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WRACK LINES is published twice a year or as resources allow by the Connecticut Sea Grant College Program at the University of Connecticut. Any opinions expressed therein are solely those of the authors.

There is no charge for Connecticut residents, but donations to help with postage and printing costs are always appreciated. Visit [seagrant.uconn.edu](http://seagrant.uconn.edu) for information.

Change of address, subscription information, cancellation requests, or editorial correspondence should be sent to the address below:

Connecticut Sea Grant  
Communications Office  
University of Connecticut  
1080 Shennecossett Rd.  
Groton, CT 06340-6048

CTSG-17-07  
ISSN 2151-2825 (print)  
ISSN 2151-2833 (online)



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From the EDITOR

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## IN THE FIELD WITH SEA GRANT

Talk to me. Please.

As the new communications coordinator for Connecticut Sea Grant, I have come into a distinct inheritance, one that it is my privilege and responsibility to help elevate to a new level of outreach for all the residents of this beautiful state. My predecessor, Communications Director Peg Van Patten, left me a highly respected publication in “Wrack Lines,” strong in content and attractive in design. As its new editor I want to build on that legacy while making my own mark.



For that I need your help.

In this my inaugural issue, I chose the theme of “In the Field With Sea Grant,” to let readers learn along with me about the interesting and important work being done by our staff and researchers. During my previous 25-plus years as a daily newspaper reporter and editor – most recently as the health and environment reporter for The Day of New London – going out with scientists to write stories about their field research was always my favorite part of the job. It gave me a chance to wade into marshes to measure sea level rise impacts, hike into dense forests in search of bears, and count river herring as they migrate upstream to spawn. Now I get to see that kind of real-world science in action at Sea Grant.

Since starting at Sea Grant in late July, I’ve been on boats twice, once to a site off Branford where seaweed is being grown for a testing project, and again into eastern Long Island Sound where marine scientists are researching how water chemistry changes with tidal flows. At a shellfish co-op I became acquainted with the unique equipment oyster farmers use. In a UConn lab I saw the intricate and painstaking process used to detect methylmercury in the tissue of small fish, clams and oysters. And at Hammonasset Beach State Park I joined teachers discovering how to bring marine science lessons into their classrooms. All these experiences were exhilarating, fascinating and enlightening. I gained new admiration for what it takes to do science that matters and apply it in the here and now.

My job is to communicate about that science in a way that best serves the public. This magazine is one of Sea Grant’s main vehicles for carrying out that mission, but with a few changes I believe it could be more effective. From my years as a reporter, I know the public is hungry for environmental news, but unfortunately coverage in many traditional journalism outlets has contracted. This magazine can be a better means of helping to fill that void. First, I am considering a new name. “Wrack Lines” – the term used by marine scientists for the line of seaweed, shells and other debris left at the high tide line – sounds to me too much like it’s a magazine just for insiders. How about calling it “Connecticut Coast and Currents” instead, to let environmental professionals and the general public alike know that this publication covers the shoreline and its great rivers that extend statewide?

I would also like to broaden the reach and appeal of the magazine, by bringing in new writers, different types of articles about issues still relevant to Sea Grant but also to a wider cross-section of readers, and making it available at more places. So please, share your ideas with me, and let me know if you’d be interested in a focus group I will be forming. If interested, contact me by January 15th. I can be reached at: [judy.benson@uconn.edu](mailto:judy.benson@uconn.edu).

Thank you and happy reading,



Judy Benson  
Editor

Front Cover: Teachers gather after a day of learning how to use Hammonasset Beach State Park as a science classroom. Photo: Judy Benson