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South Street Seaport and DEP Open New Hands-On Aquatic "Wet Lab" for Students



Commissioner David Tweedy helps to open the new Living Harbor Wet Lab on the deck of the *Peking*.

Acting Commissioner David B. Tweedy of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today the opening of the newly renovated Living Harbor Wet Lab on the *Peking*, an early 20th century sailing vessel that is part of the South Street Seaport Museum. The Wet Lab is a collaborative effort of the South Street Seaport Museum and the DEP, and will serve as a hands-on classroom where students can learn about the Harbor and the environment.

Tweedy this morning joined Museum Executive Director Paula Mayo and Dr. Julia Rankin, Director of Science Education for the Department of Education, for an opening ceremony and ribbon-cutting aboard the *Peking*. Also in attendance were students from PS 116 in Manhattan, who took part in an education program on water testing, aquatic organisms and various nautical activities.

"This new laboratory uses New York Harbor and the South Street Seaport as an educational resource to help students learn about the region's remarkable natural features," said Acting Commissioner Tweedy. "People often forget that we

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are surrounded by water in one of the world's most vital estuaries. We live at the confluence of two major rivers, New York Bight and the Long Island Sound, and the waters around us teem with wildlife and economic activity. The new Living Harbor Wet Lab will expose more of our young people to these opportunities and will also help them appreciate the environment around them."



DEP Research Scientist/Environmental Educator Doreen Bader teaches students from PS 116 in Manhattan about aquatic life and how people's actions affect the environment.

South Street Seaport Museum Executive Director Paula Mayo said, "The Wet Lab aboard the historic ship *Peking* first began in 1998 as a 'holding tank' for sea creatures fished out of the East River during school sails. In our efforts to prove to the students that there really was life down there, crew members of the Schooner Pioneer trawled during education programs under sail, and showed the students their findings. The Wet Lab in those days was primitive at best and its regular occupants consisted of a seahorse and one very cranky hermit crab. Today, with the support of the DEP, the current lab is a warm and inviting space for children and their families, filled with information, a knowledgeable staff and sea creatures. Each student who visits will have the opportunity for a truly a hands-on experience. The Lab helps to reinforce something New Yorkers frequently forget – Manhattan is an island, with water all around us. We are very grateful for the support of the Department of Environmental Protection for this unique Museum program."

Dr. Julia Rankin said, "This is another example of the tremendous impact that public and private partnerships can have. As we work to significantly upgrade the quality of science instruction in New York City public schools, we want to support and expand these opportunities for both our teachers and our 1.1 million students. A quality science education in the 21 st century requires students to have a broad understanding of the world in which we live and the potential we all have to influence life in our neighborhoods and around the planet."

The DEP and the Museum have collaborated on a number of different initiatives in recent years, including an outreach program that began last year and which distributes information to visitors about the City's various water quality protection programs. DEP educators have also worked with Museum staff to conduct several educational workshops on the *Peking*. In 2001, DEP worked with the Museum on and exhibit called *Healing Waters*. The partnership on the Wet Lab project came about as a result of this longstanding

relationship.

“ The Wet Lab’s focus on the Harbor and its indigenous marine life made this project an especially good fit for DEP because of the agency’s crucial role in maintaining harbor water quality,” said Acting Commissioner Tweedy. “This venue will help highlight the success the City has experienced in reviving its harbor water quality, as well as other ongoing environmental initiatives, such as the massive reduction in floatable trash and the effectiveness of wastewater treatment technology at the DEP’s 14 wastewater treatment plants.”