



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:

**Healthy New York
Coastal Ecosystems**

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January 2026

Increasing Volunteer Participation in River Herring Monitoring

New York Sea Grant outreach is increasing the number of volunteers monitoring the population of river herring, a fish vital to coastal food webs and the economy.

For more than 15 years, the environmental nonprofit Seatuck has been leading a participatory science program to monitor streams in Long Island for river herring and American eel. Both are keystone species supporting the food chain across different coastal and marine environments, but their numbers have dwindled in recent years. Efforts such as Seatuck's monitoring program help resource managers identify remnant runs and potential barriers to fish passage. However, in recent years, the number of volunteers engaged in monitoring also dwindled for the north shore of Long Island. As a result, Seatuck's program was barely receiving monitoring data for this region.

In 2025, New York Sea Grant led a targeted effort in partnership with the Long Island Sound Partnership and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to engage more volunteers in river herring monitoring in the Long Island Sound region. The effort included reaching out to local groups close to the targeted streams, providing a Sound-specific training webinar and volunteer resources, updating guidance on sites, and providing water quality testing kits to groups interested in "adopting" a monitoring site. To keep volunteers engaged throughout the season, the team provided weekly updates on observations from participants and wrapped the season with a "Thank You" event.

Of the thirty-eight volunteers that participated in a Long Island-wide survey, twenty-one were from the Long Island Sound coast. They logged thirty-three potential river herring observations and 136 eel observations. During training, the volunteers learned "a zero report is valuable, no data is not." This meant that, regardless of whether they saw herring or not, being able to have their reports from the field was the biggest win of all since it meant environmental managers had real-time information to support the conservation of river herring, eels, coastal ecosystems, and all who depend on them.

Project Partners:

- Long Island Sound Partnership
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Seatuck Environmental Association



Volunteers attending the River Herring Monitoring Program "Thank You" event kayaked in Oyster Bay and heard about the season's accomplishments from program partners Kaitlin Mattei, Seatuck (right); Jimena Perez-Viscasillas, New York Sea Grant (second from right), and Sara Cernadas-Martin, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (fourth from right). Photo: Sara Cernadas-Martin