



**Long Island Sound Study  
Management Committee Meeting Notes  
Housatonic Community College  
Thursday, October 19, 2017**

**Attendees:** Jim Ammerman, NEIWPCC; Rick Balla, EPA Region 2; Cassie Bauer, NYSDEC; Tracy Brown, Save the Sound; Robert Burg, NEIWPCC; Mel Coté, EPA/NE; Tom Morgart USDA/NRCS/CT; Peter Francis, CTDEEP; Richard Friesner, NEIWPCC; Laura Grieco, NYCDEP; Chuck Lee, CTDEEP; Dave Lipsky, NYCDEP; Dawn McReynolds, NYSDEC; Jonathan Morrison, USGS/CT; Leah O’Neill, EPA; Vicky O’Neill, NEIWPCC/NYSDEC; Mark Parker, CTDEEP; Evelyn Powers, IEC; Kimberly Roth, NEIWPCC; Nancy Seligson, CAC/NY; Mark Tedesco, EPA; Harry Yamalis, CTDEEP; Gary Wikfors, NOAA Fish; Darcy Lonsdale, STAC/NY

**Welcome/Introductions/Logistics.** Mark Tedesco called the meeting to order at 9:35am. Mark began the meeting by announcing the promotion of Susan Sullivan to the position of executive director at New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC)C and the official Management Committee representative for NEWIPCC. He announced the hiring of a new Long Island Sound Study (LISS) public outreach coordinator through NY Sea Grant, Anna Weshner-Dunning. Mark mentioned that the July Management Committee meeting summary is now posted on the LISS website and asked if there were any changes to today’s agenda. Leah asked to add a quick update on the Government Accountability Office engagement to the agenda.

Other announcements:

- NEIWPCC just announced the Bioextraction Coordinator position which will be housed in NYSDEC’s Region 1 office.
- The 2018 draft LISS calendar has been produced and was sent out with the Management Committee meeting materials. Please report any conflicts with other major meetings or conferences.
- EPA has posted an internal job announcement to permanently fill the position vacated by Joe Salata. Chris Mecozzi has completed his detail.

**REPORTS**

**Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).**

Jim Ammerman provided the STAC update. The next STAC meeting will be held at Stony Brook University on November 17<sup>th</sup>. The focus of the meeting will be on nutrient bio-extraction and its potential for nitrogen removal in estuaries. Speakers will include Julie Rose, Anthony Dvarskas, Jeff Levinton, and Larry Swanson. Jamie Vaudrey will provide an update on the indicators to be used for the 2018 Save the Sound LIS Report Card, and the NYC DEP will also provide an update on the new LIS modeling efforts. For February meeting, Jim plans to have presentations from the three 2017 LISS research grantees.

**Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).**

Nancy Seligson provided the CAC update. The last CAC meeting was held on September 14th. At this meeting, a nominating committee for new CT co-chair was established and the CAC plans to vote for a CT co-chair at its December meeting. At the meeting, members shared their LIS observations from the summer, Interstate Environmental Commission (IEC) gave a summary of the 2017 water quality monitoring data, Save the Sound updated the group on the Unified Water Study effort and introduced the new Sound Keeper, Bill Lucey, and Mark Tedesco gave an update on the 2018 budget and current pre-proposals. After a lengthy discussion about embayment monitoring and the need for on-going funding, the CAC passed a resolution to write a letter to the Management Committee in support of both the existing community-based embayment monitoring programs and the Unified Water Study. The CAC will present the finished letter to the Management Committee in the next two days. Members of the CAC went to Washington D.C. on September 26th and were joined by folks from Preserve Plum Island Coalition to advocate for LIS. They met with several representatives and got positive feedback on the effort to reauthorize the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act introduced in both houses. Congressman Zeldin also has a bill to protect Plum Island, but there is some controversy of whether that is the best way to preserve it. Also, on October 20th, Congressman Tom Suozzi with colleagues Lee Zeldin and Rosa DeLaura are holding a conference/press event at the US Marine Merchant Academy in Kings Point to celebrate 20 years of achievement in protecting Long Island Sound and looking forward to a vision for restoration for the next 20 years.

