

Making A Dent

Moriches Bay Project co-founders Laura Fabrizio and Aram Terchunian, whose nonprofit strives to improve the bay's water quality through multiple initiatives, are prime examples of how "the little guys" can, in fact, do their part to help turn the tide on pollution.

In addition to announcing plans to create two more oyster gardens, upping the number of such installations between Westhampton Beach and West Hampton Dunes villages to five, the organization shared that it will also start a water monitoring program this summer. That program, which will focus on the eastern side of the bay that begins in Quogue, is intended to help track whether or not their efforts, which have also included the installation of eelgrass beds in the past, is having an impact when it comes to improving water quality.

If all goes as planned, the digital monitors will continuously measure the amount of dissolved oxygen and the salinity of the water. They also will keep tabs on temperature and light exposure—things that have not yet been done on a regular basis in Moriches Bay. That work should also assist organizers in identifying what parts of the bay are in need of the most attention.

As noted by naysayers, these limited efforts will most likely not be enough, by themselves, to reverse the extensive damage caused by decades of pollution, and the over-harvesting of both fish and shellfish. Significant steps—the creation of sewer districts, upgrades for residential septic systems, reduction of nitrogen runoff and the like—are required to truly stem the incessant flow of contaminants.

But that does not mean that smaller initiatives, such as those being pursued by the Moriches Bay Project, should be discontinued. In fact, more should be undertaken, by different groups, until those in office take decisive action.

The two new oyster gardens set to be installed over the next two months will boast up to 20,000 shellfish combined. That means that, once created, they will help filter an estimated one million gallons of water in Moriches Bay every day. Or, in other words, one million more gallons than is now being filtered. It's a start.