



Douglas Manor Environmental Association

## WINTER 2017 • NEWSLETTER OF THE DMEA

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2016 was a year for the record books on so many levels. Extended droughts, eruptive politics and a neighborhood seemingly under siege. The good news is that the Shore Road project has finally emerged from the cocoon stage and is slowly - ever so slowly - becoming a reality. Remember that TV add featuring the Lethargic National Bank whose logo was "any day now, any day now"? We have been promised mitigation for the trees that were removed from Shore Road, amounting to approximately 75 replacements, 35 of which will be planted directly along Shore Road according to the wonderful design originated by Harriet Grimm, landscape architect and former Douglaston resident. After some wrangling and hissing we managed to get a tentative agreement from the contractor that the remaining 40 trees will be planted in the Manor, not other parts of Queens. We argued that we had lost a great many trees in Super Storm Sandy as well as subsequent storms and desperately needed our treescape restored.

We are also asking that mitigation include shrubs along Shore Road where soil retention is critical.

In addition to the Shore Road project, The DMEA has been investigating ways to encourage lawn services to avoid leaf blowers and the environmental degradation they cause. We are also looking into the practicality of bio swales or rain gardens as a means of diminishing rain water runoff going directly into the bay.

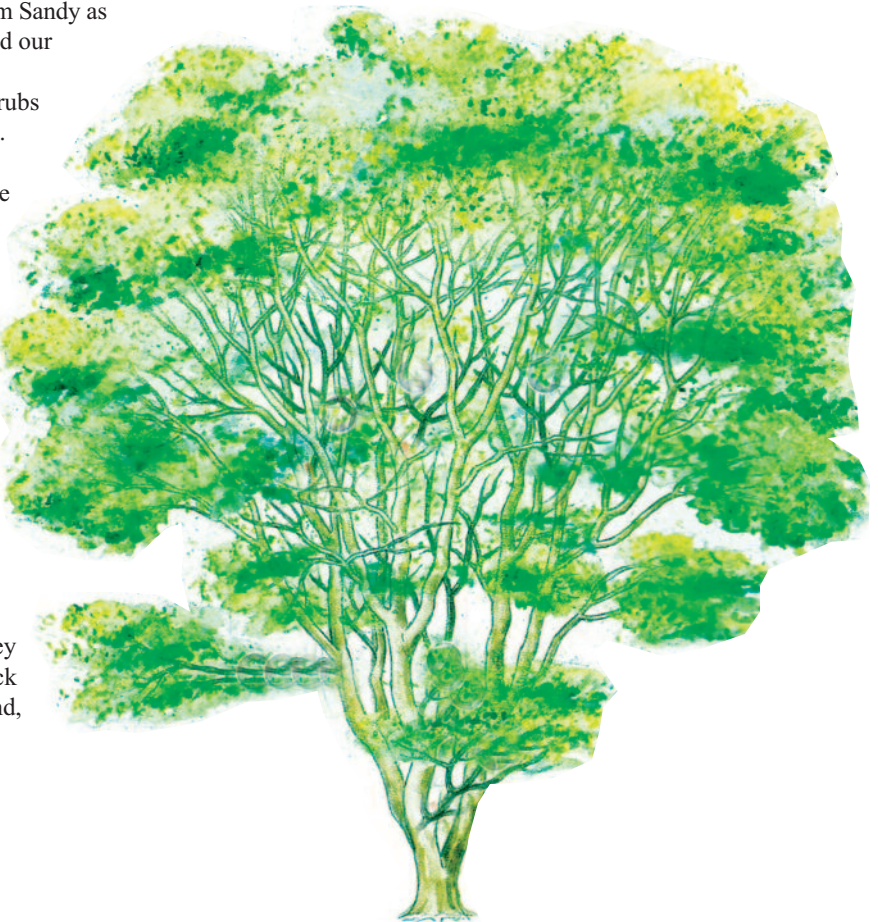
Although we did not receive the grant we applied for from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, we are continuing our efforts to restore the wetlands area north of Memorial Field with from local schools, Hofstra University and Senator Avella's office. We will apply again next year with fingers crossed.

