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NEWS RELEASE

[New York and New Jersey Harbor Transforms into Outdoor Earth Day Classroom](#)

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[NEW JERSEY \(April 25\) - More than 150 area students joined environmental community leaders throughout the region to celebrate Earth Day at the City of Elizabeth Marina Dock.](#)

“This annual Earth Day event shows City students the direct impact they have on the environment,” stated Mayor Chris Bollwage. “All the partners work on impressing that our every day actions have consequences that affect our air, water, and soil. After participating in this great program students have a better appreciation and understanding of how we coexist with our environment and how they can make a positive impact.”

[Students from St. Patrick High School, Elizabeth Public Schools, Benedictine Academy, Mabel Holmes Middle School, Monsieur Antao Academy and Albert Einstein Academy spent the morning learning about the health of the New York and New Jersey Harbor Estuary, the affects of pollution and the everyday importance of Earth Day through interactive educational stations.](#)

[The stations will be manned by a variety of professionals in the academic and environmental field including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Coast Guard, New York University and Kean University.](#)

“This Earth Day event is a great opportunity to educate and energize students about the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary. Our hope is that by the end of the event, students and residents will have a better understanding of [the connection between land and water](#), and how these areas are crucial to the environmental quality and economy of the region,” [said](#) Joseph Seebode, the Army Corps’ New York District Deputy District Engineer for Programs and Project Management.

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“Participants had the opportunity to speak openly with experts in biology, engineering and archaeology so they can better understand the rich history of the harbor and its current environmental condition. At the same time they had an opportunity to view marine life and ongoing port activities,” said Seebode.

The ER/AK Watershed Association Earth Day 2008 partners include the Mayor of the City of Elizabeth, the Elizabeth Marina, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kean University and the offices of Senator Robert Menendez, Congressman Donald Payne and Congressman Albio Sires.

“Environmental educational workshops like Earth Day and Estuary Day are tangible manifestations of a year round commitment to environmental education and stewardship within our watershed school consortia,” said Michelle Doran McBean, CEO of Future City Inc., the non-profit organization that sponsors Earth Day and Estuary Day. “The reason why this process is so successful is because for more than six years the various agency partners have made an actively collaborated with the community creating complementary environmental education and stewardship programs for the Arthur Kill/Elizabeth River watershed communities.”

The Earth Day program kicked off with an environmental harbor inspection aboard the Corps’ vessel, MV HOCKING, where many students sailed on the Arthur Kill Channel for the first time. On the boat, students learned about the historical significance of Shooter’s Island, review the types of various habitats in the Estuary and receive an overview of significant, ongoing activities to improve the watershed.

On the dock, students rotated through stations that included visual exhibits such as touch tanks with marine life, as well as interactive pollution displays, water quality testing and life of a rain garden. Students also toured a Coast Guard vessel and learned about pollution response and oil spills.

Coast Guard officials stated, “The men and women of the Coast Guard have a special responsibility to ensure that our waterways remain safe and clean. We work closely with our partner Federal, state, and local government agencies, and the private sector, each day to investigate and respond to reports of pollution in our waterways. As we celebrate Earth Day again this year, I hope we take the opportunity to increase environmental awareness, especially with our young people since they are our future”

This was the fifth annual Earth Day event hosted by the Arthur Kill/Elizabeth River Watershed association. In conjunction with Estuary Day in the September, to date, more than 2500 area students have participated in the activities since its inception.

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