

THE RIVER PROJECT

2006 Highlights

Mission

The River Project is a marine science field station founded in 1986 at Pier 26 in Tribeca, on the lower west side of Manhattan, in New York City. The River Project works to protect and restore the ecosystem of New York Harbor and the Hudson River estuary through scientific research, hands-on environmental education, community programs, and waterfront habitat improvement.

Accomplishments This Year

- **Interim Relocation** – The River Project's office, lab and dock have been moved, after twenty years at Pier 26, to Pier 40 at Houston Street, in Greenwich Village, also in Hudson River Park. Pier 26 is being rebuilt as part of the new Park. Use of the Pier 40 interim site is made possible by the Hudson River Park Trust. Relocating was funded by a grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The Lilac Preservation Project has provided additional office and lab space on the *Lilac*, a 1933 steamship moored at the north side of Pier 40. We expect to be at Pier 40 for approximately five years. Our new study area is Pier 40 and the piling field at Pier 42.
- **Underwater Observatory** – Two components of the new observatory were deployed in 2006, funded by the New York City Environmental Fund and the Norcross Wildlife Foundation, with pro bono and in kind help from Dr. Michael Bruno (Director, Center for Maritime Systems and the Davidson Laboratory, Stevens Institute of Technology) and Dr. Rodney Rountree (President, Marine Ecology and Technology Applications, Inc. and Adjunct Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts at Amherst).
 - The New York Harbor Observation and Prediction System (NYHOPS): The River Project at Pier 40 is one of 21 coastal stations in the NYHOPS network, operated by the Center for Maritime Systems of Stevens Institute of Technology. An in-water probe, wind/weather tower, and computer provide data for accurate forecasting of weather and ocean conditions.
 - Underwater Sights & Sounds: Passive bioacoustics technology is used to study the role of sound in fish behavior and ecology. Dr. Rountree supervises a system of underwater audio and video data collection at Pier 40.Underwater sights and sounds, and links to continuously updated New York Harbor environmental data, are on The River Project's website, www.riverproject.org.
- **Oyster Restoration Feasibility Study** – The River Project has been interested in the harbor's oyster population for more than a decade. We currently have a suite of research, education and community programs about oysters. Oyster partners and funders are: the Hudson River Park Trust, NY/NJ Baykeeper, the New York Harbor School, the NY–NJ Harbor Estuary Program (Harbor Estuary Stewardship Project), Patagonia Soho and the NYU Community Fund. The Oyster Gardening stewardship program involved volunteers from fourteen community groups and schools helping to raise oysters, which The River Project ultimately hopes to use in a model reef to be built on the Tribeca waterfront.



South side of Pier 40, new site of The River Project



Scientists at work



Environmental Education Expo

- **Environmental Education Expo 2006** was co-hosted in October with the New York City Soil and Water Conservation District, Hudson Basin River Watch, and NYU's Wallerstein Collaborative for Urban Environmental Education, and funded by Con Edison, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and Electra Information Systems Inc., with in-kind contributions from the Hudson River Park Trust, Euphoria Day Spa, and Patagonia Soho. This year the event included day and evening sessions with thirty-six exhibitors, who provided high quality demonstrations and materials about the Hudson estuary for 150 participating New York City teachers and after-school science educators.

- **Hudson River Snapshot Day** in October is a statewide annual event coordinated by the Hudson River Estuary Program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and by Hudson Basin River Watch. Students at stations all along the Hudson River simultaneously collect data on wildlife, water chemistry, weather, tides and currents, and a report is published that acts as a picture of the river at a moment in time. This year The River Project hosted fifty-five third-graders from the Trevor Day School to take the lower Manhattan 'snapshot.'

- **The Marine Biology Internship Program** was limited in scope this year by permitting issues at Pier 40. It continued as a special program with the Harlem Children Society. The Helena Rubinstein Foundation funded ten high school students to conduct summer-long passive bioacoustics research with River Project staff and Dr. Rodney Rountree of the University of Massachusetts. The students helped collect and interpret data for a catalog of underwater sounds of New York Harbor, deploying monitoring equipment in the river and recording sounds such as the mating call of the oyster toadfish, clicking of the cusk eel, passing ferries and their wakes, and many other sounds as yet unidentified.
- **Marine Science Field Trips** were somewhat constrained this year at Pier 40. One hundred students from the New York Harbor School participated in a hands-on overview of the Hudson River and the ecology of estuaries. Activities included field and lab data collection and analysis; identification of fishes, oyster habitats, and benthic fauna in sediments; and four lessons sharing the common themes of estuary ecology, basic food webs, and the importance of being stewards of our environment.

Future plans

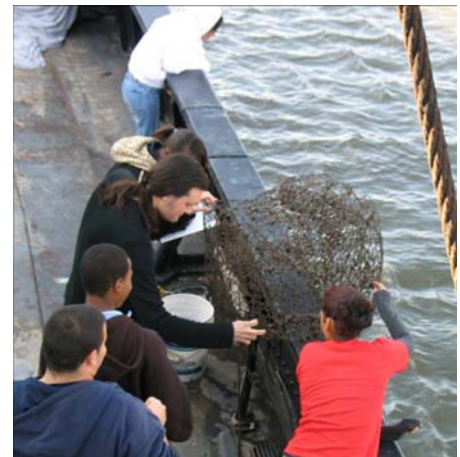
- **Planning for Pier 26** – The River Project is likely to be in temporary headquarters at Pier 40 for five years, while Pier 26 is designed and rebuilt. Planning work is underway with Community Board #1, Hudson River Park Trust and our elected officials, and we hope to return to Pier 26 once a new marine science facility there is completed.
- **Research and Education Programs** – The main focus in 2007 and 2008 is on the oyster restoration and bioacoustic projects. Internships and field trips are arranged through the office on a case-by-case basis. Please visit the website for information about:

In-water Programs

Sights and Sounds from the Bottom of the Harbor
 New York Harbor Observation and Prediction System
 Biodiversity Assessment
 LIVE! From the Bottom of the Harbor

Oyster Reef Restoration

Reef at Vestry Street
 Experimental Wet-Lab
 Outreach and Education



Checking crab traps on a field trip

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