Town of Fairfield News

4/21/2022 - Fairfield Harbor Management Commission Collaboration With U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

NEW BUOYS AND RESEARCH PLATFORMS ON FAIRFIELD COAST LINE ARE PART OF GOVERNMENT WATER QUALITY SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

FAIRFIELD, CT. APRIL 22, 2022 -The Fairfield Harbor Management Commission today announced it will collaborate with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in a three-year water quality data collection and research effort in Southport Harbor and Sasco Creek.

The investigation, in cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), is aimed at expanding scientific knowledge of water quality issues along the Fairfield shoreline and in several other coastal Connecticut communities including Mystic, Norwalk and Westport.

The research effort will start in May as USGS scientists begin installing equipment to collect water quality data at select locations. This includes a marked buoy platform with scientific instruments at the mouth of Southport Harbor and instruments at the Pequot Yacht Club within the harbor. Data will be collected throughout the year, and scientists will also periodically collect manual water samples at those two locations as well as the mouth of Sasco Creek under the Pequot Avenue bridge.

“USGS scientists will collect water quality samples from three locations along the Fairfield shoreline, providing water resource managers with a detailed understanding as to how, and to what extent, excessive amounts of nutrients affect the coastal bays of Long Island Sound,” said USGS Hydrologic Technician Brittney Izbicki.

Manual samples will be analyzed for nutrients, carbon, suspended solids, silica, chlorophyll and biological oxygen demand. At the locations with water quality instruments, additional information will be collected every six minutes on conditions such as water temperature, flow, clarity, salinity, and concentrations of oxygen and algae.

The collected data can help inform future state and local policies to enhance the Long Island Sound and improve the habitat for marine life and the environment for people living along the Sound.

Excessive nutrients in streams and rivers flowing into the Sound contribute to the loss of eelgrass, an important underwater fish habitat that once was found in every bay and harbor along the Sound, according to a Long Island Sound embayment water quality report by Jamie Vaudrey, Ph.D. and others at the University of Connecticut.

“We’re pleased to work together with USGS and CT DEEP in this research. We believe many in Fairfield are already aware of the water quality issues in the Long Island Sound when too much nitrogen and other micronutrients from fertilizer runoff upstream in our rivers and creeks flow into the sound. The result has been the excessive growth of algae and blooms of phytoplankton,” said Kim Taylor, Chair of the Fairfield Harbor Management Commission.

Bryan LeClerc, who was appointed as Southport and Fairfield’s new Harbor Master by Governor Ned Lamont last year, added “we’re confident the Fairfield boating and fishing community will also support this important work. We all have an interest in collecting scientific information that can help improve harbor and Long Island Sound water quality in the future.”

For more information on the ongoing research visit: https://www.usgs.gov/centers/new-england-water-science-center/science/embayment-monitoring-support-nutrient-management

Since 1986, the Fairfield Harbor Management Commission (FHMC) has had principle responsibility for guiding Southport Harbor’s beneficial use, safety and conservation.

Photos courtesy of USGS
Archives