



# Connecticut NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE



*Marsh at Great Island, Old Lyme. Photo by Judy Preston*

## Please welcome our new Manager

The summer may be over but things aren't slowing down at the Reserve. This issue of our newsletter brings an exciting announcement - our Reserve Manager, Kevin O'Brien, started in August. Below is a note from Kevin, sharing a bit about his background and hopes for the Reserve. Our staff sends a huge thank you to George McManus, who served as the Interim Reserve Manager and Center Director the past few years.

[Visit the Reserve's Website](#)



# A note from the Reserve Manager, Kevin O'Brien

Hello from the Manager's desk of the Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve (CT NERR)! I'm very excited to be here after spending many wonderful years with the Coastal Management Program at the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Throughout my professional career, I've had close ties to Long Island Sound and its coastal resources and have been incredibly fortunate to have connected with so many amazing and dedicated people and organizations that share common interests in making sure that the Sound is able to support all who rely on it. And so, taking a nod from that reflection, the theme of this note is an emphasis on collaboration.



It's my goal to help deliver the expertise of the incredible staff here at the CT NERR - as well as the National Estuarine Research Reserve System - to advance efforts that enhance the sustainability and health of the Sound. To that end, we're currently working on several different fronts, such as: designing and implementing a long-term system to monitor key environmental parameters; helping lead and coordinate restoration efforts in our tidal marshes and sea-grass beds; and developing programs for school children and decision makers that can tell the story of what we learn through these efforts and why it's important. And in all cases, the CT NERR is working closely with many stakeholders and partners (both old and new) to deliver programs and outcomes resulting in a Long Island Sound that will be around for generations to come.

If you're reading this, I'm going to guess that Long Island Sound is as important to you as it is to us here at the CT NERR, so I'd love to hear your thoughts and ideas on how we can all work together. Please feel free to contact me at [kevin.o'brien@uconn.edu](mailto:kevin.o'brien@uconn.edu), and I look forward to seeing you out and about in the Reserve!

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## Reserve Updates

### **A new, collaborative effort to manage and restore eelgrass**

Our Coastal Training and Research Programs received funding from the Long Island Sound Study to facilitate a new ***Long Island Sound (LIS) Eelgrass Collaborative***, which is a CT-NY bi-state initiative to implement elements of a LIS ***2022 Eelgrass Management and Restoration Strategy***.

This Strategy provides guidance for short and long-term actions that should be taken to manage and restore eelgrass meadows in LIS and acts as a resource for other estuaries in the region facing similar issues.

### **Future restoration funding for Bluff Point State Park**

### **Invasive plants found at 90% of surveyed Reserve sites**

This summer, our staff and undergraduate interns mapped invasive plant species throughout 170 sites at the Bluff Point complex, 60 sites at Haley Farm State Park, and 15 at UConn's Avery Point campus. Invasive plants such as Japanese knotweed, bittersweet, multiflora rose, mugwort, and garlic mustard were found at 90% of the sites, mostly along the roads, paths, and trails. More than 30 invasive plant species were recorded, including black swallowwort, which is toxic to the monarch butterfly. Now that mapping is complete, Reserve staff will be developing a management plan for invasive removal at these sites.

The Reserve was selected as a finalist for the NOAA Bipartisan Infrastructure Law habitat restoration funding grant, which will hopefully bring as much as \$4 million to improve and restore important habitats at Bluff Point State Park. The full proposal is due this winter.

### How can your community be improved?

In an effort to better understand the needs of communities around the Long Island Sound, the Long Island Sound Study estuary program (LISS), with research firm Responsive Management, is conducting a survey to find out more about your community and your needs as they relate to environmental justice. Your input will help LISS better understand the needs of your community and how their programs and services may be of use to you. Use the [English Survey Link](#) or the [Spanish Survey Link](#) to provide your input and please share!

### Recap of the Reserve's first summer field season

In addition to the invasive species mapping effort, the CT Reserve staff and summer interns were also in the field collecting water samples for bacteria analysis as part of the Pathogen Monitoring Network; deployed GoPros in Reef Balls to better understand fish populations in restored marshes; collected macrophyte and sediment samples in an effort to help CT DEEP monitor embayments throughout Long Island Sound; and conducted eelgrass surveys as part of a historical eelgrass mapping effort. We're already looking ahead and planning for next summer -- luckily, we still have a handful of our summer interns assisting this fall semester. They will be focusing on entering summer data and processing samples that were collected. Stay tuned for more research updates!

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## Save the Date!

Imagine a world where meetings are effective, productive and efficient...discover that world with [NOAA's Facilitation Basics Training](#)!

Our CT Reserve is hosting this VIRTUAL half-day training on Dec 5-6<sup>th</sup> for municipal staff, people serving on boards and commissions, and elected officials in the [RiverCOG](#) and [SCCOG](#) regions (training satisfies 1.5 hours of OPM's requirements for the [training of municipal land use officials](#) in the State of Connecticut).

**Note:** while this [course description](#) indicates the training is for "coastal managers" – anyone in this targeted audience is invited to attend. We will also host this as a one day, in-person training for NGOs in March....stay tuned!

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## Highlights from past Reserve events



### Freshwater Invasive Plant Training

Our Reserve partnered with Northeast Aquatic Plant Management Society ([NEAPMS](#)) and [Project Oceanology](#) to host a three day "[Plant Camp](#)" this past September.

Forty-eight participants or "decision makers" joined this training to learn more about freshwater invasive plant identification, data collection, and best management practices.

The workshop was held at our UConn Avery Point Campus,



but we also braved two site visits with incredible weather - we were very lucky to have an afternoon that was predicted to be 100% downpour and hail turn into a great day at Camp Hazen YMCA for a multiple hour paddle and plant ID session!

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## Messing About In Boats

On Sept. 15, The Reserve hosted an event, Messing About in Boats: A Day on the water at UConn Avery Point for UConn students, faculty, and staff.

Despite Hurricane Lee lingering off the coast, 60 participants were able to have fun on the water - rowing, kayaking, fishing, and cleaning up Pine Island. Many participants had never been on the water before and everyone was all smiles!

Thanks to all of our partners who helped make the event a success: Connecticut Sea Grant, Project Oceanology, The John Gardner chapter of the Traditional Small Craft Association, UConn Department of Marine Sciences, UConn Avery Point's Waterfront Program, and UConn Avery Point campus.



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## Reserve Celebration (postponed)

Rain, flooding, and slippery conditions postponed our "Celebrating the Connecticut Reserve: A day of fun at Bluff Point State Park" event on Sept 30. Keep an eye on your email for our new date this spring. This family-friendly event is going to be a blast as we spend the day fishing, kayaking, hiking, biking, and exploring!

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