

Long Island Sound Study (LISS) Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

December 12, 2013 Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, CT

Welcome, Housekeeping & Logistics

Curt Johnson, *CT Fund for the Environment and the CT CAC Co-chair*, welcomed the group at 9:40 am. A quorum of 17 CAC members was present. The agenda was reviewed in anticipation of the day's goals.

Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)

Jim Latimer, *USEPA*, provided a review of the CAC feedback on the CCMP from the September STAC/CAC meeting in New York, LISS workgroup response to date on the CAC feedback, and an overview of comments from state and federal agencies on the draft CCMP materials. Results from the STAC/CAC meeting included incorporation of 330 comments from all 4 themes that were addressed in the document. For all four themes, 159 implementation actions have been proposed.

Jim reminded the CAC that the CCMP will be completed by September of 2014, and it will include the 20-year management plan, with 5-year implementation elements. The CCMP is organized around four themes, and today's breakout sessions will reflect those themes:

Waters and Watersheds (Mark Parker, *CT DEEP*)

Habitats and Wildlife (Georgia Basso, *USFWS*)

Sound Communities (Chantal Collier, *CT TNC*, and Amy Mandelbaum, *NYSG*)

Science and Management (Mark Tedesco, *USEPA*, Jim Latimer, *USEPA*)

Breakout Session discussion of draft CCMP

The main goal of the breakout groups for the CCMP was to address: 1) have the CAC's previous comments been adequately addressed? 2) Does the CAC have any additional feedback, including comments on or additions to the proposed 5-year implementation actions?

Mark Tedesco reiterated the desire to keep the dialogue open and to understand the CAC's perspective on "what would be helpful to help you do what you do; what's missing?"

Nancy Seligson, *Supervisor, Town of Mamaroneck* and the *NY Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Co-chair*, explained what was heard from the state agencies on the December 4, 2013 video conference: NYS DEC Commissioner Jim Tierney and Deputy Commissioner Kathy Mosher talked about the importance of prioritizing and simplifying the final list of needs from the CCMP in order to be able to best communicate them. She reiterated that there is money available for coastal resilience, and implementation actions should highlight and take advantage of this. Kathy Mosher suggested that there be a separate policy section within the CCMP. Curt Johnson added that Jim Tierney said there would be unanticipated opportunities that arise that we need to be prepared to take

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advantage of. In response to Nancy's observation that CT DEEP attendees were quiet during the meeting, Mark Parker shared that Betsy Wingfield (*CT DEEP*) commented that they have already given a lot of feedback and want to see the next iteration of the plan to provide further comment.

Mark Tedesco spoke of the need to develop clear, measurable targets for where we want to see components of the LIS ecosystem in the future.

Drew Carey, *Coastal Vision*, suggested that it would be useful to select 5 actions today that would be best to take to legislators (the elevator speech) and identify 5 priorities from each theme as well. Sandy Breslin, *Audubon Connecticut*, stressed the need to include feasibility in selecting the 5 actions. Long-time CAC member David Miller reminded the CAC that we had these metrics formerly, including river miles opened for fishways or pounds of nitrogen reduced, which helped with tracking success. It was also suggested that priorities could be chosen according to the money available.

Considerations for the breakout sessions included:

- Welcome ideas for how the LISS Communications Team can assist CAC member groups with CCMP roll-out and education;
- Prioritizing important actions;
- Identifying any glaring omissions to needed actions;

Overall, the discussion will help the LISS understand what the CAC wants and build understanding and trust in the process. Curt reiterated that the three goals for the breakout sessions were: What's missing, prioritize the targets, and ideas about communications.

Breakout Session Report Out

[All the comments were collected on flip charts and given to SoundVision, who will formally type them up and circulate all the input for consideration by the CCMP Core Team]

Results of the breakout sessions were collected and will be incorporated into the CCMP planning process. Common themes of group discussion included ideas for communication and education, including information about what constituents *can* do (vs. what they should not do), sustainability and planning, including a suggestion for a program that provides money to municipalities that create resiliency plans. The Sound Communities group addressed two tracts simultaneously: sustainability at the local level, and education and outreach, especially informal education. Including the input of upper watershed states was also highlighted. The Science and Management group identified two financial priorities: to prioritize money from Hurricane Sandy, and to garner money for coastal marine spatial planning.

