



# The Environmental Justice Report

A publication of DEC's Office of Environmental Justice – Summer 2018



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

### KINGSTON YMCA FARM PROJECT

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in New York State, with nearly 36,000 family farms contributing to our economy. Seven million acres, or roughly 20% of New York State's land area, is farmland. Nationwide, New York is the second largest producer of apples, snap beans and maple syrup; third in cabbage, grapes and dairy, which is the largest segment of the State's agricultural sector; and fourth in pears.

Farms, orchards and vineyards are also an important part of our environment, offering not only open space and important water sources, but also providing a home to a variety of wildlife habitats. OEJ's Environmental Justice Community Impact grants have funded community gardens, urban farming, and educational programs.

One of the organization's receiving a grant this year, the Kingston YMCA Farm Project's Youth Farm Crew, welcomed eight teens ages 14-17 from the Kingston City School Districts to get a hands-on lesson in farming.

As part of the six-week program, participants developed their agricultural skills by seeding on the farm, and

transplanting and maintaining farm beds for crops. The teens also completed a four-part project with Hudson Valley Bee Habitat where they learned the importance of pollinators and assisted in the creation of new habitats.

Due to the successes of the initial Farm Crew, Kingston YMCA ran a second Youth Farm Crew. The second group, consisting of four teens, assisted with direct seed transplant on the farm, sold seedlings at farm stands, and learned more about agricultural careers. Their Summer Youth Farm Crews also consisted of community teens placed through the Ulster County Summer Youth Employment Program.

For more information on the Kingston YMCA Farm Project and the great work they do, please visit <https://www.kingstonymcafarmproject.org/>.

For information of OEJ's grant programs, please visit our website: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/public/31226.html>.

## EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

Environmental education provides the public with the information necessary to make informed decisions regarding our environment. Environmentally focused education is broad, since issues of environmental conservation and quality affect everyone. By promoting a deeper understanding of environmental topics and subjects, environmental education empowers and motivates a well-informed population. It teaches individuals to tackle environmental issues through critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Education and public participation are critical in the struggle to protect environmental quality and our health.

OEJ actively supports programs that not only encourage environmental stewardship, but also promote and encourage passionate advocacy and active participation.

Gowanus Canal Conservancy's Blue Schools project is using Community Impact Grant funds to develop an environmental education curriculum. This curriculum will be free and available on their website for use by any teacher in the NYC area and beyond. This curriculum has already been implemented in three schools, with students learning to map and measure permeable and impermeable space, calculating storm-water run-off, and researching and developing green infrastructure designs.

Bronx River Alliance has hosted several environmental education events, including five at the Muskrat Cove boom and one at the Concrete Plant Marsh. They continue to train staff and volunteers in the proper methodology for Project Waste, which will help the organization locate pollution sources along the upper Bronx river.

Supporting education and encouraging stewardship among New Yorkers is critical to the protection of our environment. DEC continues to strive towards a sustainable future by investing in environmental education and our communities.

## ON THE FRONT LINES: GINA JACK AND FIVE RIVERS

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center is a living museum located in the Capital Region comprising over 450 acres of fields, forests, and wetlands that offer a wide variety of regularly scheduled public programs and events, most of which are free to the public. In 2017,





DEC built a brand-new visitor center that provides information, exhibits and programs about the habitats and wildlife of Five Rivers, DEC history, and the green features of the new building.

Gina Jack is an environmental educator at Five Rivers, where she educates adults and children on the wonders of nature, often using interactive displays and exhibits available at the center. Gina's interest in conservation education and environmental education extends from her youth, where, as a teenager she worked as a camp counselor. A Recreation major at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, Gina initially considered becoming a camp director. However, through her studies, which included a summer as an intern interpreter in Yosemite National Park, she became interested in the idea of hands-on learning. Gina believes hands-on outdoor experiences are important for all ages, and provides an excellent complement to classroom studies for school-aged children. "There is more than just what you do in the classroom," she says.

