

# Cape May Coastlines



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Delaware Bay Restoration	1
Pollinator Field Day	1
Jamaica Bay	2
Avalon Sea Oats	2
Coastal America Spirit Award	3

*“Let us permit nature to have her way. She understands her business better than we do.”*

*Michel de Montaigne*



PMC, USFWS, and NJDNR staff and volunteers planting grasses



Participants gather to hear talks on pollinators

## Delaware Bay Eastern Tiger Salamander Wetland Restoration

The Cape May Plant Materials Center is cooperating with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the New Jersey Department of Natural Resources to create and maintain natural vegetation habitat for the state listed endangered eastern tiger salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*). Roughly 250 plants of switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* var. “Timber”, “Hightide”), eastern gamagrass (*Tripsicum dactyloides*), and shortbeard plumegrass (*Saccharum brevibarbe*) were planted in a vernal pool in the Delaware Bay Division of the Cape May National Wildlife Refuge. These native plants will provide

suitable structure on which the eastern tiger salamander will lay its eggs in the winter. By winter, these warm season grasses will become dormant, nevertheless their stems will persist even when dead, thereby creating a solid structure for the deposit of egg masses. The challenge of the planting occurs due to the variety of depths of the wetland. If planted too low in the wetland site, the vegetation may become too inundated and die. If planted too far from the water line, the salamander may not use the grasses. Therefore, a variety of species were used and planted in a range of distances from

the deepest part of the wetland. Switchgrass, is a facultative wetland (FACW) plant that is often found (67%-99%) in wetland sites, and so was planted in the deeper areas. Eastern gamagrass, also a FACW, does not perform as well in standing water, and so was planted at the highest elevation. Shortbeard plumegrass, an obligate wetland (OBL) species, when found, almost always occurs in wetlands, and so was planted in various elevations between the switchgrass and eastern gamagrass.

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## Pollinator Field Day at the PMC

On September 30th, the PMC hosted a pollinator field day conducted by the Xerces society. The day’s event was coordinated by Jolie Dollar, Pollinator Habitat Specialist, with guest

speakers from Rutgers university: Tina Harrison, Molly MacLeod, and Dr. Rachael Winfree. Other speakers were Tim Dunne SRC, Chris Miller PMC manager, and Jolie Dollar. The event was

well attended by roughly 70 people, on a beautiful fall Friday. The speakers presented an overview on the importance of pollinators to agricultural production, bee biology basics, current research at Rutgers (cont. pg 2)



Vegetative planting of *Spartina alterniflora* on Elders Point, Jamaica Bay

## Jamaica Bay Interagency Project

The Cape May PMC is continuing its efforts helping the NY District Corps of Engineers harvest seed from and restore the Gateway National Recreation Area Jamaica Bay unit. Recent trips to the bay included a two-day collection of saltmeadow cordgrass (*Spartina patens*) from Bergen beach. The following day the Corps ferried the PMC staff from

Rockaway Point to Elders Point to evaluate past tidal marsh restoration efforts of direct seeding versus planting with plugs. While the establishment of smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) with plugs was very successful away from areas of high tidal and strong wave-action, those plantings closest to the shoreline failed. Direct seeding also showed poor results in this instance, although the

type of planter used may have contributed to poor germination.

On a following two-week trip, the PMC staff collected smooth cordgrass for eventual seed processing and distribution. After being combined and cleaned at the PMC, the seed will then be used specifically for future Jamaica Bay restoration work. (continued on pg 3)



Molly MacLeod (Rutgers Univ.) explaining pollinator habitat study

## Field Day (continued)

University, and current pollinator-friendly conservation programs within the Farm Bill.

Research posters, native bee nesting boxes, as well as native bee specimens were on display. Participants had time after the talks to tour pollinator-friendly areas at the PMC and observe farm equipment used to establish and maintain those areas.

Afternoon activities included wagon ride tours of the PMC; highlighting the PMC's ongoing plant development projects. These projects included pollinator hedge rows, 'Monarch' goldenrod production plots, and cover crop production areas.

Thanks to Jolie Dollar, PMC staff, Rutgers researchers, Tim Dunne,

and NRCS and public attendees for making this a successful day.



Jolie Dollar (Xerces Society) discussing pollinator windbreak planting

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## Sea Oats Evaluation

PMC staff recently evaluated the growth of a cold tolerant sea oat dune planting in Avalon. The project, lead by Don Hamer, (former PMC manager), was created to determine the over-wintering ability of sea oats in the northern limit of its habitat range.

This year's planting was re-established in the Spring after last year's planting failed to survive the winter due to plant predation (rabbits), plant competition, and over-exposure. We hope the plantings will have a better chance of survival at this new site.



Avalon beach planting in late summer

## Jamaica Bay Interagency Project (Coastal America Spirit Award) (continued from pg 2)



Pictured above: left to right, Colonel John R. Boulé II, the Army Corps District Commander, Chris Miller, NRCS Plant Materials Center Manager, Donald J. Pettit, NRCS State Conservationist, Tim Dunne, NRCS State Resource Conservationist, David Avrin, Resource Management Division Chief at Gateway National Recreation Area, Peter Wepler, Chief of Coastal Ecosystem Section of the US Army Corps of Engineers



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In recognition of their help on the Jamaica Bay Marsh Islands Restoration Project the staff of the Beltsville, MD; Alderson WV; Rose Lake, MI, and Cape May, NJ PMC received the Coastal America Spirit Award. This award specifically recognized the first phase in restoring the 43 acre marsh island of Elders East.

NRCS State Conservationist Don Pettit accepted the award on Thursday, September 22 on behalf of the USDA-NRCS aboard the Army Corps vessel Hayward. Army Brigadier General Peter A. DeLuca, the Army Corps' former North Atlantic Division commander, and Col. Christopher Larsen, the acting Division Commander, presented the award to the project partners during the New York District's Harbor inspection of the marsh islands restoration project. Other award recipients who participated in the inspection included the

Army Corps' New York District, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, National Park Service (Gateway), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

William Skaradek, former Cape May Plant Materials Center Manager, played a large role in setting up the commission from the Army Corps of Engineers, New York District. The plant materials centers were responsible for the propagation of native plant species for the restoration project in the bay. Seeds were collected on site by Cape May PMC staff in order to preserve the genetic-plant resources for the national park. The PMCs from MD, WV, MI, and NJ produced the plants used in the restoration.

Seedlings of smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*),

saltmeadow cordgrass (*Spartina patens*) and saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) were returned to the site to slow erosion of the marsh islands in the bay. Plantings were installed at two islands, Elders Point East and West, and seed collection is underway for the Yellow Bar Island phase of the project.

As a result of this undertaking, the Cape May PMC has developed plant technology including refining procedures for collecting, cleaning, and storing seed of tidal marsh species, direct seeding trials of smooth cordgrass in dredged sand, and development of a successful "deep" planting plug that allows for quick rooting in a high energy environment. For more on the Cape May Plant Material Center and this project, visit:

[http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/PMC\\_Activity.html](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/PMC_Activity.html)

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