

*New York Sea Grant expertise is helping to increase the climate action capacity of communities across New York State through a new Climate Stewards training program.*

## **Cornell Climate Stewards Program: Building Capacity for Local Action by NY Communities**

Climate change poses significant risks to communities across New York State. Although the State's Climate Smart Community Certification Program (CSCCP) incentivizes local climate action by providing benefits and recognition to participating municipalities, local governments frequently cite limited staff time and funding as significant barriers to climate action.



To build community-level capacity for climate action, New York Sea Grant, worked with Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), researchers, students, and many partners, through a rigorous three-year (2018-2021) process to develop a Cornell Climate Stewards Program. The National Institute for Food and Agriculture, federal Extension Smith-Lever dollars, and a pilot grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority provided funding.

In 2020, NYSG extension expertise helped develop climate-focused, science-based curricula. In early 2021, NYSG held a train-the-trainer program with CCE educators from six counties in preparation for conducting a pilot program with community participants in the fall. Due to COVID-19, this training and the 12-week pilot program were adapted to an online format. The six CCE county educators selected the first cohort of Climate Stewards based on applications. NYSG specialists taught classes covering climate science, climate impacts, and environmental justice, and assisted with the localized cohorts in New York City and Ulster County.

Fifty-two individuals completed the 12-week program and designed projects to support climate action in their respective communities based on interests, abilities, and community need. The first Cornell Climate Stewards represented communities within Dutchess, Monroe, Seneca, Tompkins, and Ulster counties and New York City.

*“What an opportunity for the motivated!  
World-class Cornell scientists and educators.  
A collection of well-screened references. Hand-selected co-participants.  
But you have to work at it or this opportunity is squandered.”  
— Richard Mattocks,  
Cornell Climate Stewards Program participant, Dutchess County*

*Learn more at <https://climatestewards.cornell.edu/>.*

### **Project Partners:**

- Cornell Cooperative Extension: Dutchess, Monroe, Seneca, Tompkins, Ulster counties; New York City

---

#### **NYSG Focus Area for this project: Resilient New York Communities and Economies.**

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.  
Contact: New York Sea Grant Extension, 112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; [www.nyseagrant.org](http://www.nyseagrant.org).  
*Project summary written by NYSG Hudson Estuary Specialist Jessica Kuonen, 845-340-3983, [jak546@cornell.edu](mailto:jak546@cornell.edu), and NYSG Coastal Resilience Specialist-Jamaica Bay Katie Graziano, 718-951-5415, [kag247@cornell.edu](mailto:kag247@cornell.edu).*