



**Long Island Sound Study  
Management Committee Meeting  
University of Bridgeport  
John J. Cox Student Center  
Thursday, January 19, 2017**

**Welcome/Introductions/Logistics.** Mark Tedesco called the meeting to order at 10:00am asking for any proposed agenda changes. Bill Wise asked to give an update on the LIS Research Grant Program. Mark also welcomed Pamela Elardo, NYCDEP's Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Wastewater Treatment, as the new NYCDEP representative on the Management Committee.

**Members/alternates in attendance:** Mark Tedesco, EPA LISO; Dawn McReynolds, NYSDEC; Jim O'Donnell, STAC/CT; Richard Friesner, NEIWPC; Bill Wise, NY Sea Grant; Rob Hust, CTDEEP; Mel Coté, EPA Region 1; Nancy Ferlow, NRCS; Judy Yaquin Li for Gary Wikfors, NOAA; Nancy Seligson, CAC/NY; Peter Francis, CTDEEP; Sylvain DeGuise, CT Sea Grant; Rick Balla, EPA Region 2; Sandy Breslin, CAC/CT; Darcy Lonsdale STAC/NY; Pam Elardo, NYCDEP

**Others in Attendance:** Jim Ammerman, NEIWPC; Cassie Bauer, NYSDEC; Robert Burg, NEIWPC; Mark Parker, CTDEEP; Harry Yamalis, CTDEEP; Chuck Lee, CTDEEP; Evelyn Powers, NEIWPC/IEC; Joe Salata, EPA LISO; Leah O'Neill, EPA Region 1; Samantha James, NEIWPC; Dave Lipsky, NYCDEP; Amy Mandelbaum, NY Sea Grant; Laura Grieco, NYCDEP

**Announcements.** No announcements

**Reports.**

**Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).** Jim O'Donnell reported that there are two upcoming meetings scheduled. One is a joint CAC/STAC focused on science communication on January 27 at Housatonic Community College, and the other is a regular STAC meeting on February 17 at Stony Brook University focused on modeling. CTDEEP Commissioner Klee will give the keynote address to the joint CAC/STAC meeting. Everyone is welcome.

**Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).** Nancy Seligson reported that the CAC met on December 8 and discussed how important the CAC's role is now, more than ever, to communicate their activities and the needs of the program. The President grew up on Long Island Sound and one of his cabinet members is from CT so the CAC talked about how they could connect with them. The CAC also reviewed the situations in NY and CT after the 2016 elections. In NY, Governor Cuomo presented a proposal in the 2017 State of the State to invest \$2 billion in Clean Water Infrastructure and Water Quality Protection. There were a lot of questions about this proposal. The CAC is concerned about CT's budget and the commitment from the State for clean water funding. The CT General Assembly is currently tied between

democrats and republicans. The CAC also discussed specific letters that they are planning to write to elected officials. At the last meeting, Stuart Lowrie and others from TNC presented on social marketing messaging and facilitated a discussion about priorities. The CAC also heard updates on the CT Blue Plan and LIS Futures Fund awardees. The agenda for the joint CAC/STAC meeting on January 27 went out last week and a survey for the meeting will be sent out soon.

**CCMP IA Progress Reports.** Mark Tedesco reported that the summaries of the work group activities were sent out to the Management Committee prior to the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments. At the last Management Committee the Habitat Restoration and Stewardship Work Group presented a nearly final version of its proposed Habitat Restoration and Protection Goals and Parameters. The final version will be sent out to the Management Committee after this meeting. The Water Quality workgroup will give a presentation to the Management Committee today.

**Water Quality Monitoring.** Jim Ammerman gave a presentation on the water quality monitoring efforts in 2016:

- NOAA declared 2016 the third consecutive year in a row of record warm temperatures.
- 2016 hypoxia was a two part event (one in July and another in late August/early September). There were 51 days with less than 3mg/l in 2016. Hypoxia has been going down the past few years, but it went up again this year. Both 2012 and 2016 were very warm years (high hypoxia). There has been no change in duration of hypoxia since the TMDL, but average area of hypoxia has decreased from 208 mi<sup>2</sup> to 164 mi<sup>2</sup>.
- The Water Quality Monitoring work group meeting notes can be found on the LISS website (<http://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/committees/water-quality-monitoring-work-group/>).
- The IEC/CTDEEP 2016 hypoxia report has been combined and will be sent out shortly. IEC and CTDEEP plan to continue sending out a combined report in the future. Laura Grieco mentioned that NYCDEP has data through the harbor survey, but that data is not included in the combined hypoxia report.
- IEC recently released an RFP for data analysis of 25 plus years of WLIS data. Proposals are due Feb 17.
- Unified Water Study update- The last meeting was held on January 11 and over 80 people attended. The well-established groups talked about what they have been doing and many new groups were interested in participating. There was some discussion from the Management Committee about how long it would take for a citizens monitoring program to be useful for long term monitoring. Jim A suggested the longer the better (5-10 years minimum) and Jim O mentioned that bigger harbors (acting more like LIS proper) might take decades to be useful but the smaller harbors might take less time. There was also a discussion about how established monitoring programs, like IEC, can support these embayment monitoring groups.
- The NOAA Coastal Hypoxia Research Program proposal did not succeed last year, but a new strategy for modelling is needed; the February 17 STAC meeting at Stony Brook University will focus on this matter.

