



A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

The Long Island Sound Office

of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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NEWS RELEASE

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Top Environmental Officials Sign Agreements to Restore and Protect Long Island Sound

Rye, New York, Sept. 28, 2006 – Administrators of the two U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regions responsible for the health of the Long Island Sound and the environmental commissioners of New York and Connecticut today signed agreements that support ongoing efforts to protect and restore this important body of water. As members of the Long Island Sound Policy Committee, the officials adopted a stewardship initiative focused on areas of the Sound with significant ecological and recreational value, and authorized a fund that will disburse \$6 million for research and restoration.

Meeting this morning at the Jay Heritage Center near the Long Island Sound shoreline, the officials also approved a Memorandum of Understanding to restore, by 2011, 300 acres of coastal habitats and 50 river miles of fish passages to spawning sites. In addition, they signed a directive calling for an evaluation of the management plan for hypoxia to assure that the states and federal government are on target to meet water quality standards for sufficient levels of dissolved oxygen in the Sound.

"This new stewardship agreement between EPA, New York and Connecticut is another tool that will result in a cleaner, healthier Long Island Sound for people to enjoy," said Robert W. Varney, Regional Administrator of EPA's New England office. "Our collaborative efforts underscore our commitment to protecting the Sound."

"These agreements once again demonstrate how partnerships between the federal, state, and local governments achieve environmental and economic results", said Alan J. Steinberg, EPA Region 2 Administrator. "As a result of the decisions made today, the combined resources of all levels of

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government will be used to protect and restore coastal lands, improve water quality, and provide research to better manage our plan to clean up Long Island Sound.”

The agreements are part of bi-state and federal efforts “to restore and protect the health of Long Island Sound” by the year 2014, the 400th anniversary of Adriaen Block’s exploration of Long Island Sound. They build upon the overall goals of the Long Island Sound Study Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), as well as additional goals in the 2003 agreement on protecting and restoring Long Island Sound. The policy committee oversees implementation of the CCMP and the 2003 Long Island Sound Agreement.

The stewardship initiative was created to identify places with significant ecological or recreational value throughout the Sound and to develop a strategy to protect and enhance these special places. The policy committee today agreed to designate 33 inaugural stewardship areas including natural shoreline sites in Rye administered by the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation. One of the Rye sites, Marshlands Conservancy, adjacent to the Jay Heritage Center, includes one of the few publicly accessible salt marshes in New York State, and is a haven for native shorebirds and rare birds.

The Cable Fund Steering Committee established today will oversee \$6 million contributed by three utilities – Cross-Sound Cable, the Connecticut Power and Light, and the Long Island Power Authority – as part of an agreement to reactivate the cross-Sound cable in 2004. The committee will include representatives from EPA, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP), and the Sea Grant programs of New York and Connecticut. Priority will be given to projects that promote scientific understanding of the biological, chemical, and physical effects of existing or potential cable and pipeline crossings and the mitigation of their impacts.

Key habitats for fish, shellfish, birds and wildlife have greatly declined or been degraded over the last century in part due to dredging, filling, water quality degradation and development. In calling for continued bi-state restoration efforts, the policy committee recognized both the environmental and economic benefits of coastal habitats, including flood moderation, pollutant filtration, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and tourism.

"Almost 100 years ago, and just a few miles from the Sound, a man named Aldo Leopold graduated from Yale University and went on to become one of this country's most distinguished conservationists," said Marvin Moriarty, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Northeast Region, which provided key technical support in the establishment of the Stewardship Initiative. “Leopold later wrote that it would take the dedication of citizens and all levels of government, working together, for us to be effective stewards of our precious natural resources. The Stewardship Initiative that we celebrate today will encourage new partnerships and strengthen existing ones to achieve Leopold's vision of cooperative fish and wildlife conservation."

“The preservation and protection of Long Island Sound is a major priority of the Connecticut DEP, said Commissioner Gina McCarthy. “Through stewardship of our natural resources and public access areas, improvements in water quality, and protection and restoration of our critical natural

habitats, this partnership between Connecticut, New York, and the EPA continues to be an important regional effort to maintain the quality of life that we all enjoy in and around Long Island Sound.

“It is vital that the States of New York and Connecticut work together in conjunction with the EPA to protect and restore our marine and coastal habitats bordering the Long Island Sound,” said Commissioner Denise M. Sheehan of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. “The actions agreed upon at today's meeting represent a major step towards improving the Sound’s water quality and reclaiming impaired habitats as well as preventing valuable, natural areas from becoming impaired.”

The Long Island Sound Study, a National Estuary Program, is a cooperative effort created by EPA and the states of Connecticut and New York, involving researchers, regulators, user groups and other concerned organizations and individuals to protect and improve the health of the Sound. For more information about the Long Island Sound Study and the agreements reached today, visit www.longislandsoundstudy.net.

Information about the 33 inaugural areas announced today can be found at www.longislandsoundstudy.net/stewardship.