**CCMP IA PROGRESS REPORTS**

No general questions from work group summary abstracts.

**Indicators, tracking & reporting**

Mark mentioned that he and others had a call with GAO about ecosystem targets and indicators and how we would use them to track progress and evaluate implementation. The GAO was very interested in how we will determine if we are achieving the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) objectives or not.

Robert Burg gave a presentation on where we stand with indicators, tracking and reporting. The Indicators work group is currently working on developing webpages for each of the 20 CCMP ecosystem targets. There will be a CCMP landing page, an ecosystem target landing page, and an ecosystem target page for each target. Each ecosystem target page will include a description of the goal, a chart that tracks the data and measures progress, an explanation on how it is measured, a status a trends section, a related indicators/targets section, and a contact person. The new webpages should be up on the LISS website by the end of the year.

There was a discussion about how the indicators work group is interpreting the data and it was suggested to share some examples with the Management Committee before the webpages go live. Action: the work group will share a mockup of two targets with the Management Committee for comment, particularly targets that may involve uncertainty in data or in interpretation. All of these target webpages are ongoing and adaptive. They are updated on different timelines as we rely on other groups to get the data. As the webpages develop, the

indicators work group may find gaps and the need to request 2018 funding at the January Management Committee meeting.

### **2017 Summer Hypoxic Report**

Jim Ammerman gave an update on the 2017 hypoxia results and the water quality monitoring work group. According to NOAA's data, the 2017 warm season (April-Sept) mean temperatures were above average and the precipitation was average to slightly above. The LIS buoy data showed hypoxic events in both July and August with ventilation in between (late July), which is somewhat similar to 2016. The CTDEEP data shows a maximum areal extent of hypoxia of 70 sq miles on July 18-20. The areal extent of hypoxia on August 14-16 was 44 sq miles, but it was more severe in western Long Island Sound than it was in July. Overall, the area of hypoxia was significantly less in 2017 compared to 2016. The extent of hypoxia ecosystem target calls for a reduction of the five year running average from pre-TMDL level by 28%. According to this definition, we are meeting the target, though there is significant inter-annual variability. The water quality work group had a call on October 11<sup>th</sup> and discussed the 2017 hypoxia results as well as the 2018 pre-proposals.

### **Budget Update**

**FY 17 budget update:** EPA successfully awarded all the money to the 2017 grantees.

**FY 18 budget process overview:** The Management Committee asked organizations to submit non-base preproposals for 2018 funding consideration to stimulate discussion and ideas so we are prepared if LISS is funded at same level as last year. The proposed projects should be based on the CCMP and help achieve the ecosystem targets. There is also a continued focus to minimize unliquidated obligations and meet match requirements. This was not intended to be a deadline for any ideas for 2018, rather a process for identifying and discussing key needs for 2018. EPA will send out guidance and a timeline for developing full proposals. The proposals will be discussed at future Management Committee meetings, with decisions at the January or April meeting, depending on when final FY2018 appropriations are approved by Congress.

### **Review of FY18 Pre-proposals:**

1. Development of Benthic Macroinvertebrate Sampling Methodology and Tools to assess Embayment Health in Long Island Sound
  - a. No comments
2. Development of a Long Island Sound Phytoplankton Index of Biotic Integrity
  - a. Phytoplankton communities really haven't changed in last 60 years (according to the recent LIS book). Is there a hypothesis that we are trying to answer from this? The full proposal needs to demonstrate a clear need for this project.
3. Phase II of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems- implementation of Phase I recommendations
  - a. CTDEEP is currently working with Lombardo Associates on phase 1 with \$160,000. This preproposal is just a place holder right now – more information on what needs to be funded in Phase II will be know after Phase I is completed.
  - b. NY is well on their way to doing this type of work through LINAP. Dawn recommended coordination with Long Island Counties and Towns.

