

# Initial Bellport Bay Eelgrass Plantings Conducted by Cornell Cooperative Extension's Marine Meadows Program Prove To Be Successful

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**Farmingville, NY** – Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine has announced that the Town will sponsor the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County's (CCE) Marine Meadows Program Workshops in partnership at Bellport Village Marina on Saturday October 1st and October 15th from 10am-12pm. These workshops will enable essential eelgrass habitat to be restored in Bellport Bay.

After Superstorm Sandy opened up "Old Inlet" bringing a new influx of clean, cool ocean water to this end of the bay, the Town of Brookhaven was interested in bringing back the eelgrass populations that had been declining in this area prior to the storm, and partnered with CCE's Marine Meadows Program to do so. The conditions created as a result of the increased flushing proved to be favorable to eelgrass, as demonstrated by the results of CCE's surveys and test plantings. The cool and clear water that the old inlet will provide allows for eelgrass to be supported, and CCE's restoration activities will speed up the natural process of eelgrass recruitment, which relies heavily on chance in areas far away from existing populations.

The upcoming workshops are sponsored by the Town of Brookhaven, and will build upon the restoration work initiated last year. In October 2015 over 30 individuals, including Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine who is an environmental advocate and an important supporter of CCE's restoration efforts, came out to lend a hand. The 2000 eelgrass shoots processed at this workshop were planted at two test planting sites in Bellport Bay, which is in eastern Great South Bay. When CCE monitored the sites this month to see how the plantings fared the summer heat so far (eelgrass prefers cold water and gets stressed in summer temperatures), they were very happy to report that both sites still supported eelgrass, and one of the two sites looked especially good. Not only had the eelgrass survived, but it had expanded significantly and was harboring marine life already, including a school of porgy (aka scup) fry. The plants to be processed at the upcoming workshops will add to the thriving new meadows.

On Saturday October 1st, and Saturday October 15th, participants will gather at the Bellport Marina to weave eelgrass shoots (harvested from healthy donor meadows in our local waters) into burlap planting discs. Once assembled, these discs will be planted by highly trained, SCUBA certified CCE Marine Program staff at designated restoration sites in Bellport Bay. These newly created "marine meadows" will serve as important marine habitat for many species of finfish and shellfish and help enhance the health and productivity of our local bays.

All are welcome to participate, although this activity is best suited for ages 7 and up. Registration is free, but requested in advance via Eventbrite at: <https://marinemeadowsworkshopbrookhaven.eventbrite.com>.

For more information on the Marine Meadows Program, please contact Kimberly Barbour, Marine Program Outreach Manger at [kp237@cornell.edu](mailto:kp237@cornell.edu) or 631-461-5294.

## **About CCE's Marine Meadows Program:**

*The Marine Meadows Program is the collaborative, community-based component of CCE's Habitat Restoration Program. By offering Marine Meadows Workshops throughout Long Island, CCE provides an opportunity for land-based participants to learn about the importance of eelgrass while participating in a hands-on activity that will help further eelgrass restoration efforts in our region. To date, CCE and various partners have facilitated over 30 workshops in which over 1,000 volunteers have come together to assemble over 200,000 shoots of eelgrass into planting discs for use in CCE's restoration efforts. For more information about CCE's seagrass conservation and restoration efforts, please visit [www.seagrassli.org](http://www.seagrassli.org) and follow Marine Meadows on Facebook.*

*Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities; please contact us if you have any special needs. Cornell Cooperative Extension is funded in part by Suffolk County through the Office of the County Executive and the County Legislature. Learn more at [ccesuffolk.org/marine](http://ccesuffolk.org/marine).*

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One Independence Hill • Farmingville • NY 11738 • Phone 631-451-6595

