yet many residents are unaware of how stormwater management systems work and how their actions impact water quality. Increasing public understanding at the neighborhood level is the first step for reducing pollution and building long-term community stewardship.

New York Sea Grant and the Rochester Institute of Technology are collaborating with local recreation centers, schools, and a network of other organizations to deliver hands-on stormwater education, demonstrations, and debris-monitoring activities. Adjustments were made based on feedback to the Community Action for Stormwater Clean-up and Debris Elimination (CASCADE) program survey in 2024, which showed a limited increase in stormwater knowledge from school and recreation center programming. In 2025, programming included community events, youth lessons in and out of school hours, and LittaTrap monitoring to show how debris enters storm drains. Participants explored real-world connections between daily actions and water quality while gaining environmental knowledge and exposure to career pathways in stormwater management.

With more than ninety youth programming sessions and community events, the project engaged more than 800 educators, students, and community members, building community knowledge and hands-on engagement with local water systems. LittaTrap monitoring for CASCADE in 2025 captured more than 130 pounds of debris (plastic bottles/caps/bags, candy and food wrappers, ribbon, textiles, and other items) that would have entered local waterways. Partners reported increased confidence in delivering stormwater education, and educators observed improvements in student engagement, knowledge, and skills. This project is strengthening community engagement with marine debris reduction in Rochester by helping residents and youth understand how their actions influence stormwater and local water quality.

Project Partners:

- City of Rochester Departments of Environmental Services, Human Services, and Recreation
- Monroe County Department of Environmental Services
- Rochester Institute of Technology
- Rochester Museum and Science Center
- Seneca Park Zoo
- Shawn Goburn/SRG Management Firm



Sixteen teachers gathered in Rochester for a Community Action for Stormwater Clean-Up and Debris Elimination workshop.

Photo: New York Sea Grant