WindCheck

Sailing the Northeast



Inside:
First Look At SoundWaters Research Vessel

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Maritime Industry Veteran Jack Brewer Helps Expand Education on Long Island Sound

After more than five decades in the marina industry, Jack Brewer was well-known up and down Long Island Sound, having built a portfolio of more than thirty marinas from Maine to Maryland. Today, his connection with one Connecticut-based nonprofit checks all the boxes for extending his legacy, while supporting the next generation of environmental stewards and maritime professionals.

Brewer's recent seven figure donation to SoundWaters, a Stamford, Connecticut-based organization with a mission to "create a better world through joyful learning on Long Island Sound," will create a new research vessel that will give more children across Connecticut and New York the ability to experience the Sound firsthand, a game-changer for those who would otherwise not have access to this beautiful local natural resource.

Scheduled for launch in the fall of 2027, the R/V *Brewer* will significantly expand SoundWaters' on-the-water environmental education programs with schools, giving thousands more students hands-on experience aboard a modern research vessel. We recently spoke with Jack Brewer, founder of Brewer Marinas & Yacht Yards, as well as SoundWaters President Leigh Shemitz and Bob Mazzone, SoundWaters Vice President of Development.

"My great grandfather started a hardware store in Mamaroneck, New York in 1879," says Jack. "At the time of the Depression, my family owned two banks and was quite affluent, but in 1933 a law was passed which stated you could only own one bank, and my grandfather chose the wrong one. Within a year or two, my family lost everything but the hardware store. My dad, recently graduated from Boston University, began to work in the store. My grandfather's goal and my dad's goal was to hold on to the store. It was the only asset they had left. Dad would work all day, go home for dinner, and go back to the store. I would go with him, push a broom and straighten the shelves. I remember my grandfather challenging me to add up in a column of numbers on the calculator faster than he could do it in his head. I always lost."

After graduating from Rutgers with a degree in Business, Jack worked at Bankers Trust in New York City. "It did not take long for me to realize that I did not want to work for a large company," he says. "I enrolled in Columbia Business School and set out to get my MBA. In my second semester, Dad called and said the Post Road Boat Yard, located adjacent to his store, was for sale. I thought about it for one day and said yes, I would love the opportunity.

"One of the first things I learned was that money is a relative thing. My guru told me to charge a customer $420 for stripping, sanding and applying five coats of varnish to a 36-foot Chris Craft's cap rail. I couldn't believe someone would pay that kind of money for some varnish. I also could not believe people would let their beautiful boats sit week after week without being used."

Jack's dedication to sharing his love of the water runs deep.



When it is launched in fall 2027, SoundWaters R/V Brewer will enable an additional 10,000 students each year to learn, explore, conduct research, and imagine futures in science, conservation, and maritime industries. Courtesy of Derecktor Shipyards



Jack Brewer atop SoundWaters R/V Brewer during its construction at Derecktor New York Photo courtesy of SoundWaters

"My mother used to go swimming every day and I always had an affinity for the water," he explains. "My business also depended on clean water. Boaters weren't interested in dirty, smelly water, so from the time I got into business, I personally wanted to make sure the water was clean, and we did that. I was involved with the Stamford Sailing Foundation, which became the Young Mariners Foundation. I used to have breakfast with SoundWaters founder Len Miller and a few other people, and things grew from there."

In 1990, Len Miller and a group of friends purchased a replica of a 19th century Chesapeake Bay sharpie schooner. Refitted with education stations on deck, the 80-foot vessel was rechristened *SoundWaters*. Although the venerable schooner will remain in service, it was determined that a modern vessel was needed to further advance SoundWaters' mission.

Designed by Chartwell Marine Ltd, based in Hamble on the South Coast of the UK and currently being constructed by Derecktor Shipyards New York in Mamaroneck, R/V *Brewer* is an aluminum educational research catamaran measuring 50 feet long x 23 feet wide. "I've known Derecktors forever," says Jack. "I knew Paul Derecktor and his father Bob Derecktor, and seen boats their boats launched over many, many years. I've always had the greatest respect for what they've done, and they have a proven track record."

