

Local Clean Water Stewards Back First Year Of "Save The Lake - Save The Pond"



At the close of this year, CCOM reported that nearly 170 septic systems had been inspected and pumped out as part of this campaign to improve water quality at Lake Montauk and Fort Pond. (Photo: Nicole Barylski)

Concerned Citizens of Montauk's (CCOM) "Save the Lake - Save the Pond" program made major progress during its inaugural year. The initiative, in which both residential and commercial property owners can take part, allows owners to enroll as "Clean Water Stewards" and take action to address human causes of water quality problems.

According to CCOM, Lake Montauk and Fort Pond have been significantly impacted by nitrogen levels in the water. Lake Montauk was forced to close its shellfish beds and public beach, and Fort Pond is now considered unsafe for swimming throughout much of the summer season. Actions to ameliorate these water conditions and ensure cleaner water in the future include the repairing and/or upgrade of septic systems, toxin-free landscaping, safe marina practices (no discharge of boat waste), and creating water quality protection codes at the municipal level.

At the close of this year, CCOM reported that nearly 170 septic systems had been inspected and pumped out as part of this campaign to improve water quality at Lake Montauk and Fort Pond. CCOM partnered with Hampton Septic Services and offered discounts to stewards for its services.

"Septic systems, even when functioning properly, are a major source of nitrogen pollution to our ground and surface waters," says Laura Tooman, CCOM President. "Most of the septic systems currently in use were never designed to remove nitrogen, they were designed to treat waste. Moving forward, we would love to work with our Clean Water Stewards to take the next step and apply for Town and County rebate and grant programs to install low-nitrogen systems which are designed to achieve a higher rate of treatment."

CCOM was able to further its "Save the Lake - Save the Pond" efforts through a generous grant from the Long Island Community Foundation, a not-for-profit organization.

For 2018, CCOM will expand this program to include stormwater runoff management. "Everything on your lawn or street - fertilizers, pet waste, and the like - can get washed into our waters with heavy rains, leading to plumes of nitrogen and bacteria contamination," says Kate Rossi-Snook, an Environmental Advocate at CCOM. "Rain gardens and waterfront buffer zones help to slow the runoff and take up the excess nutrients. These actions are incredibly effective, and beautiful, way to improve the health of our lake and pond."

Formed in 1970, the Concerned Citizens of Montauk (CCOM) is an organization with the mission of preserving and protecting Montauk's unique environment through education, advocacy, and citizen action.

For more information about CCOM and its programs/outreach, please visit www.preservemontauk.org.

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