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NHEP Support for DES Shellfish Program 2005

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Great Bay Coast Watch

Support of DES Shellfish Program 2005



A Final Report to the New Hampshire Estuaries Project
March 23, 2005 – December 31, 2005

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Photo by Ann S. Reid

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Executive Summary

For the past three years, Great Bay Coast Watch (GBCW) volunteers have provided the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Shellfish Program with significant assistance in performing tasks necessary in managing shellfish resources for human safety. This report describes a continuation of this mutually beneficial partnership.

Introduction

GBCW was founded in 1990 as part of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension/Sea Grant citizen outreach and education program. The GBCW mission is to protect the long-term health of New Hampshire's coastal environment through volunteer monitoring and education programs.

GBCW is New Hampshire's most wide-ranging program for direct citizen involvement in monitoring estuarine waters. The GBCW strives to involve citizens in conservation efforts aimed at the Great Bay Estuarine System, the Hampton/Seabrook Estuary, and the Atlantic Coast of New Hampshire. Citizens are also educated and encouraged to be aware of how activities in their own backyards affect these ecosystems. GBCW includes adults from many occupations, as well as teachers and students from local schools.

Project Goals and Objectives

The goal of this grant was to support NHDES /Shellfish activities through the existing GBCW volunteer network.

Activities

The objectives of this grant were to:

- Send volunteer(s) on the Isles of Shoals Steamship Company ferry each week to collect the sample (When the ferry is not running, GBCW will send one volunteer to accompany NHDES staff on a department boat).
- Transport the weekly paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) samples to Concord within Quality Assurance Project Plan prescribed deadlines.
- As needed, prepare transplant samples (collect mussels in Hampton, pack in mesh cages, and transplant to Star Island).
- As funds allow, participate in monitoring the Hampton PSP site (sample collection and/or sample delivery to Concord).
- Send at least one press release to the Seacoast Newspapers and Foster's Daily Democrat describing the project. NHEP funding credit must be included in the press release.
- Provide quarterly and final reports to NHEP as required.

These tasks were accomplished by combining them in a variety of ways. For instance, on one occasion volunteers transported for NHDES staff a combination of Star Island and Hampton PSP samples, and fecal coliform most probable number (FC-MPN) samples from Hampton and Great Bay to the state laboratory in Concord for testing.

The Isles of Shoals ferry, which had generously provided transportation to the GBCW volunteers in the past, discontinued its Star Island landings in 2005. Because of this, all Star Island PSP samples were collected via the NHDES boat. Volunteers accompanied NHDES staff out to Star Island on four occasions and assisted with ambient boat sampling in Great Bay and along the coast on seven other trips. GBCW volunteers also assisted NHDES staff by collecting, bagging, and delivering mussels to the Pease NHDES office for eventual transport to the Star Island PSP station three times.

Results and Discussion

Because of the intense red tide event during May and June 2005, the NHDES boat/staff did more unscheduled sampling and transport than originally planned, sometimes making it difficult to schedule volunteers. Volunteers did however provide sample transportation to Concord on 18 occasions during this grant, driving a total of 2,045 miles and contributing 98 hours of volunteer time. To simplify reporting in the GBCW data base, whenever transporting was part of sample collection, the volunteers were listed as doing a "Transport" task, since much of the sample collection was also transporting the samples to the mainland.

A news release documenting GBCW volunteer involvement and NHEP funding was sent through UNH office of media relations in December, 2005. The Seacoast Newspapers and Foster's Daily Democrat were included in the news release list (see appendix).

Conclusions

GBCW volunteers provided not only sample transportation but also on many occasions fulfilled the two person policy required by NHDES for staff working in boats. Volunteers also provided extra assistance to NHDES staff collecting samples during both coastal and estuarine water ambient sampling efforts.

Recommendations

Continue to consider GBCW volunteers as a viable resource for assisting NHDES Shellfish Program personnel in their efforts. GBCW continues to receive calls for volunteer assistance for this program.

Appendix: News Release

GREAT BAY COAST WATCH HONORS LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

Durham, NH - Several Great Bay Coast Watch volunteers have received awards for their service to the water quality monitoring program.

Johanna Hock of Newmarket received the Great Bay Coast Watch Blue Water Award for exemplary service in monitoring both water quality and phytoplankton during the 2005 season. Pam Sampson of Dover and Heather Hochuli of Nashua were also honored for their contributions. Claire Antaya of Hampton received the student volunteer of the year award.

Awards were presented at the Chili and Chowdah Fest, an annual event that celebrates the more than 100 volunteers that donate their time to Great Bay Coast Watch.

Sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Sea Grant, Great Bay Coast Watch is a volunteer effort dedicated to protecting the long-term health of New Hampshire's coastal waters and estuarine systems through monitoring and education projects. Founded in 1989, the Watch now monitors water quality at 21 sites and phytoplankton levels at six sites around Great Bay.

This year the New Hampshire Estuaries Project provided funding for Great Bay Coast Watch to assist the NH Department of Environmental Services Shellfish Program in monitoring shellfish-growing areas for water quality and red tide. In addition, Great Bay Coast Watch received funding from the New Hampshire Coastal Program, the town of Greenland, and a number of small private donations. For more information about making donations or volunteering with the [program, contact](#) Great Bay Coast Watch coordinator Ann Reid (603-749-1565; ann.reid@unh.edu).