



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.



14 Offices

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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Building Community Understanding and Capacity for Sustainable Dune Management

New York Sea Grant applied technical expertise and meaningful community engagement to advance shoreline resilience in a Lake Ontario community.

Record-high Lake Ontario water levels and flooding in 2017 and 2019 prompted construction of a protective dune in Sodus Point under New York State's Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative. While the dune offered shoreline protection, it also raised concerns among residents regarding its design, impacts, and long-term maintenance.



Residents attend a Sodus Point Dune Project meeting. Photo: Mary Austerman/
New York Sea Grant

To advance a new New York State Department of Environmental Conservation maintenance permit and improve community understanding, New York Sea Grant partnered with the Village of Sodus Point, the Beach Advisory Committee, Wayne County, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to gather resident perspectives and identify communication and management needs.

In 2025, New York Sea Grant conducted nineteen structured interviews with beach-front residents to document experiences, concerns, and recommendations. Findings were synthesized into a detailed Sodus Point Dune Project report, community-informed recommendations, and a communication and outreach action plan. These products supported the Village of Sodus Point in finalizing a new maintenance permit and coordinating access agreements needed for County-led dune work.

Based on this process and community-informed guidance, dune maintenance was successfully completed in November 2025 by the Wayne County Highway Department. The Village is now using New York Sea Grant's recommendations to improve transparency, clarify roles and responsibilities, and establish recurring maintenance protocols. Residents gained a clearer understanding of dune function, permitting, and maintenance needs, and collaboration among local and state partners was strengthened.

Through applying technical expertise and meaningful community engagement, New York Sea Grant advanced shoreline resilience while helping rebuild trust and shared stewardship in a vulnerable Lake Ontario community.

Project Partners:

- Beach Advisory Committee
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Wayne County Highway Department
- Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Village of Sodus Point