



Department  
of Health

# Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach Project

## Project Update 2018

### 2018 HRFA Accomplishments

In 2018, the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach Project established exciting new collaborations to communicate the fish advisories, and to suggest alternative waters to families who eat the fish they catch. We have a solid foundation in our mini-grant partners, including the Cornell Cooperative Extensions (CCE) of Albany, Dutchess, Rockland and Saratoga counties, Hudson Sloop Clearwater, and Rensselaer Park Trust. With the vital involvement of many other allies, NYS DOH connects with communities along the length of the Hudson River, an EPA Superfund site that extends from Hudson Falls to the New York City Battery.



Group shot of Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach partners.

### Expanding the Project's Network

In 2018, NYS DOH and our partners explored new outreach avenues, and returned to those that had been successful in the past:

- Tabled with our mini-grant partner CCE Albany at CoNSERNS-U back-to-school and holiday events for area families. CoNSERNS-U is a social service organization and food pantry in Rensselaer.
- Attended Trinity Alliance's busy food pantries in Albany.
- Worked with the Sanctuary for Independent Media, who provide internships in Troy through Rensselaer County Summer Youth Employment.
- Tabled at the Dutchess, Saratoga and Washington County fairs.
- Attended the United Way Leo Lasher Catfish Derby in Catskill.
- Participated in the Rockin' on the River festival in Troy.
- Sage College students assisted mini-grant partner Rensselaer Land Trust in collecting Hudson fish consumption surveys at the New York State Museum.
- Mini-grant partner CCE Saratoga began conducting classes on healthy local fish consumption choices in Saratoga county elementary schools. Classes in Washington County are on the agenda for 2019.

**The Sanctuary for Independent Media**  
Aug 2 at 3:44pm

Today Uptown Summer was visited by Regina Keenan, coordinator of the NY Department of Health's Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach Project. She talked to us about contaminants in the Hudson River, how biomagnification works, and which fish are safe to eat. Youth employee Felicia will be producing a radio story on Hudson River fish, so stay tuned for that in the coming weeks!



*Rhea Esposito of the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies leads a teacher workshop on PCBs in Hudson River fish at Peebles Island State Park.*

We focused efforts in the spring near Albany and Troy, where the NYS DOH advice is most restrictive. The most sought fish species on the Hudson is striped bass. Striped bass are a migratory species, but those caught from Troy to Catskill have elevated polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) levels and should not be eaten. At boat access and shoreline fishing locations in the capital district, NYS DOH and partners distributed Hudson fish advisory materials and detailed information about PCB levels in striped bass.

DOH collaborated with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) and the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies to create STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) lessons for middle and high school students. The lessons use the PCB data in Hudson River fish that the NYS DEC collects each year. DOH annually reviews this data to modify existing advice or to establish new advice. The three modules explore the PCB concentrations in some Hudson fish species, and the

levels found in fish collected at several locations from the river. The free lessons were introduced to teachers through workshops at the Cary Institute and SUNY's New York State Master Teacher workshops, and are available at:

<https://www.caryinstitute.org/educators/teaching-materials/hudson-river-ecology/pCBS-hudson-river-fish>

### Reaching Those Who Do Not Know the Advice

Native Spanish speaker and NYS DOH research scientist Lydia Marquez-Bravo shared the advice on Hudson Valley Spanish-language radio, on a Hudson Sloop Clearwater excursion for the children of Hudson Valley migrant workers, and at a service at the Cathedral of All Saints Episcopal Church in Albany. Project staff presented about healthy choices for eating fish you catch to congregations from Burma at the Emmanuel Baptist Church and Saint Francis Mission in Albany.

To make newcomers aware of the advice, NYS DOH works with organizations that are trusted by area immigrants. CCE Albany reached out to Capital Region BOCES, and in January 2018 we began presenting lessons on healthy choices on eating the fish you catch in its English language classes. We present the advice on water bodies in the area, with participants "fishing" in an interactive exercise with DOH's county fishing maps. The color-coded maps indicate with blue the waters where families can eat fish, and with red the waters where families should avoid eating fish, due to chemical contamination. Class attendees learn that there are many waters where a person can eat fish close to home.



