

# EDITORIAL & COMMENTARY



Lesser Yellowlegs, Thursday, May 1, at Sandy Hook

SCOTT LONGFIELD

## IT'S YOUR TURN

### Letters to the Editor

#### NOAA: Not Just a Foul-Weather Coastal Friend

*By the American Shore & Beach Preservation Association*

Coastal residents may only know about NOAA – the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – at the worst of times, say, when the National Hurricane Center is talking about a major storm stirring things up offshore.

But NOAA plays a larger and more substantial role in U.S. coastal issues, and it's worth any coastal advocate's time to get to know more about the agency.

While NOAA is a relative newcomer to coastal concerns (having been formed in 1970), its roots go far back in the country's history – all the way to the National Coastal and Geodetic Survey formed in 1807. Drawn together from a number of existing agencies, NOAA was tasked to work "for better protection of life and property from natural hazards ... for a better understanding of the total environment ... [and] for exploration and development leading to the intelligent use of our marine resources."

It works through the following to accomplish those goals:

- **National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service:** Providing satellite and scientific data to provide information and conduct assessments. Thanks to this, we can keep an eye on weather systems, polar ice caps, ocean and land conditions and more – all from eyes hundreds of miles in the sky.
- **National Marine Fisheries Service:** Monitoring and maintaining marine habitat and species, including fishery management

and regulation to balance commercial and public needs. So, if you like to fish (or just like to eat those caught by someone else), these are the folks who fret about the state of the species. This arm weighs in on coastal permits as well, as those involved with beach restoration projects are aware.

- **National Ocean Service:** Home of the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, which includes many well-known coastal programs such as the Coastal Zone Management Program, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program and more. You'll also find the many state-based Coastal Ocean Observing Systems here. Also the source for nautical charts, tidal information, and a lot of coastal data (see "State of the Coast" below).

- **National Weather Service:** As the name implies they provide weather, water and climate data, forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property – issuing some 1.5 million forecasts and 50,000 warnings annually. The National Hurricane Center is housed here, of course.

- **Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research:** Focused on atmospheric, climate and ocean/coastal research to help others understand the natural processes at work here in hopes of achieving better forecasts, warnings and science. Drawing on the work done in the other offices, you'll find reports on ocean acidification, drought resilience, hurricane hunting and more/The National Sea Grant College Program is based here, which operates in 33 coastal states bringing coastal research closer to home.

- **Office of Program Planning and Integration:** A recent addition to the agency to foster integration and strategic management. NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) is here, as well as other regional and strategic collaborations.

If you're into coastal statistics and reports, be sure to check out NOAA's "State of the Coast" online compendium, teeming with tidbits such as:

- \$6.6 trillion – The contribution to U.S. GDP from coastal shoreline counties, just under half of the country's entire GDP in 2011. That would rank as the third largest GDP in the world if coastal counties were considered as an individual country.
- 51 million – The total number of jobs in U.S. coastal shoreline counties in 2011, which generate \$2.8 trillion in wages.
- 16.4 million – The approximate population residing in a coastal floodplain in 2010 (5 percent of the U.S. population) – and 12 percent of them have incomes below the poverty level.
- 39 percent – How much of the nation's total population lived in coastal shoreline counties in 2010 (the number has gone up since then, and doesn't include coastal watershed or coastal-adjacent counties which are typically used to calculate actual coastal population)... Those folks live on less than 10 percent of the total U.S. land area, which means coastal shoreline counties have a population density more than four times higher than the U.S. as a whole.

To see a thorough overview of NOAA's activities in your state, go to [www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS/](http://www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS/).

For a county-level view, go to [www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/snapshots](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/snapshots). Want to see how different sea level rise scenarios could impact your coastal area? See the NOAA-sponsored simulation at [csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/srviewer](http://csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/srviewer).

*Founded in 1926, by the American Shore & Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) advocates for healthy coastlines by promoting the integration of science, policies and actions that maintain, protect and enhance the coasts of America.*

#### New App Nips Invasives in the Bud

*By Michele S. Byers*

April showers, check. May flowers, on the way!

At last, it's the season of colorful blossoms in woods and meadows and along roadsides and backyard edges. But sometimes looks are deceiving. Such is often the case with invasive plants.

Non-native, invasive plants may seem every bit as glorious as New Jersey's native wildflowers. But, if you're a bird, insect or mammal looking for food, you may starve!

Native plants provide food for insects, which are themselves eaten by songbirds. Native plants also produce fruits and seeds that are eaten by birds, as well as leaves that are munched by white-tailed deer.

Many alien plants don't play a role in the local food chain. The birds don't like their seeds and berries, and the insects and deer barely touch their leaves. These non-indigenous plants can spread quickly, taking up large

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areas that would otherwise be occupied by a diversity of native species.

If you want to know which wild plants to yank from the ground and which to nurture, try out the new app offered by the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team.

The Strike Team is a nonprofit group dedicated to stopping the spread of invasive species whose presence is likely to damage the health of the environment. Each year the team creates a list of "target" species and asks our state's residents to be on the lookout for them.

Using a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Strike Team recently developed a smartphone app that makes it easy to identify and report invasive species.

After downloading the free "New Jersey Invasives" app through iTunes or Google Play, all you have to do is scroll through the images and descriptions of invasive species – and then keep an eye out. If you spot a plant that looks like one of the target species, simply snap a picture, enter some information about the habitat and submit. Your phone automatically tags the photo with GPS coordinates, so you don't have to worry about entering an exact location.

Strike Team experts will review all submissions. Once verified, input from the app will be entered into the Strike Team's statewide database, as well as a national database cataloging invasive species across the United States.

Widespread invasive plants in New Jersey include mugwort, garlic mustard, Oriental bittersweet, purple loosestrife, Japanese honeysuckle, lesser celandine, watercress, wine raspberry and linden viburnum. They're found all across this state we're in, making eradication a challenge.

Emerging threats to watch out for in 2014 include Japanese chaff flower, water wheel plant, Italian arum, blue plantain lily, Scotch broom, birchleaf pear, seaberry, mock-orange, Spanish bluebells, purple stemmed dodder and blackberry lily.

Join the Strike Team and enlist your phone in the fight against invasive species! The Strike Team will appreciate your help – and so will native plants and the diverse wildlife that depends on them.

The Strike Team will hold a number of workshops around the state this spring and summer to demonstrate how to use the app. The team also plans to release a second app this summer, which will allow landowners to track and monitor eradication activities.

To learn more about the apps, visit the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team website at [www.njisst.org](http://www.njisst.org).

And for more information on preserving land and natural resources in New Jersey, visit the New Jersey Conservation Foundation website at [www.njconservation.org](http://www.njconservation.org) or contact me at [info@njconservation.org](mailto:info@njconservation.org).

*Michele S. Byers is the executive director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.*



COURTESY DORN'S CLASSIC IMAGES

#### Two River Moment

Madam Marie's, mentioned in the lyrics of Bruce Springsteen's "4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)," was the longest tenant on the Boardwalk in Asbury Park, from 1932 until her death in 2008 at age 93. Her real name was Marie Castello. This photo was taken during the 1970s.