- c. Is there a need to do a lot by lot assessment?
4. Groundwater Budgets and Estimated travel times of Groundwater to the Connecticut Coast of LIS
  - a. It would be useful to define how we would use this information in evaluating the estimates from Jamie Vaudrey's work.
5. Development of LIS Hypoxic Volume Calculation Methodology and Increased FIS Analyses
  - a. Dawn asked for more clarification on why this is needed. Will it give us more insight into status and trends of than areal estimates?
6. Lower Connecticut River Salinity Monitoring Equipment Replacement
  - a. There was a question about EPA data and if this would be a duplication of that effort. Leah mentioned that EPA did initiate some water quality sampling within CT River, but it is in a different part of the river.
  - b. The LISS has funded this in the past. The equipment hasn't been upgraded in 10 years, so if it is not funded it would only last a few more years.
7. Development of a Nonpoint Source and Stormwater Tracking Tool for the LIS watershed- Phase 2
  - a. Jim mentioned that there is a webinar on the CAST (the tool that was recommended in Phase 1) on November 9<sup>th</sup>.
8. Unified Water Study: Nitrogen Impacts on LIS Bays and Harbors
  - a. Dawn mentioned the need for the MC to figure out how we are going to continue supporting embayment monitoring, through LISFF or through base/enhancement funding. Tracy mentioned that LISFF has a project limit of \$100,000 and will not continuously fund the same monitoring project each year (limit of 3 consecutive years). The CAC supports having embayment monitoring in base funding.
  - b. Darcy asked about the mechanism for condensing the data to make it useful. The UWS created one study with a QAPP to be able to compare data. The groups are entering the data into a spreadsheet that STS will combine into one document.
  - c. Does this proposal satisfy the need for embayment monitoring and can it provide the information that is lacking now? Chuck Lee said that data from this study and from CTDEEP embayment proposal is important information if we want to move forward with the N strategy.
9. Enhancements to the LISICOS Buoy Array for Monitoring Hypoxia and Nutrients
  - a. We need to understand the operation and maintenance costs more. How much will this increase the base request in the future?
  - b. We typically give \$120,000 to the buoys in base funding each year. We need clarification on whether the \$300,000 in this proposal includes that \$120,000 or not?
10. IEC Summer 2019 Hypoxia Monitoring in Far Western Long Island Sound
  - a. Not formally part of the base but we have funded it in past years.
11. Connecticut Coastal Area Land Acquisition Addition to Chapman Mill Pond WMA
  - a. No comments
12. Connecticut Coastal Area Lan Acquisition Addition to Seaside
  - a. No comments
13. Chapman Mill Pond Wildlife Management Area Riparian Restoration Derelict Structure Removal and Improved Public Access Project, Clinton/Westbrook, CT

- a. No comments
- 14. Acquire 5 parcels of land in the Incorporated Village of Nissequogue for addition to the Stony Brook Harbor State Tidal Wetland.
  - a. No comments
- 15. Developing Conservation Plans for New York's Long Island Sound Marsh Complexes
  - a. No comments
- 16. Coordination of LIS Education Resources with the Next Generation Science Standards
  - a. Is CTDEEP a partner?
  - b. We fund Sea Grant to do a mentor teacher program. What is the need for the additional funding?
  - c. Might be useful to do this for both states at same time, however NY has many waterbodies (beside LIS), so it might not be the same.
- 17. A Long Island Sound Model and Data Sharing System
  - a. No comments

Other ideas that should be considered for 2018 funding:

- Funding for the further integration of the ongoing Nitrogen efforts and a technical review of EPA contract methodology. Dawn suggested that the groups involved in the different Nitrogen efforts have a face to face meeting to talk about next steps and how best to integrate and coordinate efforts.
- Using Satellite data to track SAV. Mark mentioned that EPA ORD just announced funding for a proposal to look at satellite data for LIS. Mark will share details of that proposal and at the next MC meeting we should get an update of the 2017 aerial surveys.
- Updated information of Nitrogen from mobile sources, like air deposition? NEIWPPC was involved in this in the past and EPA has identified some funding to update estimates, but only for mercury.

### General Updates:

**LIS Futures Fund:** The review team met in September. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has identified proposals and hopes to schedule an announcement and press event in early November. The event will be in Connecticut this year. Over 40+ proposals were submitted with more than \$2 million available in funding. This was the first year we increased the geographic scope to upper watershed states for water quality improvement projects.

