

Lake Learning on Champlain

With over \$670,000 in funds committed through 2001 by the National and New York Sea Grant programs and its participating universities, the Sea Grant Lake Champlain project is better informing both government officials and the public on the lake's coastal concerns and issues. Last summer, NYSG's **Mark Malchoff** traded in his marine fisheries education responsibilities on Long Island to be the first of two Sea Grant coastal issues specialists along Lake Champlain's 587 miles of shoreline. Based at SUNY Plattsburgh, Malchoff was joined this past January by University of Vermont's **Juri Homziak** to oversee the project.

Photo courtesy of Mark Malchoff

Lake Champlain Sea Grant's co-sponsored "Net Trawling Workshop," held earlier this year at the University of Vermont in Burlington, was envisioned by UVM's research vessel captain Dick Furbush (at back) and taught by Steve Cluett from SUNY Stony Brook's Marine Sciences Research Center. Cluett is pictured here demonstrating some repair techniques.



Two broad themes are being explored through the joint New York-Vermont venture. First, SUNY Plattsburgh is home to issues relating to aquatic resources, water quality and ecosystem changes in the lake and how they relate to introductions of non-indigenous species, changes in fisheries dynamics and the resulting impacts on shoreline communities. Second, Lake Champlain watershed issues are being addressed at the University of Vermont (UVM), with a focus on the implementation of an extension education program pertaining to watershed management.

The next step is to develop research activities to support work being done at the two universities. In addition to hammering out the details

of a "Lake Champlain Research Issues Initiative," Malchoff and Homziak realize the benefit of partnering with local organizations and agencies to make all aspects of the project a success. Working with the Lake Champlain Basin Program, New York and Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, the Lake Champlain Research Consortium and other research centers at both SUNY Plattsburgh and UVM, Sea Grant's Lake Champlain staff continue to produce fact sheets and conduct workshops to help the public recognize the issues facing Lake Champlain.

Earlier this year, for example, Sea Grant joined forces with UVM's Rubenstein Ecosystem Science Laboratory and the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife to sponsor a Trawl Repair Workshop. The two-day workshop offered insights on trawl and other gear type techniques, which are employed for fisheries management and ecosystem research efforts on Lake Champlain that require extensive sampling. By the very nature of sampling, these gears are often damaged, sometimes beyond repair, through contact with bottom structure or debris. Says Malchoff, "The lack of trawl net design, construction, and repair capabilities within the basin has the potential to increase sampling costs and decrease the amount of data that can be collected during the field season. So, the workshop helped its 20 participants — Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife staff and UVM faculty and graduate students — gain design and hands-on repair skills that will enable more efficient use of fish sampling gear in Lake Champlain for both research and management applications."

"The efforts of both Malchoff and Homziak serve as a bridge between scientific researchers and user groups as well as individuals concerned with Lake Champlain's coastal resources," says NYSG Director Jack Mattice. "Our goal is that their hard work will result in wiser decision-making and greater stewardship of coastal resources in the area."

— Paul C. Focazio

For more information on the Sea Grant Lake Champlain Project, visit us on the Internet at, <www.seagrantsunysb.edu/pages/SGL-ChamplainProject.htm>.