



Connecticut NEMO Program

Program Initiated: October, 1991

How the Program Developed

The original NEMO Program, still going strong after a decade, developed from work being done by the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) National Estuary Program on coastal nitrogen pollution.

Working together for the first time on the LISS Nonpoint Source Working Group, University of Connecticut (UConn) Cooperative Extension land use and water quality educators linked up with the UConn Laboratory for Earth Resource Information Systems, which had just created the first satellite-derived land cover map of Connecticut.

This new and unique information, incorporated into educational programs using geographic information system technology, became the informational foundation of NEMO. The other major element of the program was its tight focus on municipal land use decision makers as the target audience. With support from the USDA/CSREES Water Quality Initiative, NEMO was able to develop slowly, testing educational methods in three pilot coastal communities before broadening the program.

How/Where NEMO Works

NEMO has evolved in many ways since its inception. Typically, NEMO has expanded from the basic presentation developed in the pilot towns to over a dozen educational modules covering many different aspects of natural resource-based community planning, including open space planning, community resource inventories, wetlands protection, watershed planning and designing

development to reduce the impacts of impervious surfaces. Geographically, NEMO has long been a statewide program: over two-thirds of the 169 communities in Connecticut have participated in a NEMO educational workshop. The most important change to the program, however, has been the development of the *Municipal Initiative*, in which one town in each of Connecticut's five major watersheds is selected each year to work with the NEMO Team on an intensive basis. The "Muni," which has been incredibly successful at fostering local change, is supported by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Section 319 Nonpoint Source Program. Additional support comes from NEMO's two major partners, the Connecticut

Sea Grant College Program and UConn Cooperative Extension.

Accomplishments

NEMO has been the catalyst for planning, policy and practice changes at all levels of Connecticut government. At the state level, NEMO is referenced in, and NEMO principles have been incorporated into, the State Plan of Conservation and Development, the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Plan, the "6217" Coastal Nonpoint Source Plan, and the upcoming State Stormwater Guidance Manual. NEMO is an important part of Connecticut's plan to assist communities covered under the Stormwater Phase II permitting program.

However, it's at the all-important local level that the program has had the most impact. Catalyzed by NEMO educational programs and information, towns throughout Connecticut have changed their land use plans, regulations, policies and procedures. New multi-commission task forces have been created to address growth related issues in a coordinated fashion. Watershed plans have led to unprecedented inter-town cooperation. Natural resource inventories have been



(from top) Town leaders and local developer pose with NEMO coordinator Laurie Giannotti at new, water-friendly subdivision in Old Saybrook. Old Saybrook NEMO Task Force works on open space maps. Old Saybrook redevelopment project reducing impervious surfaces.

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conducted, to help identify and prioritize areas worthy of protection.

Comprehensive town plans have been revised to more specifically outline the goals of protecting water resources and community character. Open space plans to guide the protection of natural areas and working farmland have been created, and many hundreds of acres of these lands have been placed in permanent conservation.

Zoning and subdivision regulations have been changed to minimize the impact of new development, through fostering of innovative development design that requires stormwater “best management practices” that conserve green space and protect water. Taken together, these new policies and

practices are changing the way that Connecticut's local leaders plan and build their communities. Old Saybrook (*below*) is one example.

The Future

Ten years after its first pilot presentation, CT NEMO is going strong and providing inspiration to the entire National Network. The program is committed to the practice and philosophy of fostering change “one town at a time.” And it works—the number of local impacts is snowballing, as more and more towns provide examples of ways to grow while protecting their natural resources. Finding the resources to service the growing number of towns requesting assistance is the key future challenge for the NEMO “Mother Ship.”

Spotlight on *Old Saybrook, CT*

Old Saybrook joined the Municipal Initiative in 2000, and with the help of NEMO staff the town's multi-commission NEMO Task Force is spearheading an overhaul of town land use plans and regulations. Natural resource and economic resource inventories have been conducted, local road standards are being revised, and the Board of Selectmen has put forth a policy statement on development that has already resulted in the town's first water-friendly innovative subdivision.

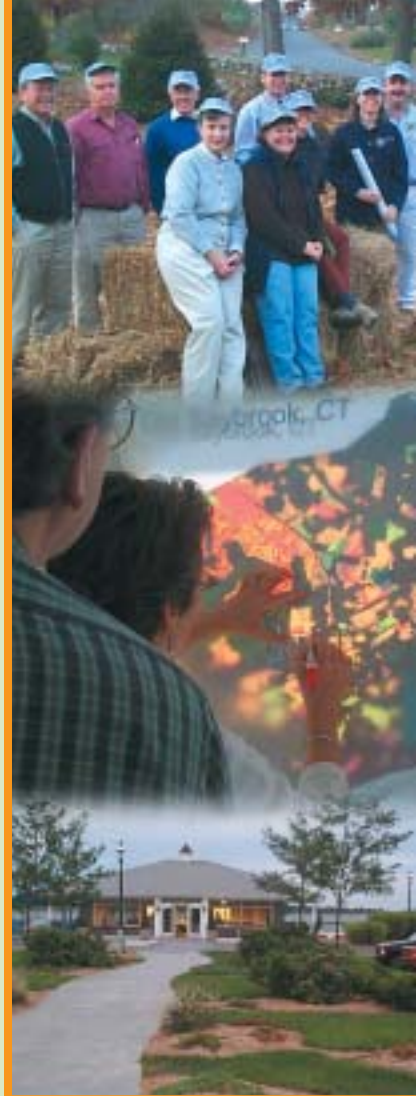
Excerpts from Old Saybrook's Policy Statement on Development:

It is the desire of the Board of Selectmen to encourage the use of design standards . . . that will maintain and enhance the character of the Town [and] minimize potential impacts to the environment . . . The specific objectives of the Board are to:

1. Reduce increases in volume, velocity and rates of stormwater runoff.
2. Minimize erosion and sedimentation of wetlands, watercourses and drainage systems.
3. Minimize the potential for increased frequency and severity of flooding.
4. Minimize potential for stream channel and floodplain changes.
5. Minimize the potential for reduction in groundwater recharge and reduction of stream base flows.
6. Minimize the discharge of pollutants to wetlands and watercourses.

On the Web at: nemo.uconn.edu

Connecticut NEMO is a charter member of the National NEMO Network.



Program Partners

University of Connecticut
Sea Grant

University of Connecticut
Cooperative Extension

University of Connecticut
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