



Governor's Office of Storm Recovery

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NY Rising and Seatuck Environmental Work to Foster River Herring Spawning Efforts by Smith Pond Dam Project to Boost 'Alewife' Population



Photo Credit: Enrico Nardone

(Rockville Centre, N.Y.) The Governor's Office of Storm Recovery's NY Rising program has been assisting thousands of people rebuild their lives and homes in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. Another vital element to its mission is Rebuild by Design: Living with the Bay, a comprehensive regional resiliency program for the South Shore of Nassau County.

On April 12, dedicated environmentalists from NY Rising and the Seatuck Environmental Association and a small army of volunteers focused their energy on what they hope will restore the population of the alewife, a species of river herring whose numbers have dwindled. Like salmon, but lacking their leaping power, alewives spend most of their lives in the ocean, but migrate to coastal tributaries to spawn in fresh water. Locally, the fish have difficulty getting from Mill River up to better spawning habitat that is past a dam at Smith Pond. The dam blocks access to cleaner fresh water spawning habitat. The fish continue to spawn in the brackish water below the dam, but their success rate is low and the alewife population has declined.

A permit issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation allowed alewives to be carefully caught and tagged and put over the dam and into Smith Pond to spawn and later return to the ocean. Over time, sponsors expect that should bring about a higher survival rate. In three-to-five years, those fish will mature and make their own migration back to the Mill River and be biologically driven further upstream into Smith Pond.

GOSR Executive Director Lisa Bova-Hiatt said: “Our storm recovery mission is not only to provide greater resiliency to homes and communities following the devastation from Sandy, but to enhance the ecology, which is vital to the life of Long Island. Living by the Bay is a prime example of our commitment.”

Rockville Centre Mayor Francis X. Murray said: “I’d like to thank New York State, Seatuck and Hofstra University for their work on this great event. We, at Rockville Centre are very fortunate to be part of this program and look forward to help the environment thrive in our parks.”

Laura Munafo is Deputy Director of the NY Rising Community Reconstruction – Long Island and Program Manager for Living with the Bay. She foresees assisting nature though a ‘fish passage’ or ladder between pond and river. “It’s a site where engineers could craft a plan to incorporate a nature-like passage that would enhance the ecological value of the area,” she said.

Enrico Nardone, Executive Director of the Seatuck Environmental Association said: “We are proud to partner with the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery on the Living by the Bay project and the ongoing work to improve the resiliency and ecological health of the Mill River. Efforts to rebuild the river’s population of migratory river herring will generate a cascade of ecological benefits, helping countless other species in and around the river to thrive.”



Photo Credit: Craig Low

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