A discussion about dredging included suggestions that this topic should be its own stand alone theme within Sound Communities due to its significance to recreational and commercial harbors; the need for creating approved upland

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areas for disposal, the affordability of dredging, and the potential use of dredge spoils to re-establish elevations in coastal marshes. It was pointed out that no actions about dredging occur in the CCMP.

Other topics included questions about the fracking issue and impacts to LIS, the need for more reference to riparian buffers and alternative landscapes, and the impacts of excessive leaves from watersheds to LIS.

After the conclusion of this session, Nancy Seligson asked all those in attendance about key projects on which their organizations are working for initial thinking about subjects for the next CAC meeting.

Key Member Organization Projects:

- Jason Krumholz, *NOAA* – water quality monitoring
- Mark Tedesco, *EPA* – progress on TMDL, CCMP
- Chantal Collier and Nathan Frohling, *CT TNC* – water quality, nitrogen reduction, protecting habitats, fresh and salt water connectivity, coastal resiliency
- Mickey Weiss, *Project Oceanology* – hands-on education of LIS
- Paul DeOrsay, *Friends of the Bay* – cesspools, habitat restoration
- Pat Aitken, impacts on whales, dolphins, seabirds
- Eric Swenson, *Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee* – restoration at Gutters Pond, septic system education program, 3rd annual LI Green Infrastructure Conference
- Joel Ziev, *Town of North Hempstead* – dredging, waterway access for lower income people (tours, kayaking)
- David Miller, What is a ‘Sound community?’, reflection
- Jennifer Wilson-Pines, *Manhasset Bay Protection Committee* - restoration at Gutters Pond, septic system education program, 3rd annual LI Green Infrastructure Conference, removing bacteria from stormwater
- Curt Johnson, *CT Fund for the Environment* – Nitrogen accountability and what’s next, bacteria, opening up rivers via tide gates and dam removal, green infrastructure in Bridgeport, CT
- Nancy Seligson, *Town of Mamaroneck* – green infrastructure, reducing energy, Sustainability Plan
- Tim Visel, *The Sound School* – proposals
- Sandy Breslin, *Audubon Connecticut* – steward nesting birds, create wildlife habitat in urban areas, get funding for Stewart B. McKinney Wildlife Refuge and Falkner Island
- Allen Berrien, *Milford Harbor Marina* – disposal of dredge material
- Grant Westerson, *Connecticut Marine Trades Association* - regulatory relaxation and state permitting
- Abbie McAllister, *Saybrook Point Inn & Spa* - upland erosion, dredging, outreach and education

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- Maureen Dolan Murphy, *NY Citizens Campaign for the Environment* - plastic bags, pharmaceutical drugs
- Adrienne Esposito, *NY Citizens Campaign for the Environment* - reduction of pesticides, new technologies to treat nitrogen at wastewater treatment plants
- Louis Burch, *CT Citizens Campaign for the Environment* - pesticides, fracking waste, access to green infrastructure in New Haven, CT
- Amy Mandelbaum, *NYSG* – education/outreach and positive behavior change
- Drew Carey, *Coastal Vision* – regional habitat guidelines in New England, what have we learned about capping, dredge material management program
- Jim Latimer, *EPA* – new set of science priorities tied with management priorities, produce synthesis book summary
- Robert Burg, *NEIWPCC* – communicate Long Island Sound on our website, indicators presentation, promoting positive behavior change
- Vicky O'Neill, *NYS DEC/ NEIWPCC* – working with partners to conduct habitat restoration, fish passage, and stewardship/outreach projects
- Judy Preston, *CTSG* – Master Gardener Coastal certificate program, alternative landscapes/green infrastructure
- Mark Parker, *CT DEEP* – LISS CCMP, CT DEEP Work Plan for LISS, inland watershed committee on the Thames River, CT

