

OYSTER BAY TOWN

Grant to fund septic system education

A \$45,000 grant awarded by the governor's office to the Town of Oyster Bay and several committees dedicated to protecting North Shore waters will go toward surveying residents with septic systems and educating them on their proper maintenance in order to curb pollution.

The alliance — which includes the nonprofit Friends of the Bay and watershed protection committees for Manhasset Bay, Hempstead Harbor and Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor — will match the grant with \$45,000 in funds that include in-kind services or volunteer hours, Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee executive director Eric Swenson said yesterday.

The alliance will use the funds toward the Coordinated Environmental Solutions for Septic Problems Occurring on Long Island (CESSPOOL) project, Swenson said.

"In areas along the North Shore, most of those homes are not hooked up to the sewer system and have on-site septic

systems," he said. "Some are old or not up to standards. If not properly maintained, they could be leeching pathogens and other contaminants into the groundwater, which could ultimately end up in the bays or even the drinking water."

After polling residents on whether and how they care for their septic systems, the alliance hopes to use ads, mailings or possibly discounts from local septic maintenance companies to encourage residents to safely operate their systems, Swenson said.

The grant was awarded on Dec. 8 through the state Department of State and funded through the state environmental protection fund, he said.

Officials of Sea Cliff, a municipal member of the Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee, said the alliance received 100 percent of the funds it requested.

— EMILY NGO