There was a discussion about the LIS TMDL and how it can be determined when the TMDL achieves its goals. Mark Tedesco explained that the goal for any TMDL is based on water quality criteria. The current LIS TMDL forecasted improvements and those improvements did not

satisfy the criteria, so more work was needed. There has not been a formal revision of the TMDL, but this was the basis for the LIS Nitrogen Strategy. A big issue is how we evaluate compliance both spatially and temporally. The current tools on the modeling side leave us a little short. We need to find a way to close that gap. Joe Salata mentioned that when the TMDL was developed and EPA issued the marine standards, they were based on lab procedures, but not the critters. The conditions that were established didn't consider climate change and the warmer waters. We have to look at what is living there and what is possible to live there when we look back at the standards. For a copy of Dr. Ammerman's presentation, please contact him at [james.ammerman@longislandsoundstudy.net](mailto:james.ammerman@longislandsoundstudy.net).

## **Updates**

**2017 Seagrass Monitoring.** Under an existing EPA agreement, USFWS is going to conduct a seagrass survey in the summer of 2017. It has been five years since the last survey, which showed increases in seagrass in some locations. There is a planning call scheduled for the week of January 23. Traditional methods and some field verification will be used in this survey. There was a discussion about whether using existing remote sensing imagery is applicable to track and understand changes in eelgrass and if it can replace the use of over flights. Dawn McReynolds mentioned that the NYSDEC seagrass coordinator is working on a similar effort with the South Shore estuary right now. Mel Coté mentioned that EPA is hosting an annual eelgrass meeting on March 29. There was also a discussion about the benefit of tracking eelgrass changes every year since there can be very high variability from year to year. It was suggested that having data every 3-5 years is good for long-term trends, but you may miss some local/annual events. It was also suggested to use citizen scientists to ground truth the data.

**LIS Research Grant Program.** Bill Wise gave an update on the Research Grant Program. Nine full grant proposals were received and the reviewers met on December 9 to select which ones would be funded. The review team funded 3 projects (2 fully funded and 1 partially funded) totaling ~ \$800,000. These two-year projects will start in March 2017. A press release will be sent out soon. Joe Salata asked if they would have funded any other proposals if they had more money. Bill said that they would have liked to fund two to three other proposals. There was a Principal Investigator's meeting to discuss the three proposals that were funded last round. An additional \$19,000 was allocated to better integrate the three projects. These projects are also going to request a no-cost time extension because of the delayed start.

**NOAA Press Release.** Leah O'Neill mentioned that NOAA issued a press release on new sea level rise scenarios and will email a copy of the press release to the Management Committee. Link: <http://www.noaa.gov/media-release/new-regional-sea-level-scenarios-help-communities-prepare-for-risks>

**October 2017 two-day meeting.** Leah O'Neill brought up the discussion of having a two-day Management Committee meeting in October 2017. In the past, the LISS had two-day meetings every October, but this stopped in 2010 due to travel restrictions. A two-day meeting was held in October 2015 after the revision of the CCMP. Leah asked if the Management Committee felt we should have another one again this year. After some discussion it was determined that there was not a need to have a two-day meeting this October, but maybe to have one in the spring of 2018.

Suggested agenda items for a two-day meeting included: ecosystem targets (look at progress and gaps), assess partner contributions to the CCMP targets and actions, and get an update on the nitrogen reduction work. The I-team will follow up with these suggestions. It was also suggested to have webinars of projects that were completed and which do not fall within the Management Committee schedule.

**2017 Budget & Work Plan.** Mark Tedesco reported that EPA is on a Continuing Resolution (CR) until April 28, 2017. The CR provides a portion of funds based on the prior year Enacted budget. For Long Island Sound, this is a combination of funds from Section 119 and 320. Currently, the President's budget request for LISS is \$3.5 million. Right now, the proposed work plan budgets for base projects total \$4.3 million. Non-Base program proposals for consideration (depending on the final budget numbers) include: continuing support for IEC monitoring, funding UCONN CLEAR to complete 2015 impervious coverage data in NY, support for the evaluation of bio-extraction, support Phase 2 of the nitrogen reduction work, funding Phase 2 of the NPS tracking tool, behavior change social marketing and overhead costs for CT acquisitions. Mark Tedesco asked for detailed proposals from any of the above projects at least three weeks prior to the next Management Committee meeting.

