

Packets Prompt Citizens to Save Dunes

NYSG Stewardship Educator Molly Thompson (r.) presents Sandy Pond cottage owner Sally Sessler with a “hot off the press” copy of the Lake Ontario Shoreline Stewardship Guide. Photo by David White, NYSG



Cottage and home owners occupy 50 percent of the 17-mile-long coastal barrier environment that stretches along Eastern Lake Ontario and includes the largest and most extensive freshwater sand dune formations in New York State. To help shoreline property owners learn about the valuable and fragile ecosystem of dunes and wetlands, New York Sea Grant and The Ontario Dune Coalition have distributed information and resource packets to landowners.

“These information packets encourage wise use and conservation. This barrier system, its wetlands and near-shore waters are vital to maintaining the natural habitats and productivity of the coastal environment and provide recreational opportunities that support our local economy,” explains **David G. White** of New York Sea Grant’s Great Lakes Program.

The packets include:

- Fliers describing dunes and wetlands and the processes affecting the shoreline, e.g., waves, wind, lake level fluctuation and erosion;
- “Living with the Lakes: Understanding and Adapting to Great Lakes Water Level Changes,” a publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Great Lakes Commission;
- Suggestions and illustrations of measures to protect the environment, for example, dune stabilization through restoration plantings, fencing and walkovers;
- Fliers on invasive plant species: Purple Loosestrife, Eurasian Water Milfoil, Water Chestnut, and Hydrilla;
- A Lake Ontario Stewardship Guide, produced by New York Sea Grant, with tips for creating a wildlife friendly shoreline and a regionally-specific recommended plants list on CD;
- A packet of wildflower seeds; and
- Information on activities that are prohibited or require a permit.

“Most of the people here are interested in maintaining both the environmental quality of the land and the property value and packets such as this from New York Sea Grant are a wonderful help to us,” says **Nan Winters**, Chairperson of the Private Landowners Committee of The Ontario Dunes Coalition.

Cottage owner **John Petreszyn** is known as the “Dune Saver.” He belongs to the Friends of Sandy Pond that is celebrating its 10th anniversary and the planting of more than 88,000 stems of native beach grass raised by the group to protect Lake Ontario’s fragile sand dunes.

“The Natural Area here looks gorgeous now,” says Petreszyn, who adds that partnerships between New York Sea Grant, the Friends group, The Ontario Dune Coalition and others are a key part of the dune restoration effort. “We cannot be selfish. Any knowledge one acquires is quickly shared and supports the group effort to educate the public, school groups and beach users,” he says. “One family came to plant grass on the dunes a couple of years ago as a learning experience for their children. This year they came back to buy grass for their grandmother’s lakefront property.”

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— Kara Lynn Dunn

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