We have also been addressing the Belgrave Outflow project - the big cement box with the sunflowers on it by Memorial Field. It seems they are planning an outflow pipe from the Great Neck water treatment plant that ends short of the Sound,

allowing treated effluent to flow back into our bay as the result of tidal action. We are petitioning to have the pipe extended further into the Sound to avoid that result.

We need to applaud the enormous effort being made by your neighbors who have volunteered their time and talents on behalf of all of us. No one expects a standing ovation, although I can think of a few of our neighbors who deserve one. What we do ask for is your financial support, reminding you that the DMEA is funded entirely by voluntary tax free donations. So please be generous in your support, showing those who take on our environmental challenges that they are really appreciated.

Sincerely,  
George Schmidt  
President



## COMPOSTING IS COMING TO THE MANOR!

Over the next few weeks, NYC Department of Sanitation will be dropping off a starter kit for organics collection at your home. It will include an indoor kitchen container, an outdoor bin, and an instructional brochure. (If you don't receive a set by January 2017, please call 311.)

Collect food scraps, food-soiled paper, and plants in your kitchen bin. This includes fruit, vegetables, meat, bones, dairy, pasta, bread and prepared foods. It also includes tea bags, coffee grounds, coffee filters, towels and napkins. You can also add in yard waste such as leaves, grass, plants. Please don't add pet waste, cigarettes, diapers or hygiene products.

Set the brown outdoor bin at the curb the night before your trash collection days. (In the Manor, trash is collected Monday and Thursday mornings).

If you are concerned with odors or pests, line your bin with a compostable bag, sprinkle baking soda inside the kitchen bin or store scraps in the freezer. The kitchen container is dishwasher safe.

The organic waste collected by the city is brought to local compost heaps to help grow plants or is turned into clean, renewable energy. Organic recycling is not only good for the environment, it also saves the city money. Nearly a third of the city's waste stream is made up of organic waste, according to a 2015 Sanitation Department report, and the city can save millions by reusing organic waste, rather than exporting it to landfills.

*—Mary Alice Dadras*



## BIG ROCK WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT

The proposed 6-acre Big Rock Wetland Restoration Project in Douglas Manor is the focus of a groundbreaking multi-faceted public school curriculum created in partnership with the Douglas Manor Environmental Association (DMEA), Public School 98Q in Douglaston and Middle School 67Q in Little Neck. The new curriculum, in which students will not only analyze and study the site over several years but also participate in the step-by-step creation of the restoration plan from design through actual construction, is the only one of its kind in the city.

On Saturday, December 3rd, more than 100 people, including public school students from both schools, their teachers and their parents, visited the site for the first time, gathering at Memorial Field in Douglas Manor at 1 pm for an afternoon of hands on scientific research.

Senator Tony Avella (D, NY) spoke at the kick-off ceremony. Walter Mugdan, president of the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee and an environmental lawyer with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, led the students on a walk for the group’s inaugural visit to the wetland site. Students were introduced in the field to the impacts of preservation, restoration, climate change, and water quality using the Big Rock Wetland Restoration Project site as their laboratory over several years of study.

The site visit will be the first for a reimagined Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math curriculum (STEM) that focuses on the Big Rock Wetland site and will involve more than 500 students and 16 teachers per year at both schools, for a three-year period, and for every grade starting with first grade. The curriculum was custom designed by the schools to dovetail specifically with the Big Rock Wetland Restoration Project.

The triangular shaped site is north of Memorial Field on the eastern shore of Udalls Cove. The northernmost tip of the site is marked by a distinct geological landmark known locally as “Big Rock,” an enormous boulder that is a survivor from the Ice Age.

The 6-acre site has about 2 acres of degraded tidal wetlands, the result of mid-20th century landfills that damaged this once diverse natural habitat. The proposed restoration will include selective removal of concrete riprap fill, removal of invasive Phragmites

reeds, and the re-introduction of native plantings and “living shoreline” plantings to strengthen the shoreline against storm surges and enhance wildlife habitat. The restoration will also improve water quality.

Development of the new STEM curriculum started earlier this year when the DMEA applied for a planning grant for restoration of the site. The DMEA invited both schools to become partners in the planning process, and partnered with other local civic groups as well for the grant application to the Long Island Sound Futures Fund (LISFF), a private non-profit. The restoration project also includes educational outreach to local residents and a broader regional audience through newspapers, social media and various events.