Washington D.C. Report: Policy Committee

Sandy Breslin reported on the 2014 Budget agreement that doesn't eliminate but reduces the sequester cuts – useful to move Congress forward but not necessarily what the CAC/LISS needs. A group from the CAC (and others) plus construction and consulting representatives, visited Washington and met with legislators, members of the President's Council on Environmental Quality and the Office of Management and Budget on September 30th and October 1st. The group made the case for investing in Long Island Sound, and was able to cite important accomplishments. Despite being proactive and appreciated, the CAC still needs to “step up our message.” Sandy pointed out that the Great Lakes program receives \$300 million compared to the LISS \$2 million. Being there in person helped a lot, especially with White House personnel. Although they talked about reauthorization for LISS, the group is not optimistic. Sixty-eight signatures went on a letter sent from New York advocating for funds for damages from Hurricane Sandy to the Stewart B. McKinney Wildlife Refuge.

Comments included the point made that congress responds to the Great Lakes program because they deliver projects and have an entire book of accomplishments; the LISS needs this. This is an important message for our workgroups. Interest was expressed in holding a January meeting to come up with LISS success stories.

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Adrienne Esposito, *Citizens Campaign for the Environment*, reported on a bi-state committee meeting of state legislators in Port Jefferson, NY, where it was agreed that the group would meet once a year to work on bills of mutual interest and to encourage collaboration. Curt Johnson reported that the Plum Island Draft EIS came out, which concluded that the sale of the island could be as a whole, despite abundant input from the LISS and other government agencies on the need to set aside critical areas. Legislation is being proposed to de-link the Kanas lab from the sale. New York Governor Cuomo wrote a letter saying that the NYS DEC would require Plum Island to be cleaned up before any transfer. The town of Southhold, NY has created a conservation zone on 620 acres of the island.

New York Sewage Treatment Plants: Upgrades and Compliance

Curt Johnson provided what he characterized as a good news story about the progress that has been made to upgrade sewage treatment plants in the state of New York in proximity to LIS. Phase one of this process included the “guts” or heavy construction activity; phase two (with a 2017 deadline) is a process change (activated carbon addition to optimize nitrogen removal). Curt provided a virtual tour, via Google maps, of the upgraded plants, noting that this information will be online soon. He announced that “we’re doing quite well meeting the standards” for reducing sewage treatment pollution to LIS, noting that New York City has done a great deal of work bringing their plants on line since 2012.

In response to a question about next steps for addressing additional sources of nitrogen, Mark Tedesco commented that septic systems would likely be the next challenge, noting that atmospheric and agricultural inputs of nitrogen have been declining watershed wide. Mark also pointed out that increasing human population in coastal areas means that urban stormwater is also increasing.

2013 Hypoxia Season: Nitrogen Loading and Hypoxia Trends

Mark Parker reported on the 2013 Hypoxia season, noting that this past summer LIS had reasonably good water quality. The Hypoxia season was shorter by one day from 2012 (averaged 62 days in 2013) than the long term average, and that at 81.7 square miles, it was the third smallest hypoxia area in twenty years. Mark explained the “end of pipe” monitoring process from 81 public and private plants, 79 of which are under a general permit, and noted that most upstate discharges are higher than are still wanted, although the impacts are attenuated by the distance to LIS. The good news is that Connecticut will reach its equalized goals; the permit expires at the end of 2014 at which time the nitrogen credit program will be re-evaluated. This annual report is on the CT DEEP website: http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2719&q=325570&deepNav_GID=1654

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Updates, Announcements

Nancy, Curt, and Leah O'Neill, *USEPA*, will be meeting with Mark on the TMDL update process.

The next meeting of the CAC will be March 13th, 2014, in New York.

Amy Mandelbaum provided an update on planned CCMP public input meetings in New York in 2014.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm.

2014 CAC MEETINGS: March 13 (NY), June 12 (CT), September 11 (NY) and December 11 (CT)

For meeting minutes and other information, visit:

<http://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/committees/citizens-advisory-committee/>