

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Closure Memo**

To: Jessica Lillquist
From: Dana Rushton
Date: April 5, 2018

Project: Audubon WildLife Guards – A Coastal Stewardship and Youth Conservation Training Program (CT)
Number: 1401.16.053864
Grantee: National Audubon Society, Inc.

Project Description:

The project will engage students and municipal employees in ways reduce disturbance to coastal nesting areas birds such as Least and Common Tern, American Oystercatcher, and Piping Plover; and conduct public outreach to 3,000 visitors at Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The grantee will address the need to manage beach and dune habitat for coastal birds while increasing appreciation and understanding of the value of natural resources by the public in a populated area of Long Island Sound. The project will: 1) Employ 10 high school students as summer WildLife Guards to monitor and steward nests and conduct public outreach along 1.25 miles of shoreline; 2) provide a workshop about the natural resources and ecological value of the beach for 25 municipal employees; 3) Engage 150 volunteers in three hands-on events organized by the WildLife Guards. Hands-on activities may include: a beach cleanup, planting native flora, playing Wildlife Jenga, and a craft project using marshmallows to create a Piping Plover; 4) Ask visitors to take the “Be a Good Egg” pledge to give nesting birds space and to keep the beach trash-free; and 5) Produce regular Facebook posts about the WildLife Guards, beach-nesting birds, and the Sound. The end result is a Pleasure Beach that all of Bridgeport’s residents can enjoy and where birds can nest successfully. Project partners: Audubon Connecticut, City of Bridgeport, and the Roger Tory Peterson Institute (RTPI).

Final Products:

Employ 10 high school students as summer WildLife Guards to monitor and steward nests and conduct public outreach along 1.25 miles of shoreline

- Employed 12 high school students in Bridgeport and West Haven to serve as WildLife Guards for summer 2017 at Pleasure Beach and Sandy Point.
 - Guards received an initial week of intense training and then continued to learn about natural resources of Long Island Sound from their crew leaders, Audubon and RTPI staff, and via education field trips during the following six weeks of the program.
 - Guards put in 1,461 person-hours monitoring beach-nesting birds and engaging visitors to Pleasure Beach and Sandy Point.
- WildLife Guards monitoring program implemented on 53.61 acres of beach, dune, and shoreline habitat.

- The efforts of the WildLife Guards contributed to 100 Piping Plover fledged statewide, which is the fourth highest number of fledglings since the State began monitoring the population (1986) and is indicative of a growing population.
 - One pair of federally threatened Piping Plover at Pleasure Beach fledged two chicks, while at Sandy Point seven pairs of Piping Plover fledged five chicks.

Provide a workshop about the natural resources and ecological value of the beach for 25 municipal employees

- Audubon Connecticut provided training to 13 Bridgeport Parks and Recreation staff (Water taxi crew, lifeguards, beach supervisors, and other staff at Pleasure Beach).
 - Those who participated in the training reported talking to visitors about the beach-nesting birds; asked visitors to stay out of string fencing areas and to pick up trash that attracts predators; and even months later, were still able to name beach-nesting birds and identify threats to the birds and actions that beachgoers can take to help them nest successfully.
 - Audubon staff and volunteers spent 701 person-hours at these two locations, for a total of 2,162 person-hours of stewardship.

Engage 150 volunteers in three hands-on events organized by the WildLife Guards. Hands-on activities may include: a beach cleanup, planting native flora, playing Wildlife Jenga, and a craft project using marshmallows to create a Piping Plover

- Engaged 102 volunteers who participated in two “learn about birds” and beach clean-up.
- Conducted three events to give the public an opportunity to participate in conservation efforts and habitat improvements at Pleasure Beach. The events entailed:
 - A Live Bird of Prey show with Horizon Wings, focused on teaching the public about birds and actions they can take that benefit birds.
 - Planting a variety of native perennials and shrubs in the garden around the flag pole. Crew leaders researched and purchased native plants that would do well in the coastal zone and the West Haven crew and another group of high school students working for the summer at our Bent of the River Audubon Center made the trip to Pleasure Beach to assist.
 - Beach clean-up, a lesson in how improperly disposed trash can end up along the shores of Long Island Sound.
- Outreach to the public and the City of Bridgeport Parks and Recreation staff about Pleasure Beach, Sandy Point, Long Island Sound and its natural resources.

Ask visitors to take the “Be a Good Egg” pledge to give nesting birds space and to keep the beach trash-free; and produce regular Facebook posts about the WildLife Guards, beach-nesting birds, and the Sound.

- Guards had face-to-face conversations with 703 people and reached additional members of the public through their website (429 visitors) and Facebook page (70 people reached/post, 6250 views of content), via articles on the Audubon CT and RTPI websites (1153 page views) and in Audubon’s monthly e-newsletter (distributed to 10,000 people with an open rate of 25.7%), and via posts to the Audubon CT, Audubon CT at Stratford Point, Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds, and RTPI facebook pages (more than 30,000 views of content).
- Overall, 4,855 people with knowledge

- This includes the number of people who learned about beach-nesting birds and Long Island Sound via face to face conversation; via the WildLife Guards, Audubon CT and RTPi websites; and via our e-newsletter (distributed to 10,000 people, open rate of 25.7%, so 2570 people with increased knowledge). If Facebook impressions were included, the number would be 41,105.

LISFF award: \$34,997.00
LISFF funds spent: \$34,997.20
Match requirement: \$48,640.65
Match spent: \$48,640.65