Although the DMEA did not receive an LISFF grant when they were awarded this fall, Senator Avella has pledged to seek funding for both planning the restoration of the site for the DMEA and funding for aspects of the STEM curriculum at the public schools.

In addition to partnering with PS 98Q and MS 67Q, the DMEA partnered on the restoration planning project with the Douglas Manor Association (DMA), the owner of the site; the Alley Pond Environmental Center (APEC); the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS); the NYC Parks Department; and the Department of Geology, Environment and Sustainability at Hofstra University. The Udalls Cove Preservation Committee is an enthusiastic supporter of the restoration project. The DMEA will co-sponsor events with each of the partners over the coming year, including inviting local residents to participate in developing the restoration plan through public meetings and open forum design planning sessions.

The education aspect of the Wetland Restoration Project is greatly important to the DMEA and to the success of the project. Students will continuously move forward with their observations, data collections, analysis, and determinations as the restoration project is developed. The student’s findings and conclusions will be used and distributed to the public at large. The STEM based wetland curriculum will not only expand students’ knowledge of this important ecosystem but will open up doors to the understanding of both the decline of a wetland and it’s revival, for all New Yorkers.



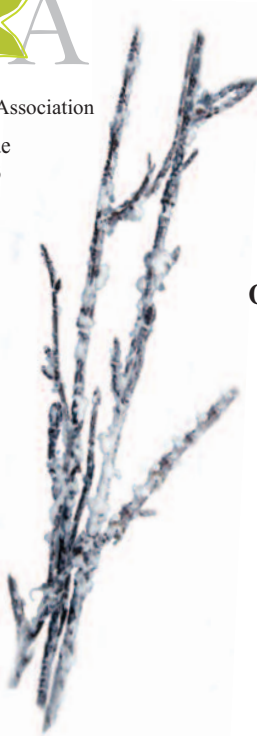


Douglas Manor Environmental Association

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**WINTERING LOCAL BIRDS**

Winter ecology focuses on the stresses that winter places on organisms and how this determines their energy use. Winter is a season of decreased energy – decreased solar, thermal and nutritional energy. In Northern regions where temperatures are low, the successful terrestrial and aquatic organisms elicit adaptations through evolutionary solutions that balance their energy supplies to live and reproduce. Snow cover of sufficient duration as part of the environment, is an important contributor to the overwintering success of organisms.

With this said, let us look at our natural world and the effects it has on the bird population in our area. One of the strategies for birds is to migrate where the weather is warmer and they can find a reliable food supply. How do they know when it is time to leave? Scientists are still researching this phenomenon, but many others see it as a yearly cycle of changes a bird goes through controlled by changes in the amount of daylight and the weather. Resident birds remain in their local habitats in the winter and find available sources of food such as seeds, berries, insect eggs and larva, green vegetation, mice and smaller birds. The red tailed hawk, a common bird of prey, can be seen in the meadow areas looking for rodents. Other common winter birds include cardinals, blue jays, woodpeckers, sparrows, nuthatches, hawks, owls, chickadees and gold finches. Bob white quails will huddle together to form a circle and all of them will face outwards to spot predators. Thickets of berry bushes like the native winter berry shrub produces many red berries keeping birds alive over winter. Evergreens like cedars, pines and spruces provide necessary cover and resting/sleeping areas.

Ducks, geese and swans have oil glands at the base of their

feathers that they spread to keep water away from the skin to keep them warmer. Some have efficient heat exchanges between the body and the feet. It's usually not the cold that causes water fowl to migrate but it's a shortage of food. Many birds can adjust their internal body temperature downward to reduce the temperature gradient with environmental temperatures, thus reducing heat loss. Shivering and growing 20-30 percent more feathers helps to maintain body temperatures in some birds.

Many people enjoy watching birds in winter at their bird feeders and suet cakes. Since we are losing important open space areas, this is a very helpful way to ensure the survival of bird life in urban areas.

Consider winter as a classroom and open your imagination and all your senses to this incredible season.

*–Aline Euler*