"The design of the vessel was based on a collaboration between a marine operations team which understands the mechanics of the vessel and moving further and faster to provide access to communities up and down Long Island Sound, but it also had to be capable of holding a certain number of students and teachers," explains Bob Mazzone, VP of Development at SoundWaters. "It had to have the capability to allow them to do science while they were on board so it had to be stable and fast, and a catamaran is ideal. The draft had to be shallow so it could get into a shallow, rocky coast. Chartwell refined their design many times, and now we feel like we have that vessel. It's a beautiful way to honor Jack because the Brewer name is synonymous with boating on Long Island Sound."

"At SoundWaters, our purpose is to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards through joyful learning on Long Island Sound," says President Leigh Shemitz, who spent more than a dozen years at the Yale School of the Environment, first as a Master's student in Ecology, earning a Ph.D. in Environmental Health, and later working on community-based environmental projects. "We believe that people protect what they know, and they care for what they experience. If the next generation is going to safeguard this remarkable resource, they must first have the opportunity to learn from it, on the water itself.

"Our educational programs have continually evolved to bring more people to the Sound in more meaningful ways. Each year, SoundWaters reaches more than 30,000 students through hands-on environmental education aboard our iconic schooner—the flagship educational vessel of Long Island Sound—and at our two waterfront education facilities: the Cohen SoundWaters Harbor Center and Cove Island Coastal Center. Our programs span every stage of learning, from introducing elementary school students to marine science, to supporting advanced high school and college research, and preparing young adults for careers in the marine trades and environmental sciences. The impact is profound, but it's still not enough. If we are to prepare the next generation to understand and care for Long Island Sound, we must reach more students in more communities. That is the purpose of the R/V *Brewer*.

"Purpose-built as a floating classroom and research platform, the R/V *Brewer* will bring the science of the Sound directly to students throughout the region. Rather than asking schools to come to us, the vessel will travel to ports and marinas close to their communities—from Greenwich to Stonington, and from Port Washington to Orient Point—making authentic, hands-on marine science accessible to thousands of students who otherwise might never have the opportunity.

"The R/V *Brewer* will complement, not replace, our beloved schooner. While the schooner introduces students to the Sound through the timeless experience of sailing and exploration, the R/V *Brewer* will serve as a floating laboratory, equipped for water-quality monitoring, biological sampling, habitat studies, and environmental research. Together with the Cohen SoundWaters Harbor Center, these platforms will allow SoundWaters to provide an unmatched continuum of experiential education, from discovery and inspiration to advanced scientific investigation. The vessel will enable an additional 10,000 students each year to learn, explore, conduct research, and imagine futures in science, conservation, and the maritime industries.

"For SoundWaters, the R/V *Brewer* is far more than a new vessel. It is an investment in the future of Long Island Sound itself. The Sound has been preserved. It has been protected. Our responsibility now is to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to participate in its future. That is how stewardship begins, and that is how this remarkable body of water will remain healthy for generations to come." ■

To learn more, visit SoundWaters.org. Special thanks to Sabrina Boccuzzi at Mercury Marketing Communications for facilitating this article.

COMING SOON TO LONG ISLAND SOUND

SoundWaters

DISCOVER THE SOUND. EMBRACE THE WORLD.

SOUNDWATERS NEW RESEARCH VESSEL IS COMING IN 2027

10,000 more students will learn on Long Island Sound every year



"Thousands of students experience SoundWaters every year and every student will walk away with an unparalleled appreciation for the natural world. That is a catalyst for change from generation to generation. That is how we will change the world."

Leslie Guerra, SoundWaters alumna, Environmental Professional

Find Out More

SoundWaters.org/Brewer