



University of Connecticut

NEWS RELEASE

Connecticut Sea Grant Announces 2010 Grant Recipients

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STORRS, Conn. – [Connecticut Sea Grant](#) at the University of Connecticut has announced seven new grants to researchers for the years 2010-2012. The awards, totaling \$657,702, will fund research projects focusing primarily on the ecosystems and natural resources of Long Island Sound and its surrounding shoreline communities.

Several of the proposals will examine current and emerging ecological issues, such as climate change and its associated ocean acidification, as well as invasive species and red tides. Others will focus on human uses of marine areas, such as the side effects of lobster fishing and the scaling up of seaweed aquaculture.

“It is very exciting to be able to increase our support for research in these economically difficult times,” said Sylvain De Guise, director of Connecticut Sea Grant. “In addition to the five projects we will fund in Connecticut, we have joined in a new collaboration with Sea Grant programs from Maine to Connecticut to jointly fund two regional proposals, expanding our portfolio while addressing problems that are truly regional in nature.”

The Sea Grant program is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and public research universities in 32 coastal and Great Lakes states throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Grants to these universities support the sustainable use and conservation of coastal and marine natural resources.

The projects funded and their principal investigators are:

Temperature, Salinity and Sea Level in Long Island Sound: North East Coastal Ocean Forecast System (NECOFS) for Managing Coastal Resources, Ecosystems and Habitats.

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James O'Donnell, University of Connecticut Department of Marine Sciences; \$99,834.

This grant will adapt an existing ocean circulation model to the waters of the Long Island Sound, which will help scientists and ocean managers understand how water temperature and oxygen levels affect the habitats and population levels of bottom-dwelling animals, such as lobsters. The project will help communities and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to visualize sea level rise probabilities and develop adaptation plans for coastal areas.

Effects of acidification on coastal habitats in Long Island Sound

Robert B. Whitlatch, University of Connecticut Department of Marine Sciences, and R.W. Osman and A.W. Miller, Smithsonian Research Center; \$129,365.

This project will study the effects of increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide on acidification of the Sound, which can interfere with the creation of shells by mollusks and crustaceans such as oysters, clams and shrimp.

Bloom Control and Toxin Transfer of the Toxic Dinoflagellate *Alexandrium* sp. Via Zooplankton in Long Island Sound

Hans G. Dam, University of Connecticut Department of Marine Sciences; \$133,011.

This study will help scientists understand how red tides and other harmful algal blooms might be controlled by the feeding habits of specific zooplankton. The results could be useful in mitigating and controlling harmful algal blooms.

Development of Seaweed Culture System Technologies to Support Integrated Multi-trophic Aquaculture and Sea Vegetable Aquaculture in New England Coastal Waters.

Charles Yarish, University of Connecticut at Stamford, Departments of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Marine Sciences; \$99,675.

Technology developed by this project will aid in the commercial-scale production of mass seaweed cultures for use in integrated aquaculture, which combines marine animal and plant production. This practice can increase food production while also improving water quality. Yarish will collaborate with Chris Neefus of the University of New Hampshire, who has been funded for a complementary project by New Hampshire Sea Grant.

Ingestion and Bioaccumulation of Nanospheres by Eastern Oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*): Cellular Effects & Implications for Shellfish Safety.

J. Evan Ward and Robert Mason, University of Connecticut Department of Marine Sciences; \$129,998.

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This project will assess the negative effects of human-made nanoparticles, an emerging source of pollution found increasingly in nature, on filter-feeding oysters. The results may have implications for shellfish health and human health.

Mitigating Risk to Whales from Lobster Fishing

Hauke Kite-Powell, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; \$127,748 (Connecticut Sea Grant contributed \$25,000)

This regional project will use data on right whale movements and key seasons for fishing activity to assess the risk of entanglement of endangered right whales in lobster fishing nets off the coast of Maine. Results will suggest ways to prevent harm to the whales without disrupting fishing activities.

Using Technology to Assess the Invasive Sea Squirt, *Didemnum vexillum*: Impacts on Fisheries and Ecosystems

Franz Hover, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Co-Investigators: Robert B. Whitlatch, University of Connecticut, and Emmanuel Boss, University of Maine; \$191,292 (Connecticut Sea Grant contributed \$25,000)

This regional grant will support research to produce an optical sensor that, when mounted on an underwater vessel, will detect populations of an invasive sea squirt, which can displace native marine organisms.

For more information about the research projects, contact [Syma Ebbin](#), research coordinator, or [Sylvain De Guise](#), director

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