



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**CCOM EXPANDS WATER TESTING PROGRAM TO ACCABONAC HARBOR,
NORTHWEST CREEK; REINITIATES FORT POND HAB SAMPLING**

MONTAUK, NY – After much community input and close conversations with the Town of East Hampton Natural Resources Department, Concerned Citizens of Montauk (CCOM) has added two new harbors to their robust *enterococcus* bacteria testing program.

“Over the last couple of years we’ve received a number of requests from community members who live around Northwest Creek and Accabonac Harbor to monitor those waters, and we just haven’t had the means to add new sites,” says CCOM Environmental Advocate, Kate Rossi-Snook, who manages the program. However, with a generous donation to upgrade their sample incubator, CCOM has been able to double their in-office laboratory testing capacity to 30 sites per sampling round.

Accabonac Harbor has been a major focus for many Town and County water quality improvement projects recently. Ms. Rossi-Snook explains that “up until now, we’ve only sampled in Pussy’s Pond in that area, so we’re hoping that these new testing sites at the south end of the harbor will give us some baseline data showing what’s going on with bacterial contamination before the next round of planned projects begins.”

It is with the commitment of Accabonac Protection Committee member Christine Ganitsch to sample these new sites that CCOM has been able to expand the program.

The water quality monitoring program began in 2013 with just a handful of sampling sites mostly in Lake Montauk, and over the last 6 years has grown to 30 sites from Montauk to as far west as East Hampton Village. Ms. Rossi-Snook processes all the samples taken by her and a few dedicated volunteers in the CCOM office laboratory. During the winter months sampling occurs once per month, and during the warmest and busiest months of summer samples are taken every week. On average CCOM tests over 800 samples per year. The results are reported to media outlets, posted on the CCOM homepage, and shared on Surfrider’s Blue Water Task Force website.

In previous press releases Ms. Rossi-Snook has noted that heavy rain events or extreme high tides, in combination with warmer temperatures often lead to these elevated bacteria levels, which can be a public health concern.



Additionally, CCOM just announced it will resume its partnership with Stony Brook Southampton to perform weekly testing and analysis of Fort Pond for Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), a partnership which began in 2018.

"Harmful algal blooms are typically fueled by increased nutrient loadings from septic systems and stormwater runoff. Mitigating direct discharges of stormwater and replacing outdated and ineffective cesspools and septic systems with new innovative alternative systems, which have higher nitrogen treatment capabilities can help remedy the problem. But until there is a concerted effort by the Montauk community to address these nutrient loadings, Fort Pond remains susceptible to the blooms, and thus close and frequent monitoring is integral" says Laura Tooman, CCOM President.

To help raise awareness for these water quality issues in Fort Pond and throughout the Town of East Hampton, Ruschmeyer's in Montauk will be hosting a Party for the Pond on Friday, May 17th from 6-9pm. There will be food, drinks, and raffle items available for bid. Tickets for the party can be purchased in advance for \$60 per person at www.preservemontauk.org/partyforthepond, and all proceeds go to supporting CCOM's water quality initiative and their town-wide bacteria testing program.