In 2007, Gina was hired as the first editor for DEC's *Conservationist for Kids* magazine, where she shared her enthusiasm for the outdoors with young readers. In 2013, she moved to the Five Rivers Center, where she continues to share her enthusiasm with visitors to the new facility. "I would absolutely do this again and I will keep doing it for as long as I can."

To learn more about Five Rivers Environmental Education Center and the programs offered, visit <https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html>.

Are you holding an environmentally themed event and looking for a speaker? Are you interested in promoting environmental careers at your school, church, or community center? Are you interested in hands-on environmentally focused activities to engage youth?

DEC encourages you to reach out to one of our Regional Environmental Educators:

Region 1 - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1839.html>

Region 2 - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/38184.html>

Regions 6, 7, & 8 - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/93207.htm>

## VISIT OUR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTERS

Environmental Education Centers (Centers) provide quality environmental education for the public, including outdoor experiences, exhibits and programs. DEC operates two fully staffed Centers: Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve and Environmental Education Center (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1837.html>) and Five Rivers Environmental Education Center (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html>).

DEC's Centers offer:

- Classes for students, including guided field trips through diverse habitats
- Programs on environmental awareness around New York State
- Interpretive trails
- Exhibit areas
- Meeting rooms
- Year-round family events, and
- Workshops for teachers that provide opportunities for professional growth, and internships for people interested in pursuing careers in natural history or related fields.

In addition to DEC's staffed Centers, there are three regional environmental education programs that offer professional development for educators, in-class and after-school programs on the environment, and public environmental education programs at fairs and festivals. The regional programs are located in DEC Region 1 - Long Island; DEC Region 2 - New York City; DEC Regions 6, 7, & 8- Western Adirondacks & Central NY.

If your focus is the Hudson River, the Hudson River Estuary Program (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5102.html>) has an education and interpretation unit that focuses on Hudson River lessons and exploring the Hudson River Estuary. This program works with river education providers to train the next generation of environmental stewards by providing a series of community-based and classroom education programs.

To learn more about DEC's environmental education centers, please visit our website. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/74.html>.

Environmental Education is not just for kids! DEC offers programs for adults and resources for families interested in discovering nature. Visit our website to get started on your environmental education journey. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/26.html>.

## LESSON PLANS AND KIDS ACTIVITIES

DEC's Environmental Education Center staff have compiled an amazing collection of educator lesson plans, (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/73131.html>) to bring students out into nature and nature into the classroom. The lesson





plans are grouped by age/grade and then by topics, including: animals, recycling, and water. Additionally, there are activities for kids to do while exploring outside (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/72444.html>), crafts to create, and tips on how to make a nature journal.

Kids can always visit the Kids GO (Get Outside), (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/69.html>) page for information on wildlife in New York and fun outdoor activities, and to learn more about the Symbols of New York State.

If you are interested in teacher trainings, or just want to discover fun activities for kids, please visit our website for additional information and tools. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/66.html>

## **COLLABORATION AND CONSULTATION** **THE WAY FORWARD FOR LAND USE CLASSIFICATION**

Indigenous populations have a history in New York State that predates the formation of this country. Land-based practices among the Haudenosaunee nations, the Shinnecock, and the Unkechaug are inherent to their cultural identity. As DEC was established to conserve, improve, and protect New York's natural resources and environment, there are opportunities for agreements and collaboration that respect indigenous heritages and DEC's mission.

DEC's Commissioner Policy 42 requires that DEC staff consult with Indian Nation representatives on a government-to-government basis regarding issues that affect Indian Nation interests. All of DEC programs and/or policies, from air resources to water, either directly or indirectly affect the traditional practices, cultural resources, and environmental concerns of indigenous peoples. Cooperation and understanding is crucial to the resolution of potential issues, specifically when discussing and determining land-use policies and

land-based practices.

Annabel Roberts-McMichael, a graduate assistant with OEJ, is currently working on a graduate thesis to determine how DEC might use these shared interests in land use management to create a better working relationship with indigenous nations within New York's borders. Specifically, Annabel's project explores ways of integrating indigenous concerns and traditional ecological knowledge within DEC's unit management planning (UMP) process. Annabel's internship, the first of its kind in OEJ, is part of a larger collaboration with the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment of SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) and DEC.