*Lydia Marquez-Bravo (left) of NYS DOH speaking after a Spanish-language church service in Albany.*



*A Hudson River fish advisory warning sign at a popular striped bass fishing location in Green Island, NY. The Village of Green Island has been very cooperative in posting signs to alert anglers.*

### Looking to the Future

Signs continue to be a helpful tool to inform the public that Hudson River fish are contaminated, and fish advisory signs are posted at many popular fishing locations from Albany to New York City (south of the NYS DEC catch and release regulation). In 2018, Project staff visited shoreline fishing sites in all counties in the roughly 240 miles of shoreline to determine if signs are present, or if those posted needed replacement. Following up with municipalities and other landowners, NYS DOH successfully coordinated sign posting in eleven new locations, including Newburgh and Peekskill.



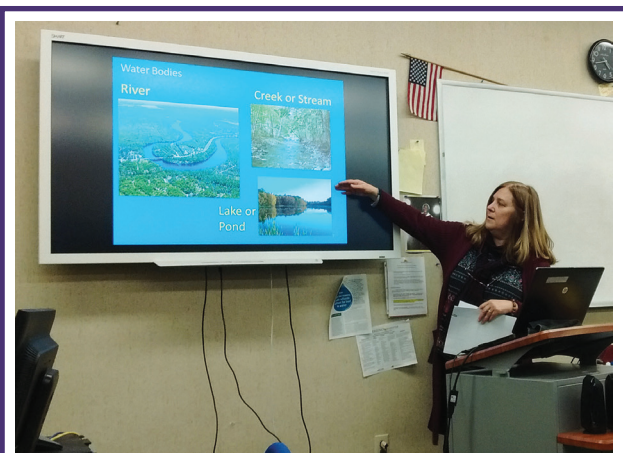
Working with property owners to maintain the signage that we have, and adding new waterfront fishing sites, are an ongoing part of the Project. We acknowledge the many property owners who currently cooperate with our effort, and welcome more in future.

Interested land owner can order signs here: [www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/udson\\_river/docs/udson\\_river\\_sign.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/udson_river/docs/udson_river_sign.pdf).

If anything emerges as “the” outreach tool of choice, it is the maps we have developed that show “better choice waterbodies”. The maps carry the positive message of what you can eat; not what you cannot. In 2018, we were able to make more county-based maps available, with a total of nine Hudson Valley county maps online and more planned in the coming years. [www.health.ny.gov/fish/maps.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/fish/maps.htm).

As always, we could not do this work without our partners, who know their communities best. We look forward to seeing the creative ways they convey Hudson fish advisory messages. For example, Cornell Cooperative Extension Rockland County Environmental Educator Jen Zunino-Smith offers her 2018 highlight:

***“We presented at the Haverstraw STEM day. In this school district with high populations of immigrant (or first generation) children, we educated elementary school children on the Hudson River fish advisory, and the children took home materials in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole.”***



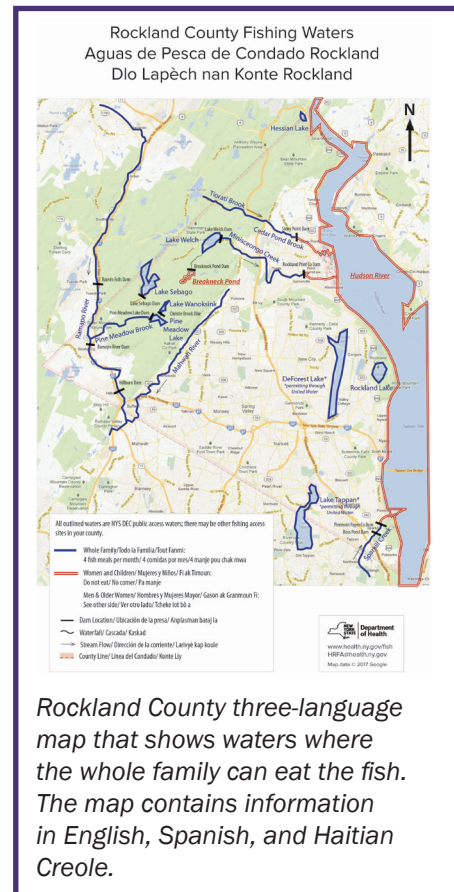
*Karen Roberts-Mort (right) of CCE Albany teaching a BOCES English-language class on the Hudson River fish advisory and alternative places to eat fish.*

In its 11th year, the Project has engaged a variety of partners and developed successful outreach strategies. It continues to expand its network of organizations and adapt its outreach techniques to respond to community needs.