Leah O'Neill announced that EPA headquarters gave LISS an additional \$30,000 to complete a Vulnerability Assessment of the CCMP concerning how climate change and resiliency may affect its goals and objectives.

**Nitrogen Reduction Efforts.** On the phone: Bob Nyman, EPA Region 2; Dave Pincumbe, EPA Region 1; Dan Arsenault, EPA Region 1; Lorraine Holdridge, NYSDEC

**EPA Nitrogen Strategy** – Leah O'Neill reported:

- EPA, and its contractor Tetra Tech, hosted a public webinar Monday December 19 from 12-1pm. The goals of this webinar were to: briefly summarize the nitrogen strategy, outline technical process and products of that support work, highlight planned schedule for products, and provide links for additional information during the process.
- The webinar was well attended and we covered some good questions, but disappointingly Adobe connect experienced some technical difficulties during the webinar and cut-off webinar audio halfway through, but the conference call remained connected. The presentation slides& reference materials can be found at:  
<http://longislandsoundstudy.net/issues-actions/water-quality/nitrogen-strategy/>
- The Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) was approved on January 11 and will be posted to the LISS website sometime soon. The finalization of the QAPP drives the deliverables schedule as noted in the Performance Work Statement.
- A draft comprehensive literature review of the technical references has been compiled to help Tetra Tech better understand the project objectives, to assist in clarifying the science underlying the technical approach, identify data gaps and/or matters requiring future empirical data collection. TT submitted a draft earlier this week, after reaching out to EPA, the States, monitoring groups, researchers and other partners to complete this task.
- Upcoming: EPA anticipates draft summaries of embayment loadings, of regulated point source discharges, and of tributary loading from Tetra Tech by mid-March.

- EPA is working with Robert Burg on adding a comment box to the LISS nitrogen strategy webpage. The comments would just be submitted to an EPA account (not visible to others). EPA is also anticipating having a box where you can enter your email address to get updates when new items have been posted on the website.

**CTDEEP** - Robert Hust gave the Management Committee an update on the CT 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Nitrogen Strategy. A multi-pronged water quality management strategy that includes:

- Continuing the Nitrogen Trading program (Equalized Nitrogen load reduced down to 7,000 lbs/day)
- Design upgrades for denitrification at 9 additional Waste Water Treatment Plants
- Revising the MS4 General Permit (effective 7/2017)
- [Integrated Water Resource Management](#) – Identifying 8 priority embayments for [TMDL development](#)

Contact Mark Parker at [mark.parker@ct.gov](mailto:mark.parker@ct.gov) for a copy of the CTDEEP presentation materials.

**LINAP** - Lorraine Holdridge via conference call, gave an update on the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP). Some of the short term goals of LINAP are to estimate current loading conditions around LI, prioritize subwatersheds, and identify no regrets actions. Suffolk County and Nassau County are currently doing subwatershed planning (189 subwatersheds for Suffolk and around 15 for Nassau). Several advisory work groups are being established to provide input and support in the development and implementation of LINAP. The following work groups have been established: fertilizer management, bio-extraction, and data collection and analysis. Suffolk County completed phase 1 of testing advanced onsite wastewater treatment systems. Three of the five systems have been approved for installation. Phase 2 systems will be installed by April 30<sup>th</sup>. Nassau County is looking to follow Suffolk Counties lead and is encouraging contractors to participate in Suffolk County meetings/workshops/trainings. NYSDEC launched a new newsletter on LINAP. To sign up, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/103654.html>. NYSDEC also hired a NEIWPC staff person to work on LINAP.

Dawn McReynolds gave an update on the bio-extraction work group, which plans to have its first meeting in February. The hope is that the work group will put in a proposal for consideration of LISS funding. Both NY and CT experts will be invited to this work group.

**NYCDEP** - Laura Grieco presented a graph of East River performance, showing a 60% reduction of nitrogen as of September 2016. She also showed a graph with a breakdown of effluent loading at each facility. Pam Elardo introduced herself and said the NYC will be meeting all their limits, but they need advocates at all levels to allow base infrastructure to be updated and maintained. Contact Laura for a copy of presentation materials at [momata@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:momata@dep.nyc.gov).

**Next Meeting.** Due to the current uncertainty in the Federal budget process for 2017, it was agreed to reschedule the April 20 Management Committee meeting to May 11 at Housatonic Community College.

**Adjournment** There being no other business, Mark Tedesco adjourned the meeting at 2:30pm.