

June 7, 2011

newsday.com

Editorial

A victory for the environment

Published: June 6, 2011 7:09 PM



Photo credit: Newsday/J. Conrad Williams Jr. | [Oyster Bay](#) constable and [Nassau](#) police watch clambers on Saturday, June 4, in [Hempstead Harbor](#).

The reopening of 2,500 acres of Hempstead Harbor to clamming is good news not only to those who harvest and consume clams. We can all rejoice that even the vast environmental problems that closed it can be fixed if citizens and governments work together.

A 1971 Newsday investigation posed this question: "Who's Killing Hempstead Harbor?" There were many culprits: sewage treatment plants in Glen Cove and Roslyn, sand mining, heavy industry, and rain that carried oil and other surface contaminants to the harbor.

But in the mid-1980s, a citizens group, the Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor, began to push government. Then, in 1995, nine municipalities -- the towns of Oyster Bay and North Hempstead, the City of Glen Cove, five villages and Nassau County -- formed the Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee, a pioneering effort. And they collaborated with the state's departments of State and Environmental Conservation and the federal [Environmental Protection Agency](#).

Since the 1971 story, some remedial actions were huge, like closing the Roslyn sewer plant, upgrading the Glen Cove plant, and cleaning up Superfund sites. Others were smaller, like GeesePeace, a program to cut the amount of [Canada](#) geese droppings.

It all added up to success. A lot remains to be done: The inner harbor is still closed to clamming. But the return of clambers last week is a sign that we really can clean our precious waters -- a work that is never finished.