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# A $3 Million Investment

## Donation will seed restoration efforts in bay

BY MICHAEL WRIGHT

With tubs of growing shellfish bubbling with water drawn directly from Shinnecock Bay in the background, officials from the Stony Brook University School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences announced on Monday that the program has received $3 million in private donations that will seed a plan developed by scientists from the school to attempt to restore water quality, shellfish populations and marine life in the blighted western reaches of Shinnecock Bay.

Standing on the lawn at the university's Marine Sciences Research Center at the Stony Brook Southampton campus in Shinnecock Hills on Monday morning, deans and professors from the acclaimed school said they hoped the money, which comes from a donation by the Laurie Landeau Foundation and a matching grant from the Simons Foundation, will help the school conduct a restoration program guided by the strict fundamentals of science that will be held up in the future as model for other estuarine restorations around the country and the world.

"Too often restoration projects are not based on science," Laurie Landeau, an aquatic veterinarian and a member of the Dean's Council of SOMAS, told a large crowd of local officials, environmental activists and school scientists. "Let's demonstrate what science, together with a little well-placed financial support, can do to help the environment."

The restoration initiative will be led by a team of the school's marine science professors and students who have been working on western Shinnecock Bay for a decade, and have watched and documented its steady devolution into what one scientist said earlier this year has effectively become biological sterility.

The restoration efforts will focus primarily on boosting clam stocks—in massive amounts—expanding the presence of eelgrass beds in the bay and finding ways to battle the harmful algae blooms that have infected the western end of the bay for more than two decades.

The program will use the scientific data about conditions throughout the western end of the bay and observations from laboratories that Stony Brook scientists and students have compiled over a decade of close monitoring to target the project's efforts at the regions that are the most likely to boost success. The scientists have identified specific areas of the bay where shellfish and eelgrass beds stand the best chance of thriving and thus the best chance of helping, slowly, bring the bay back from the brink.

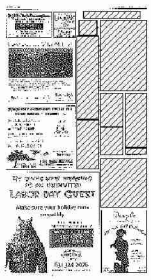
In the last two years, Stony Brook scientists have been at the forefront of a long list of discoveries about the problems facing western Shinnecock Bay. Two years ago, they were the first to sound the alarm about the presence of a red algae species that infects shellfish with biotoxins that can be harmful, even fatal, to humans, which has led to the closure of shellfish harvesting in the western portion of the bay two years in a row.

Last year, researchers from the school announced that they had, for the first time, charted the connections between the declining water quality in western Shinnecock, and other bays around Long Island, and the septic systems of residential homes within the bays' watersheds.

And just this spring, the school's researchers released the results of a study that showed that essentially none of the various shellfish species that inhabit the Shinnecock Bay—including millions placed there by environmentalists and local government programs in hopes that they would help jump-start natural population growth—had successfully spawned in its western half in recent years.

Along with their gloomy reports, scientists from the school said that the best hope for restoring the bay to its former glory is to halt the influx of nitrogen-laden water from residential septic systems and rain runoff carrying chemical fertilizers from lawns. But in trumpeting the new effort to turn around recent trends, naturally, the school's officials were brimming with hope.

"Despite all this gloom, I am actually an optimist," said Dr. Chris Gobler, a SOMAS professor who has led the researchers, first from Southampton College and now from Stony Brook, that have been monitoring the bay and its machinations for more than a



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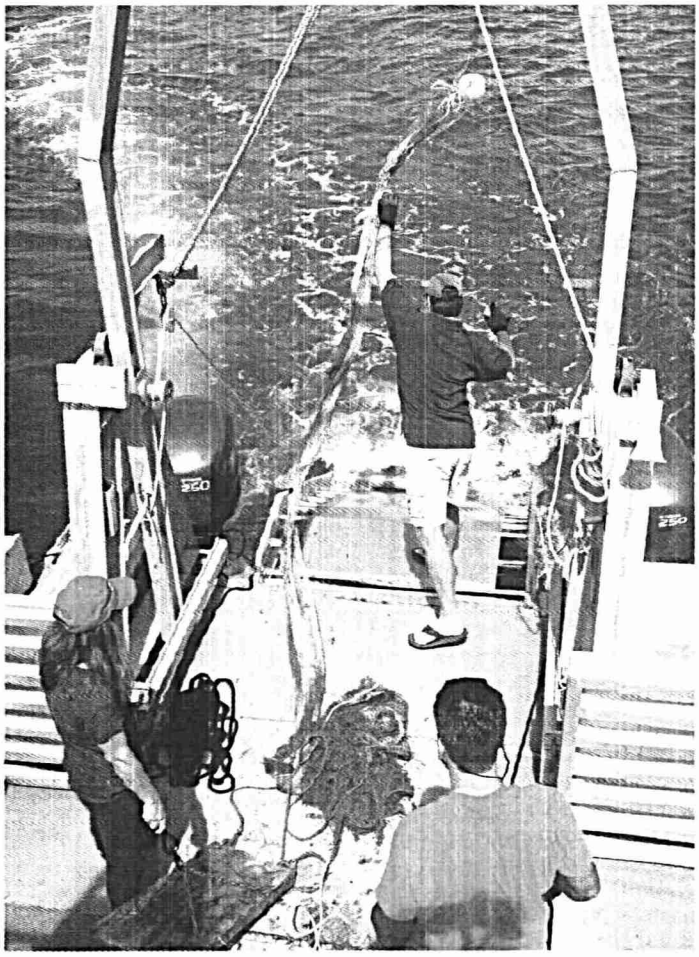
decade. "How exciting it would be if we can bring back this fabulous body of water to its previous productivity and health."



**Damien Chapman throws out a net during a trawling exercise on Shinnecock Bay following a press conference announcing a $3 million in donations to Stony Brook University for the Shinnecock Bay Restoration Program.** DANA SHAW PHOTOS

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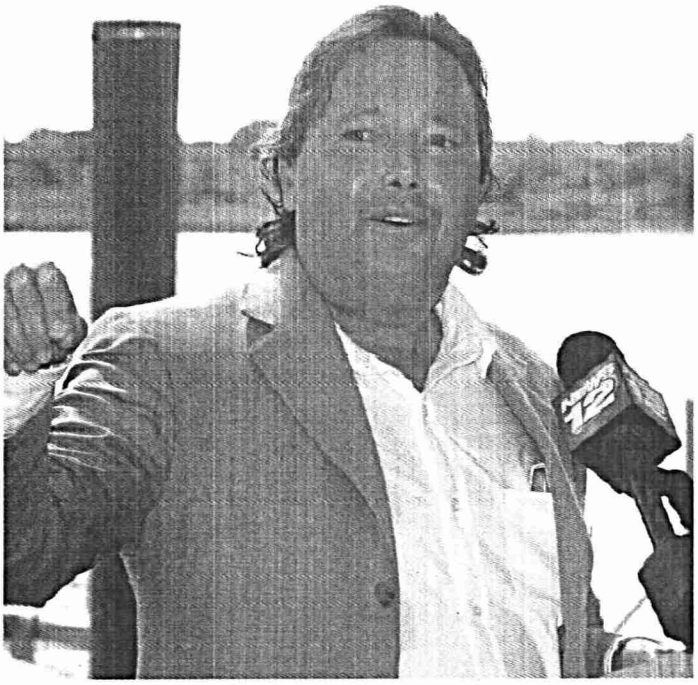

Richard Gelfond, chairman of the Stony Brook Foundation Board of Trustees, CEO of IMAX and Southampton Town resident.





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