The Project thanks Tarin Bready and Cody Netzbund of Capital Region BOCES for welcoming NYS DOH staff into twelve BOCES English classes, and eleven High School Equivalency classes. We appreciate that RISSE (Refugee and Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus), the Literacy Volunteers of Rensselaer County, and Questar III instructor John Parker also invited us into their English classes. We thank Clara Sorrell for expanding access to Trinity Alliance food pantries. Russ Altone, Susan Kukuk and Carlie Thompson of Trinity Alliance were instrumental in making our outreach to the refugee community from Burma possible. Wayne Richter of the NYS DEC Bureau of Habitat,

Division of Fish and Wildlife, and other DEC staff provide valuable support regarding contaminant data in fish.

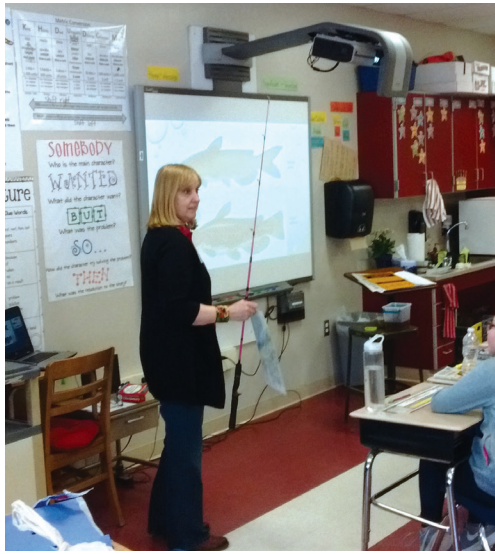
We appreciate the contributions from our growing list of outreach partners and look forward to working with many new ones in the future. Please visit [health.ny.gov/fish](http://health.ny.gov/fish) for more information or contact us at [HRFA@health.ny.gov](mailto:HRFA@health.ny.gov).



*Rockland County three-language map that shows waters where the whole family can eat the fish. The map contains information in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.*



## Partner Outreach



*Diane Whitten of CCE Saratoga teaching an area elementary school class about the Hudson River fish advisory and better places to eat fish.*



*A family playing the CCE Rockland "go fish" game and learning about the Hudson River fish advisory.*



*Alana Gerus (left) speaks with Jessica Guzman (middle) and Nicole Andreotti (right), Rockland County Conservation Corps members who interned with CCE Rockland, about their outreach program at the Nyack Farmer's Market.*



*Joy Yin Ohn (left), Russ Altone (middle), and Paw Shee Wah (right) translating the advice on where you can eat local fish to a congregation at Saint Francis Mission in Albany.*



*Karen Roberts-Mort of CCE Albany assisting with striped bass angler outreach at Schodack Island in the spring of 2018.*



*Kevin Ryan of Hudson Bait and Tackle next to the Albany/Rensselaer fishing waters map he posted in his shop. Community partnerships like these are a crucial part of getting the word out to anglers about the advisories.*



# NYSDOH Outreach



Alana Gerus at the Hudson Fish Advisory table at Saratoga County Fair.



Audrey Van Genechten and Alana Gerus working with the NYS DEC Hudson River Fisheries Unit during their striped bass biological survey.



English Language Learner (formerly ESL) students using the Albany/Rensselaer fishing waters map to learn more about healthy places to eat fish locally.



Lydia Marquez Bravo explaining the fish advisory on a Hudson Sloop Clearwater sail for Spanish speaking farmworker families.



Alana Gerus and Audrey Van Genechten speaking with an angler about the Hudson River fish advisory at the Catfish Derby in Catskill.



Regina Keenan speaking with striped bass anglers at the Rockland Outdoor Show in Suffern as another angler takes our consumption survey.

## Survey Results Update

Hudson fish consumption surveys continue to provide valuable insight into what people are catching and eating, helping to inform new directions and messages. From 2013 through 2018, in collaboration with our partners, we surveyed people at community events. The over 1,400 responses we have collected can be viewed here:

[www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-BKL29WGPV/#](https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-BKL29WGPV/#)

We continue to see many of the same patterns we originally saw in 2013. About 40% of people who fish the Hudson say they practice catch and release, and about 75% of respondents who say they eat Hudson fish, eat striped bass. For more information about how the surveys are collected and an overview of trends: [www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/udson\\_river/docs/hrfaappendix.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/udson_river/docs/hrfaappendix.pdf)

## More Information:

### **Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach Program**

### **New York State Department of Health, Center for Environmental Health**

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