

Offshore

Northeast Boating at its Best

Tidings

Dressing up Sludge

New image is key to New Jersey dredging.

No matter what size boat you captain, you know the sinking feeling of seeing that dark, whirled-up mess in your wake when you run aground. Caused by natural erosion and silt run-off, the gradual shoaling of waterways, particularly in New Jersey, with its numerous inlets, back bays

and barrier islands, is a concern among boaters and marina owners.

Whether or not the channel to your slip will be clear for years to come

will depend on a new publicity campaign to promote the benefits of dredged muck.

The solution sounds simple enough. A contractor comes in with his equipment in the off-season, removes sediment off the bottom, and you've got a channel. But where does this excess from the harbor, river and bay floors then go?

In order to arrive at real solutions, the New Jersey Marine Science Consortium's Sea Grant Extension Program hosted a summit at the Wildwood Convention Center in October on the importance of maintenance dredging and to explore beneficial options for dredged material. The first step, said maritime resources official Scott Douglas, is to "devilify" dredge materials. When the material is "de-waterized" it can be used for a host of projects, including capping landfills, creating nutrient-rich soil and construction fill. If dredged materials contain contaminants, they can be run through a binding process that turns the material into a solid so it won't seep into local soil when used.

—Jon Coen



Left: Rocking the Boat founder Adam Green (standing at left) helps students build a Whitehall.



Right: Students do some interior finishing work as another Whitehall nears completion.

Rocking the Bronx

Boatbuilding program targets New York City students.

Ernest Pollman lifted the bow of the just-finished replica of an eighteenth-century bateau, a 21-foot flat-bottomed wooden boat used by colonial farmers at Philipsburg Manor in Tarrytown, New York, from its cradle. Next, Pollman—one of 12 New York City high school students who had spent the summer building the bateau on the grounds of the historic manor using period wooden tools—helped guide the boat to the bank of the Pocantico River as its beautifully oiled hull glistened in the early fall sunlight. About 75 onlookers applauded as the boat slid into the water, fully understanding the time, hard work and care it took to get to this place.

The students, most from disadvantaged families in the city, are participants in Rocking the Boat, a Bronx-based after-school and summer program that uses boatbuilding and environmental stewardship as a means to educate and motivate inner city kids. Rocking the Boat is the brainchild of Adam Green, a Manhattan native who grew up sailing the Hudson River aboard the environmental education sloop *Clearwater* with his social-activist

parents. "I saw the power of teaching middle-school kids in a Hudson River environment, so I took a year off of college in 1994 and volunteered at an East Harlem junior high school," said Green, who founded Rocking the Boat in 1996. "I loved carpentry, so we built an eight-foot dinghy and floated it in the local pool. The kids were ecstatic because it worked!"

Green, with his knobby gray sweater, cargo pants, curly blond hair and Van Gogh beard, can pass as one of his 150 students who come through the program each year. Many are apprentices who have studied under Green, graduated high school and are now mentors for the younger kids.

"Rocking the Boat links the urban world to ecology," said staffer Kimberlin Vasquez. While rowing their fleet of Whitehall rowboats—to date, eight have been built—on the Bronx River, students learn to take water and core samples and plant river grasses.

"We learn about [boat] restoration and the environment," said student Angel Rodriguez. It's a curriculum that you won't find in any textbook.

—Malerie Yolen-Cohen >