



THE RIVER PROJECT

2004 Highlights

Mission

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

Accomplishments

- The Estuarium exhibit was open 276 days out of the year and was visited by over 12,000 **Public Visitors** during regular open hours and special events. A grant from the the New York State Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation funded significant improvements to the aquarium facilities and the design of new interpretive signage.
- Mentored by leading environmental scientists, 35 students from fifteen schools and organizations gained valuable academic and work experience through the **Marine Biology Internship Program**, funded by the National Science Foundation, the Mount Sinai Superfund Basic Research Program, and the Citigroup Foundation. Public school participation increased by 29%. Discoveries made by interns:
 - Wild oysters are returning to the harbor after an absence of 100 years, and each year interns identify and map their locations under Pier 26. More appear each year, though most do not survive. A new study will attempt to determine why that is. Michael Ludwig, Fisheries Biologist, National Marine Fisheries Service, guides this project.
 - A two-year study of human pathogens shows that water quality in Tribeca is consistent with swimming most days of the year. Dr. Bruce Brownawell, Marine Sciences Research Center, SUNY, Stony Brook supervises this study.
 - The 'wild garden' of native shore plants installed at Pier 26 in 2003 is successfully attracting insects and birds. Information about its habitat value and species associations could be used to enrich the ecosystem of the waterfront. Dr. Marcha Johnson, landscape architect at NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, oversees this study.
 - Forty-nine species of fish have been caught on the bottom of the river off the pier to date. Interns are compiling a map of their distribution, to see where they spend time, and, possibly, why they occur at some places more than others. Knowledge of their habits will, perhaps, help us conserve them. Dr. John Waldman, Queens College, CUNY, is assisting this project.



- **Marine Science Field Trips** to The River Project more than tripled to 1,556 students and 156 teachers. This expansion was made possible by funding from the NYC Environmental Fund and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums program.
- With funding from the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program, and in cooperation with the NYU Wallerstein Collaborative for Urban Environmental Education, the third annual **Teachers' Open House** introduced more educators to the Hudson River Estuary. Teachers from 19 city schools and representatives of 12 organizations with informal science education programs attended.

- The River Project launched the in-water research project **Discoveries from the Deep**, funded by the Hudson River Estuary Program and the Florence V. Burden Foundation, and in collaboration with the Stevens Institute of Technology at Rutgers University, and Dr. Rodney Rountree at the University of Massachusetts. A diving dock has been installed, and new underwater monitoring equipment set up to post real-time data on turbidity, salinity, and conductivity of the water to a web site.
- The River Project paired fifth-graders from P.S. 20 with mentors from Stuyvesant High School and the High School for Environmental Studies for the **Afterschool Science Action Partnership** program of Educational Equity Concepts at Pier 26, funded by the Greentree Foundation and the Bay Foundation.
- With the continued support of Con Edison and new funding from the Port Authority of NY & NJ and NYC Councilmember Alan Gerson through the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, The River Project organized a series of **Summer Science Events**, co-hosted by the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance and in collaboration with the Hudson River Foundation and other organizations.
- The River Project participated in the 2nd annual **Estuary Snapshot Day**, organized by Hudson Basin River Watch and the Hudson River Estuary Program of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, to help students understand how their piece of the Hudson fits into the larger estuary ecosystem. School classes and environmental educators at 21 sites along the Hudson created a day-in-the-life picture of the river from Troy Dam to New York Harbor, at our site, for a better understanding of the whole estuary. 1,100 students gathered data on the type of fish caught, tides and currents, the kinds of aquatic plants, water temperature, salinity, and dissolved oxygen levels. Supervised by Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University.



Future plans

The River Project will continue to occupy Pier 26 until the Hudson River Park Trust receives funding for pier reconstruction. During reconstruction, we will relocate, and submit a proposal to return to Pier 26. We are currently developing interpretive signage and research plans to ensure the continuity of our programs regardless of any change in the location of our facilities.



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