

# LIGHTHAWK

## WAYPOINT

SUCCESS STORIES FROM ABOVE

February 2009, Issue 26

LightHawk's monthly update, WayPoint, was created to share some of the good news we on staff learn about daily. These success stories illustrate the critical role we play in conservation efforts throughout North and Central America through the unique perspective of flight. We hope you enjoy WayPoint and will share with others our success stories from above.

### Flights Benefit America's Nurseries of the Sea



LightHawk Volunteer Pilots Joe Fischetti and Mike McNamara (kneeling 3rd and 4th from left) flew two rounds of Restore America's Estuaries members over Narragansett Bay demonstrating how the aerial perspective enhances its partners' ability to monitor, document and share information on estuaries health and rehabilitation. Eastern Program Manager Kelley Tucker (kneeling 2nd from left) organized LightHawk's involvement in the conference and flights for RAE. Photo: Laura Wainer/Save San Francisco Bay

disseminates resources, tools, and methods to assist restoration specialists. It also holds a national conference every year that brings together, non-profits, government agencies, and industry to discuss restoration needs, challenges, and progress.

Business 101 teaches that good partnerships are the key to building networks and new relationships. This was true for LightHawk when partner Save The Bay, Narragansett Bay introduced us to a group with national reach: *Restore America's Estuaries*.

Last fall, on a perfect October morning, nine non-profit organizations dedicated to estuary protection in the U.S. came together to learn about and fly with LightHawk. The groups are charter members of *Restore America's Estuaries* (RAE), a group that works to preserve the nation's network of estuaries – the nurseries of the sea - by protecting and restoring the lands and waters essential to the richness and diversity of coastal life.

RAE includes eleven independent non-profits from around the U.S. who work in their own regions. As a national organization, RAE does several things. It supports on-the-ground restoration efforts in key areas and collects and disseminates resources, tools, and methods to assist restoration specialists. It also holds a national conference every year that brings together, non-profits, government agencies, and industry to discuss restoration needs, challenges, and progress.



Volunteer Pilot Joe Fischetti leads a pre-flight briefing for Restore America's Estuaries members at Quonset State Airport, Rhode Island. Photo: Elsa Carlisle/RAE

federal and Rhode Island state law. Beds of eelgrass provide a nursery for fish and shellfish and food for diverse organisms, filter contaminants from water, and control coastal erosion – all invaluable assets for human communities. Working with staff from the University of Rhode Island, STB is updating an inventory of eelgrass beds. Since 1996 they've been successfully restoring eelgrass in 12 Narragansett Bay salt marshes. The view from above allows them to measure their success and identify areas for follow up in a way they could never do from the ground or on a boat.

Volunteer Pilots Joe Fischetti and Mike McNamara met Eastern Region Program Manager Kelley Tucker in the early morning at Quonset State Airport. After a thorough briefing of the day's flight plan, the fun began as passengers loaded the planes and aircraft engines roared to life for two separate tours around Narragansett Bay guided by Save The Bay (STB). Looking down at the expanse of Narragansett Bay from the window of those small aircraft, conservationists visiting from as far away as Texas, Louisiana, and the Pacific coast witnessed first-hand Save The Bay's work and the value of LightHawk flights as a tool for monitoring, documenting, and sharing it with the public.

In 2007, STB tapped LightHawk to begin conducting aerial monitoring of eelgrass throughout Narragansett Bay. A critical marine resource, eelgrass is currently protected by



LightHawk partner Save the Bay is protecting and restoring salt marsh ecosystems, like this one at Walker Farm, throughout Narragansett Bay. Photo: Marci Cole/Save the Bay/LightHawk

Passenger Doug Myers, Director of Science for People for Puget Sound noted, "This flight allowed me to consider the types of information and perspective we need to gain for our restoration sites and for broader Puget Sound conservation, and, how future coordination with LightHawk could further the goals of our organization and its mission."

Honoring the value of LightHawk's donated flights to estuary restoration in the East, LightHawk was recognized as a sponsor at the 4th National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration held in Providence, Rhode Island. At the conference, Tucker met with attendees who lauded LightHawk's engagement with coastal and estuarine issues. And by providing support to the conference, LightHawk generated a great deal of interest in future partnerships with other RAE member organizations around the nation.

It looks like the beginning of another beautiful relationship.



Restore America's Estuary members from as far away as Texas and Louisiana participated in LightHawk aerial surveys during the RAE annual conference. Many are now considering how LightHawk's support can help the estuary monitoring and restoration in their regionals. Photo: Laura Wainer/Save San Francisco Bay

"Perfect weather, perfect pilots, perfect organization, perfect experience for RAE and our member organizations! Thank you again for this amazing opportunity. Looking forward to more."

--Steve Emmett-Mattox, Strategic Programs Lead, Restore America's Estuaries

"My eyes were swelled with tears for the beginning of the journey-I was amazed at how beautiful the Bay looked. Coming from SF Bay and seeing another Bay on the other side of the country from above, yet so close to the ground, was breathtaking. I can see this resource being useful to STB and our projects in the south bay working on salt pond restoration. We can easily look at hydrologic connectivity, wildlife movement corridors, seed dispersal and sediment deposition from above. Will really help in our planning process of where to begin in some sites. Thanks again!"

--Laura Wainer, Save San Francisco Bay



### *Celebrate 30 Years* **On the Wings of LightHawk**

Join this gathering of LightHawk Volunteer Pilots, conservation partners and friends to celebrate 30 years of flying for the environment.

Hear stories about the early days of LightHawk and a plane named, "Emily," reconnect with fellow flyers and enjoy the beauty of Santa Fe, New Mexico a city celebrating its 400th anniversary.

**October 9-11, 2009. Santa Fe, New Mexico**

Call Bev at 207-699-4145 or email [bgabe@lighthawk.org](mailto:bgabe@lighthawk.org) to reserve your spot today.



## **About LightHawk**

Founded in 1979, LightHawk is a nonprofit, volunteer pilot-based organization that flies environmental missions in collaboration with with a large network of pilots and hundreds of partner organizations throughout Central and North America. LightHawk flights provide a powerful and effective platform for research, groundtruthing, environmental awareness, and education.

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