



## New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council

### UPDATE ON COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

*April 1, 2008*

*The New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act established the Council to conserve, maintain, and restore New York's coastal ecosystems through the application of ecosystem-based management (EBM).*

*The Council is charged with charting a course for New York State to achieve healthy, productive, and resilient coastal ecosystems by coordinating State agencies and programs in implementing EBM. This course will be laid out in a report required by the Act to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by November 2008.*

*The following progress report is the third edition in a series of newsletter-style updates aimed at informing New York State's coastal constituents of the Council's accomplishments and engaging all interested stakeholders in developing a visionary approach to EBM in New York State.*

#### **Forming Strong Council Infrastructure and Partnerships**

The Council held its second meeting, chaired by Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis, on January 11, 2008 in New York City. At this meeting, the Council considered a number of regional approaches to EBM and how lessons learned from the demonstration projects could inform regional application of EBM state-wide. At the meeting, Dr. Andrew Rosenberg, member of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, addressed the Council to provide a scientific perspective on EBM implementation.

- ***Science Advisory Group.*** The Council's Science Advisory Group held their second meeting on January 25 in Albany where they focused on developing the framework for the Statewide Research and Monitoring Agenda as required by the Act and started planning for workshops to be held in April 2008.
- ***Ocean and Great Lakes Working Groups.*** Both the Ocean and Great Lakes Working Groups were constituted and held inaugural meetings in March 2008. At those meetings

each of the working groups set forth a vigorous schedule to develop recommendations for the November 2008 report.

- **Technical Advisory Group.** The Technical Advisory Group met on January 27, 2008 and continued to guide development of the Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas and plan for steps to identify and prioritize datasets key to carrying out EBM in New York (see update on Atlas below).

### **Integrating EBM into the State Agencies and Regional Programs**

The nine agencies represented on the Council and several regional programs have initiated work to further integrate EBM into their programs that affect the health of coastal ecosystems.

- **State Agencies.** Council agencies are developing guidelines to incorporate EBM principles into key agency programs. The Council Agency Steering Committee met on February 20, 2008 to coordinate guidelines development. Follow-up meetings with each agency are currently being held.
- **Regional Programs.** Council staff are working with an initial set of regional programs (Long Island Sound Study, the Peconic Estuary Program, the Hudson River Estuary Program, the Tug Hill Commission, the New York Harbor Estuary Program, the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council, and the Great Lakes Basin Advisory Commission) to develop recommendations on how EBM principles can be further integrated into their programs.

### **Taking Action in Demonstration Projects**

EBM planning and implementation components are ongoing in the two EBM demonstration areas.

#### ***Great South Bay, Long Island***

- **Planning.** The draft EBM plan is nearly complete and will be released for public comment this Spring. A report of the stakeholder workshops held last Fall has been completed and will be released along with the draft EBM plan.
- **Implementation.** The project has partnered with the Towns of Brookhaven, Islip, and Babylon on hard clam restoration. This Summer, the project will install 16 re-usable aluminum shellfish nursery rafts and monitor Town waters for hard clam recovery.

#### ***Sandy Creeks Watershed, Lake Ontario***

- **Planning.** The report of the Summer 2007 stakeholder meetings was released to the public. The draft strategy to develop an EBM plan is nearly complete and will be released for public comment this Spring. A series of meetings of a core team composed

of stakeholders and technical advisors is being planned for Spring/Summer 2008 to refine the EBM Strategy and stakeholder input into recommendations for the November 2008 report.

- *Implementation.* In the Sandy Creek area, the project is planning another season of focused efforts to contain invasive swallow-wort and conduct ongoing biological control of purple loosestrife. Two additional workshops to educate local foresters about best management practices are planned for this Summer. Several other implementation projects will be initiated this season including:
  - a study of hydrogeology and water quality of the Tug Hill Aquifer, in collaboration with U.S. Geologic Survey,
  - design and installation of 10 educational kiosks along the shores of Lake Ontario, in collaboration with New York Sea Grant
  - installation of an additional conservation buffer on North Sandy Creek, in collaboration with DEC and the local Soil and Water Conservation District
  - biological surveys and modeling to identify biologically significant areas in the watershed, in collaboration with the New York Natural Heritage Program.

### **Increasing Access to Data through the Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas**

Key milestones achieved in developing a New York Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas include:

- *Beta Testing.* The Atlas commenced beta testing the end of January 2008 and an updated beta version was pushed out March 21, 2008. The beta Atlas in its most current form will be demonstrated at the April 1 Council meeting, an April release to the public is planned.
- *Expanding the Database.* Nearly 700 databases have now been collected to date for the Atlas. An online survey of data needs was conducted in January 2008 to guide future data collection efforts, a summary and analysis of this survey is available on the Council's website. A workshop, to be held in Albany on April 22, 2008, will further refine survey results to target data collection efforts.

### **Engaging New York State's Coastal Constituents**

The Council is encouraging public participation at Council meetings by sending announcements to an email listserv of over one thousand members and encouraging constituents to interact with the Council during public comment periods. A Stakeholder Advisory Group will be formed this Summer to provide more extensive input on the Council's work.