



NEWS RELEASE

New York and New Jersey Harbor Transforms into Outdoor Earth Day Classroom

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NEW JERSEY (April 24) - More than 150 area students will join environmental community leaders throughout the region tomorrow to celebrate Earth Day at the Elizabeth Marina City Dock.

Students from St. Patrick High School, Elizabeth public schools, and the Benedictine Academy will spend the morning learning about the health of the New York and New Jersey Harbor Estuary, the affects of pollution and the everyday importance of Earth Day through interactive educational stations.

The stations will be staffed by a variety of professionals in the academic and environmental field including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Coast Guard, New York University and Kean University.

“This Earth Day event is a great opportunity to educate and energize students about the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary. Our hope is that by the end of the event, students and residents will have a better understanding of the connection between land and water, and how these areas are crucial to the environmental quality and economy of the region,” said Joseph Seebode, the Army Corps’ New York District Deputy District Engineer for Programs and Project Management.

“Participants will have the opportunity to speak openly with experts in biology, engineering and archaeology so they can better understand the rich history of the harbor and its current environmental condition. At the same time there will be an opportunity to view marine life and ongoing port activities,” said Seebode.

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The ER/AK Watershed Association Earth Day 2008 partners include the Mayor of the City of Elizabeth, the Elizabeth Marina, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kean University and the offices of Senator Robert Menendez and Representatives Donald Payne and Albio Sires.

“Environmental educational workshops like Earth Day are tangible manifestations of a year round commitment to environmental education and stewardship within our watershed school consortia,” said Michelle Doran McBean, CEO of Future City Inc., the non-profit organization that sponsors Earth Day and Estuary Day.

“The reason why this process is so successful is because for more than six years the various agency partners have made an actively collaborated with the community creating complementary environmental education and stewardship programs for the Arthur Kill/Elizabeth River watershed communities.”

The Earth Day program will kick off with an environmental harbor inspection aboard the Corps’ vessel, MV HOCKING, where many students will be underway along the Arthur Kill Channel. Students will learn about the historical significance of Shooter’s Island, review the types of various habitats in the Estuary and receive an overview of significant, ongoing activities to improve the watershed.

On the dock, students will be rotated through stations that include visual exhibits such as touch aquarium tanks containing marine life, as well as interactive pollution displays, water quality testing and life of a rain garden. Students will also able to tour a U.S. Coast Guard vessel and learn about pollution response and oil spills.

The men and women of the Coast Guard have a special responsibility to ensure that the waterways remain safe and clean. The Coast Guard works closely with our partner Federal, state, and local government agencies, and the private sector, each day to investigate and respond to reports of pollution in our waterways.

This is the fifth annual Earth Day event that will be hosted by the Arthur Kill/Elizabeth River Watershed association. In conjunction with Estuary Day in the September, to date, more than 2500 area students have participated in the activities since its inception.

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