

New town water quality sampling program to begin

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Darien is currently taking part in Save the Sound's Unified Water Study , a program that Darien first participated in last year. The program provides sophisticated testing equipment, at no cost to the town, and sampling methods to town's and environmental groups with bays and harbors along Long Island Sound.

UWS's mission is to assess the ecological health of Long Island Sound's bays and harbors. Testing of this sort already exists in Long Island Sound's open waters, but not in the coastal areas. Twenty-two other towns and environmentally concerned organizations have joined the United Water Study's effort in Connecticut and New York for 2018.

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The program began in Darien last year only at Darien Harbor. This year, the program has expanded to the towns two harbors, Darien Harbor and Cove Harbor.

This allows coverage of the waters next to beach, where samples will be taken from

n of Darien's coastal commission, which d the Board of Selectmen. Bill Cavers, Vice Chairman of the Darien Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters, said, "The selectmen as well as Darien's Health Department have been highly supportive of the program. In general, I'm surprised by the overwhelmingly wonderful collaboration this effort has been met with."

Cavers is excited to have several Darien groups that are strong partners in the effort from Darien High School for providing student volunteers, Darien Boat Club for providing a boat, and the Darien Nature Center for providing lab space for equipment and chemical

On-the-water sampling takes place two Saturdays a month at 6 a.m. from May through October. This year, Darien residents Bill Cavers, Gary Banks, Dave Sinclair, Camilla Kline, and Kelsey Vrooman have volunteered to take samples.

Participants use probes to test levels of dissolved oxygen, salinity, turbidity, and Chlorophyll *a*. Results are then sent to Save the Sound and will appear in an annual report on water quality in LIS bays and harbors. The Town of Darien's Health Department also receives the results and an end of year report will be presented to Darien's Board of Selectman each season.

The Commission on Coastal Waters does not focus on the health aspect of the program, but the

ecological side to then inform the public of their findings. Cavers hopes to continue to work on this program in order to gather long-term data that will allow the public and towns departments to work on any possible issues they find.

Bill Cavers believes this program is important for Darien residents and the environment since "Participation in UWS fits into the Coastal Commission's broader efforts to assist town officials in protecting the ecological health of Darien's coastline."

The Coastal Commission encourages any Darien residents to participate in the program. The more people that join the cause, the more the Unified Water Study can receive in depth knowledge for a town whose culture is largely dictated around life by the sound.

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