

Spring 2022

Community Science Eel Monitoring Project

How is year 1 going, and where are we headed for year 2?

Since 2008, our neighbors to the north at the Hudson River NERR have been successfully monitoring glass, or juvenile, eels in various sites along the Hudson River with help from local citizens. Now, through a 2020 transfer grant, this fun and slimy citizen science opportunity will be offered at the JC NERR within the next couple of years. The two-year grant project, titled “Adopting program coordination methods and best practices to launch community-driven research efforts on the American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*)” and funded by the NERRS Science Collaborative, includes team members from the JC NERR, HR NERR, and Stockton University. During the project period, the team will work together in testing potential monitoring/field work sites, pilot trainings with volunteers and teachers, and transfer the HR NERR’s best practices for program implementation. In addition, outreach materials and tools will also be developed.



So far, we have been up to a great deal during Year 1 of this project. Volunteers jumped in to kick things off, assisting the JC NERR staff with making eel mops in mid-February. This was the first time we had a group of volunteers safely return to the JC NERR since the start of the pandemic, and was therefore a special event. We invited volunteers back a few more times to help us at various stages of making the eel mops. We couldn't have accomplished nearly the amount that we did without their help!

There were also reciprocal visits of staff to the JC NERR and Hudson River NERR. Project team members learned from each other, shared best practices and reviewed NJ specific challenges to consider when it comes to future monitoring. Kaitlin Gannon visited the Poughkeepsie/Kingston NY area in early/mid-March to observe volunteer trainings, data collection methods and fyke net installations.



In April, HR NERR Education Coordinator Chris Bowser traveled to the JC NERR to join Kaitlin in providing an informational seminar to interested teachers and volunteers about eel biology, discuss plans for year two, and how they can get more involved in the project.

We also found two collection sites that we will officially start monitoring in year two! The JC NERR hopes this eel monitoring program will strengthen relationships between the Reserve and surrounding communities, as well as provide useful information about the American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) to fisheries managers.

After the conclusion of the grant period, this citizen science opportunity will be open and ready for community members to participate by fall 2023. Stay tuned for more announcements!

To learn more about this project, check out the project website here – [Launching a Community Science Eel Monitoring Project](#). In addition, if you'd like to learn more about the HR NERR's eel monitoring efforts, [check out the amazing work they've been doing over the years!](#)

Winter 2023

Become a Community Scientist!

Updates from the Volunteer Program

Volunteers have been very active this year at JC NERR. In 2023, 40 volunteers have contributed more than 1370 hours to our ongoing projects. We also welcomed Christine Moran to the JC NERR as our new Volunteer Coordinator! She has been quite busy, working with our current volunteers and running multiple projects and opportunities.



Volunteers have monitored juvenile eels, collected monofilament fishing line, welcomed visitors & hosted tours at our Life on the Edge exhibit, sorted larval fish, maintained the Grassle Marsh trail and contributed to our children's summer program. This year also presented a very unique opportunity to assist with the NERRS Annual Meeting. Volunteers were indispensable in helping with registration, the silent auction, and hosting sector meetings at both the JC NERR Coastal Center and the Seaview Hotel in Galloway NJ.

Below are just a few of the volunteer opportunities that you can be a part of at the JC NERR! Be sure to fill out our [volunteer application](#), and reach out to Volunteer Coordinator, Christine Moran, at christine.moran@marine.rutgers.edu with any questions. Must be 18 years or older.

Eel Monitoring Community Science Program

The Eel Monitoring project had its pilot season this past spring. Volunteers monitored juvenile "glass" eels on their journey to freshwater from the Sargasso Sea. The eels were momentarily captured using eel mops or a fyke net, recorded, and safely returned upstream to continue their journey.



You can join our monitoring team! We are hosting a volunteer training event on February 1st, 6pm, at our Coastal Center in Tuckerton, NJ. We welcome new and returning eel monitoring volunteers to this event! Refreshments will also be provided. If you are not a volunteer but still interested in learning more, you can complete a volunteer application form via the link above before or after the training.

If you have questions about the program, please call Education Coordinator Kaitlin Gannon at 609-249-8822 or email to gannon@marine.rutgers.edu.