

BOATS BUILD KIDS



BY ROCKING THE BOAT

The South Bronx is not generally regarded as a center of marine ecology, but don't tell that to the team at Rocking the Boat. This spunky nonprofit organization has been around since 2001, doing cutting edge environmental work on the Bronx River, a tributary leading to the Atlantic Ocean via the Long Island Sound. Inner-city high school students participating in Rocking the Boat perform research that keeps local waterways healthy, and they do so using brightly colored, traditional wooden boats they've hand-built from scratch with their peers.

How is Rocking the Boat empowering kids to care about the natural world they never realized was hidden beyond the housing projects and waste transfer stations in their neighborhood? By keeping it real. Students come every day after school to put on life jackets, grab their oars, and launch their fleet of wooden boats. They row to project sites up and down the Bronx River: the oyster reef and seaweed farm where native species help filter excess nutrients caused by overflows due to New York City's century-old sewer system; the eel mops that temporarily waylay young eels migrating from the ocean, predicting their arrival to the upper Bronx River; the wetlands that help to mitigate the impact of rainwater washing hydrocarbons off the streets and into the water. In the summer, these same students test their mettle during a week-long sail on the Long Island Sound.

Supporting much of this work are grant-making foundations, government agencies, and environmentally focused corporate sponsors, but individuals are the anchor of Rocking the Boat's donor base. An annual fundraising event featuring a circumnavigation of Manhattan is just one of the many ways that people contribute to Rocking the Boat's success.

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AT ROCKING THE BOAT, KIDS DON'T JUST BUILD BOATS, BOATS BUILD KIDS.