Land management collaborative efforts are especially important when crafting Unit Management Plans. UMPs identify opportunities for consistent public use within specific land classifications. Planners assess the natural and physical characteristics and resources within a land unit, and determine appropriate uses based on the ecosystems and resource availability. Working closely with Indian Nations in crafting UMPs ensures that important cultural practices are respected and valuable resources are protected. Annabel's research is a great stepping stone for land management collaboration and sharing of knowledge between DEC and Indian Nations.

For more information on DEC's UMP process, please visit our website. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4979.html>

For more information on SUNY ESF and the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, please visit <http://www.esf.edu/nativepeoples/>



## **NATURALIST INTERN PROGRAM**

DEC offers a year-round internship program available at our four environmental education centers (Five Rivers, Reinstein Woods, Rogers and Stony Kill). The Naturalist Internship Program is a 10-16 week training opportunity available to individuals with two years of college level study (or equivalent experience) looking for professional experience in environmental education. Interns will assume the role of environmental education staff in carrying out the responsibilities necessary to meet the center's objectives. Opportunities for training and development of specific skills will be available depending on each intern's interests and the center's needs.

Eligible candidates must be able to work in the United States. Preference will be given to candidates with a strong natural history background, experience with teaching or youth leadership, and a demonstrated interest in environmental education.

For additional information, or to apply for this internship, please visit our website. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1829.html>.

## APPLY FOR FUNDING

Are you a community-based organization looking to fund a project? OEJ offers grants to not-for-profit organizations to address environmental harms in low income and environmental justice communities. For additional information on OEJ grants and a complete list of previous project awardees, please visit our website: [www.dec.ny.gov/public/31226.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/31226.html).

## WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

Do you have concerns about the environment where you live? Do you want to make your voice heard? Do you want to stay informed about the different environmental issues affecting the state of New York?

## JOIN OUR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LISTSERV

Go to: [www.dec.ny.gov/public/65855.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/65855.html) and sign up to receive regular updates from the Office of Environmental Justice. Stay current on the issues that are important to you. As always, you can contact the Office of Environmental Justice with any concerns by sending an e-mail to: [justice@dec.ny.gov](mailto:justice@dec.ny.gov).

Please include:

- Your location/address
- City, town, village or borough
- The environmental concerns you wish to address
- List the potential source if you know
- How or whether you wish to be contacted

## HELP US SERVE YOU

### REGISTER TO VOTE

Visit [www.elections.ny.gov/](http://www.elections.ny.gov/)



**ORGAN DONORS SAVE LIVES  
REGISTER TODAY**

[donatelifenys.gov](http://donatelifenys.gov)

### Contact us:

**DEC Office of Environmental Justice**  
625 Broadway, 14th Floor  
Albany, NY 12233-1500  
**518-402-8556** [justice@dec.ny.gov](mailto:justice@dec.ny.gov)  
**EJ Hotline 1-866-229-0497**  
**Sign up for updates and  
follow us on social media!**

Sign up today on DEC's homepage to receive e-mail notices from the Office of Environmental Justice.  
[dec.ny.gov](http://dec.ny.gov)

 DEC on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/NYSDEC](http://www.facebook.com/NYSDEC)

 DEC on Twitter:  
[twitter.com/NYSDEC](http://twitter.com/NYSDEC)

**Basil Seggos**  
*Commissioner*

**OEJ Staff:**  
**Rosa Mendez**  
*Director*  
**Laynesia Jones**  
*Office Assistant*

**Karen Engel**  
*Green Infrastructure Coordinator*

**Rodney Rivera**  
*Special Assistant*

**Alanah Keddell-Tuckey**  
*Public Affairs Specialist*

**David Witt**  
*Indian Nations Affairs Coordinator*

**Adanna Roberts**  
*Citizen Participation Specialist*

**Dana McClure**  
*Environmental Program Specialist Trainee 2*



**Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation**