

# News Release



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## **Meadowlands Senior Citizens to Participate in Videoconferences About the Environment**

***Project sponsored by Ramapo College and the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission's Meadowlands Environment Center***

LYNDHURST - Senior citizens in the Meadowlands will be asking, "Should I tell my children and grandchildren to eat the fish and crabs they catch?" The question will be posed in a series of interactive videoconferences sponsored by Ramapo College of New Jersey and the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission's Meadowlands Environment Center in the month of June.

The senior citizens at the Clara Maass Continuing Care Center (Kearny), United Senior Center (Hackensack), Secaucus Senior Center and the Lyndhurst Public Library for this special program will be among the first Meadowlands area residents to participate in this new outreach effort. The program was piloted in March at the Daughters of Miriam Center in Clifton and the Northeast Bergen Senior Center in Midland Park and now is ready to reach a larger audience of older adults.

Called the Senior Environmental Experiences (SEE), it is funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Internet videoconferencing will connect senior citizens at the community centers, library and extended care facility to scientists and environmental educators at the Meadowlands Environment Center, a unique ecosystem in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. The program fosters an ongoing dialogue between the seniors and the scientists.

"The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission takes great pride in the announcement that the first module of Project SEE, focused on this important issue, is now ready for presentation in the Meadowlands District," said Susan Bass Levin, Chair of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission and Commissioner of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. "This is another example of how synergy between New Jersey's world-class centers of education, like Ramapo and the Meadowlands Environment Center, can take the latest research of our top professionals and translate it into real-world expertise for our residents. This is also part of a specific attempt by the NJMC to bolster efforts by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and environmental advocates to make the public aware of the continuing dangers of eating fish that are still contaminated from the mistakes of the past and urging strategic problem-solving to heal our ecosystems."

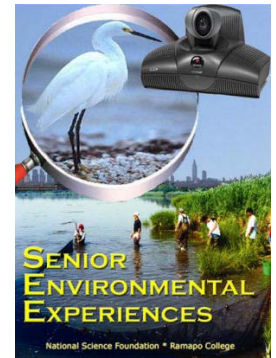
The goal of the program is to increase the interest of senior citizens in environmental issues by linking science to history and politics. SEE consists of four modules related to the natural history, ecosystem structure, and future of the Meadowlands that will pose questions to spur participants' thinking about scientific processes. The second module in Project SEE ("*What is a Black Crown Night Heron and Would I Want One in the Backyard?*") will be available for presentation in September. Interested facilities possessing a connection to the Internet should contact Dr. Angela Cristini at (201) 684-7724.

Dr. Angela Cristini, a professor of biology at Ramapo College was awarded a \$462,002 grant by the NSF to coordinate the three-year project with the Meadowlands Environment Center. SEE is expected to reach approximately 4,500 senior citizens in 32 centers throughout New Jersey. The grant also allows for the production of video versions of the four modules in the program to be made available to facilities across the state and country. Although the tapes won't allow for live interaction with the scientists, planners and engineers in the Meadowlands, they will serve as a model to introduce more senior citizens to this unique ecosystem.



The New Jersey Meadowlands  
Commission's *Meadowlands Environment  
Center and Ramapo College of New Jersey*  
Present:

**SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERIENCES**



**FACT SHEET: BACKGROUND**

**Senior Environmental Experiences**

A grant funded by the National Science Foundation, SEE or *Senior Environmental Experiences* will design interactive science experiences using Internet video conferencing to connect senior citizens at community centers and extended care facilities to the Meadowlands Environment Center, New Jersey - in a unique ecosystem in plain view of the Empire State Building.

**Goals**

The goal of the program is to increase the interest of seniors in environmental issues by linking science to history and politics. SEE will create experiential modules related to the natural history, ecosystem structure, and future of the Meadowlands that will pose questions to spur participants' thinking about scientific processes.

**Modules**

Each module will have a lead question such as:

#1 - *Should I tell my children and grandchildren to eat the fish and crabs they catch?*

#2 - *What is a Black-crowned night heron and would I want one in my backyard?*

#3 - *Why are the ruins of New York's Penn Station in the Meadowlands?*

#4 - *Why is it called Paterson Plank Road and who are in the one thousand coffins moved to construct the rail link to New York City?*

Interactive video conferencing will connect the audience with scientists and environmental educators in the field to view habitats in the Meadowlands, gather information, and conduct an ongoing dialogue.

**Responsibilities**

SEE will provide; the video-conferencing equipment, staff to set/up take down the technology, staff to conduct all program activities, and pre and post program materials.

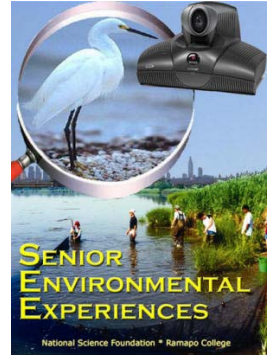
The facility will provide a connection to the Internet and the audience.

**Final Product:**

The grant will also produce video versions of all four modules to be made available on VHS or DVD to facilities across NJ and the US. The tapes will not allow live interaction with the scientists, planners, and engineers in the Meadowlands. However, SEE can serve as a model to introduce more seniors to this unique ecosystem and encourage them to engage in discussions of the environmental issues presented in the modules in their communities.



The New Jersey Meadowlands  
Commission's *Meadowlands Environment  
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*Present:*



**SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERIENCES**

**FACT SHEET: MODULE ONE**

*Should I tell my children and grandchildren to eat the fish and crabs they catch?*

SEE will engage older adults in answering this question in 3 sessions.

1. Warm up session – live at the facility
  - Will take place a few days before the videoconferences
  - 45 minutes – 1 hour – Introduction and hands-on activities on pollution and the location and history of the Meadowlands.
  
2. Video Conference One – between the facility and the Meadowlands
  - 1 hour – History of contamination; identification of the species of concern; and potential health effects of eating fish and crabs listed in the advisory.
  
3. Video Conference Two – the day after Video Conference One – between the facility and the Meadowlands.
  - 1 hour – discussion and demonstration on what seafood we should and should not eat and safe ways to prepare it. We will end by competing for prizes in our Marsh Jeopardy Game.

**UPCOMING SESSIONS**

<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Warm up</u></b>	<b><u>Video Conf. #1</u></b>	<b><u>Video Conf. #2</u></b>
<b>United Senior Center Hackensack</b>	<b>June 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:45 a.m.</b>	<b>June 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:45 a.m.</b>	<b>June 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:45 a.m.</b>
<b>Secaucus Senior Center</b>	<b>June 14<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 p.m.</b>	<b>June 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:45 a.m.</b>	<b>June 24<sup>th</sup> at 10:45 a.m.</b>
<b>Clara Maass Continuing Care Center</b>	<b>June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:45 a.m.</b>	<b>June 27<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>June 28<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.</b>
<b>Lyndhurst Public Library</b>	<b>June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 12:00 p.m. (at the Meadowlands Environment Center)</b>	<b>June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>June 24<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.</b>