**NEPORT:** National Estuary Program Online Reporting Tool is a required leverage and habitat reporting tool for our program and funding. Currently, we leverage 86 dollars per 1 EPA dollar.

**NYCDEP modeling work:** NYCDEP is self-funding the scoping document piece using an existing contract. They will be issuing an request for proposals for the hydrodynamic model and water quality modeling piece. NYCDEP is also in the process of sending letters to invite people to join a technical review committee.

**Eelgrass Surveys:** USFWS completed their eelgrass surveys in July and field verification in August and September. The results of the survey will likely be ready by the end of the year.

## **Nitrogen Strategy Updates**

**CTDEEP 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation:** Since the last Management Committee meeting, CTDEEP started working with Pawcatuck watershed, worked on a national water quality initiative with NRCS, met with CT Fund for the Environment about the monitoring program, and started a contract with Lombardo Associates on Phase 1, which will hopefully be completed by September 2018.

**LINAP:** The subwatershed planning effort in Suffolk County is underway and will be followed by efforts in Nassau County. A draft priority area map for Suffolk is expected to go out for public comment in late December. This work is looking at the individual tax parcel level. One of the issues that came up was that some of the Towns are using different land use coding than the County. A final subwatersheds plan for Suffolk County should be completed by the Spring of 2018. As part of the LINAP process, Suffolk is also updating their codes for septic systems. By January 2019 the grandfathering of old septic systems will be removed and all new commercial systems will have to upgrade to the new code, starting in January 2018. Suffolk County also completed installation of 19 test systems and is looking to approve more of the systems. Suffolk County residents are able to apply for a \$10,000 grant to install one of the approved advanced systems and finance the rest through low interest loans. So far, 180 residents applied and 600 residents showed interest. Hydrodynamic modeling in Nassau and Suffolk County is underway and should be wrapping up soon. The LINAP team is also participating in the efforts that are underway in CT, the Report Card, and the Nitrogen Strategy.

### **EPA Nitrogen Strategy:**

Technical Contract- originally scheduled to close by Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, but since the LISS funded the Option Period the contract, expanding the geographic scope, has been extended to March 2018. All final deliverables can be found on the LISS website (<http://longislandsoundstudy.net/issues-actions/water-quality/nitrogen-strategy/>). The water quality monitoring data summary was recently posted and Task E Hydrodynamic Modeling summary is anticipated to be posted next week. All of these deliverables have been reviewed by the technical stakeholder group. Tasks F and G will be released by the end of the year. A public webinar on this effort will be held on November 8<sup>th</sup> from 12pm-1pm.

Monitoring: Tetra Tech compiled the available water quality monitoring data as part of this contract (Task D). A massive amount of data was collected and it highlights the strength of this effort, but it also points out places where there is very little data. One of those locations was the lower Connecticut River, so EPA initiated an effort to collect samples in late summer 2017. EPA collaborated with CTDEEP and USGS to select 7 locations, from Essex to Old Lyme on four different dates for multiple parameters. They also plan on going out in the spring/summer of 2018. The report summary for this sampling will be posted on the LISS website.

### **LIS Report Card Presentation**

Jamie Vaudrey gave a presentation on the LIS Report Card. Save the Sound produced the second LIS report card in the Fall 2016, after taking it over from the University of Maryland. After taking it over, Save the Sound received a lot of feedback from various stakeholders on how to

make the report card better and more understandable to the public. The report card score is based on four criteria: Dissolved Oxygen, Chlorophyll a, Water Clarity, and nutrients (N, P). The biggest hurdle is how to represent the conditions for nutrients. In order to determine the best way to represent nutrients, Save the Sound sent a survey to experts and stakeholders to get their opinion and establish a technical advisory committee. Save the Sound reviewed the survey results, did a literature review looking at thresholds of other programs, and is holding several webinars the technical advisory committee. Some options they are looking at include, WWTP loads, TN, and average winter surface DIN. Save the Sound plans to have the re-evaluation of the nutrient criteria completed by the end of the year. The next steps include a webinar in mid-November/December, finalizing the report, and releasing the report card in the Spring of 2018 (using 2017 data).

Mark Tedesco adjourned the meeting at 2:37pm.

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