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Winter 2019

LISS NEWS

LISS Budget to Increase to \$14 Million for 2020

The federal and bi-state effort to restore and protect Long Island Sound received a financial boost in February. The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) received a \$14 million appropriation from the federal government for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 and ending Sept. 30, 2020. The appropriation, an increase of \$2 million from the current LISS funding, was signed into law by President Trump on Feb. 15 as part of Congress's omnibus appropriations bill to fully fund the federal government for the current fiscal year.

The money will be used by LISS's federal, state, and local partners for projects that include restoring coastal habitats, purchasing open space to protect coastal habitats, monitoring in the open waters and harbors and bays



Devan Shulby from Harbor Watch collecting a chlorophyll filter in Norwalk, CT. Harbor Watch is one of several groups monitoring embayments as part of Save the Sound's Unified Water Study, which is funded by the LISS. Photo credit: Save the Sound.

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to test for dissolved oxygen levels and other indicators of water quality, and developing a "nutrient bioextraction" plan to harvest shellfish and seaweed for the purpose of removing excess nutrients and improving water quality.

Funding also will be used to continue the Long Island Sound Research Grant Program, which funds scientific research critical to making informed management decisions to help meet the Sound's restoration goals in the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). It also will fund the Long Island Sound Futures Fund Grant Program, which provides over \$2 million a year to local environmental groups and municipalities to help implement the management goals of the CCMP.

These programs and projects and several others are being reviewed by the LISS Management Committee, with recommendations for funding by the end of April. EPA will then work with partners to establish grant agreements during the summer for work to commence October 1, 2019.

In another important development, last October, the Congress passed legislation entitled, America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. A provision of the law reauthorized the Long Island Sound Restoration Act through 2023, which permits the government to appropriate up to \$40 million a year under Section 119 of the Clean Water Act and

\$25 million a year under the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act. This year's \$14 million appropriation is LISS's largest since it joined the National Estuary Program as an inaugural member in 1988. See "Our Plan" on the [LISS website](#) for more information about the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and restoration and protection efforts.

LISS Achieves Habitat Restoration Milestone



One of the many corporate groups, Swiss Re, that volunteered to help plant trees and shrubs at the Otter Creek forest restoration project. Photo credit: Mike Surdej.

In 2018, the LISS partnership achieved a major milestone to provide healthy habitat for coastal wildlife. The Study accomplished its goal to restore 2,000 acres of coastal habitat, three years ahead of its 2020 target. The long-term goal was originally set by EPA regional administrators and the top environment officials in New York and Connecticut in 2006, and was carried over as a LISS Ecosystem Target in 2015 to restore the final 350 acres of the goal.

Estuaries, such as Long Island Sound, where freshwater from upstream rivers mixes with brackish water from the sea, are considered to be some of

the most productive ecosystems in the world. In Long Island Sound, tidal wetlands, beaches and dunes, coastal forests, and other coastal habitats are home to hundreds of fish, invertebrate, and bird species. Wetlands also act as a buffer to intense storms, filter pollutants, and slow shoreline erosion.

LISS started tracking restoration projects in 1998. By the end of 2018, a total of 2002 acres were restored. Projects that were reported completed in 2018 include a 12-acre coastal forest restored by the Westchester Land Trust at Otter Creek in Mamaroneck, and a 7.25-acre freshwater wetland restored by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection at the Bond Property in Greenwich.

The LISS Habitat and Stewardship Database provides descriptions of all New York restoration projects since 1998 (Connecticut projects are still being added.) It can be viewed at lisshabitatorrestoration.com. Information on the Coastal Habitat Ecosystem Target and other restoration goals are available at the LISS Ecosystem Target and Supporting Indicators section of the [LISS website](#).

Sea Grant Programs Announce LISS-Funded Research Grants

This year's research projects awarded through the Long Island Sound Research Grant Program will investigate issues impacting the Sound by sea, by land, and by remote sensing satellite imagery. On February 11, the Sea Grant Programs of Connecticut and New York announced \$1.5 million in awards to four scientific teams selected under the grant competition.

The projects include two that will focus on how oxygen is used by aquatic life, and will involve measuring respiration rates, oxygen levels, organic matter degradation rates, nutrients, carbon dioxide and controlling variables, including pH, alkalinity and temperature. Another project will examine how different homeowner lawn care behaviors influence the export of nitrogen (a component in fertilizer) and stormwater runoff into rivers and Long Island Sound, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policies designed to encourage less polluting lawn care and landscaping practices. The last project will gather data from satellite images of Long Island Sound to help develop new remote sensing products to improve knowledge of Long Island Sound ecosystem parameters, including harmful algal blooms.

A description of each project is available in the Long Island Sound Study [research section](#) of the LISS website.



UConn Marine Scientist Penny Vlahos, center, will be working with UConn colleagues Mike Whitney and Jamie Vaudrey on a LIS Research Grant funded project to measure respiration in the Sound. She is seen here in 2017 conducting CT Sea Grant funded research to study the amount of carbon and nutrients entering Long Island Sound. Photo credit: CT Sea Grant.

The Research Program is supported via a partnership of EPA, through the Long Island Sound Study, and NYSG and CTSG.

AROUND THE SOUND

2019 Long Island Sound Research Conference Set for March 15



On March 15, Port Jefferson Harbor will be the place to learn about the issues facing the health of Long Island, and what's being done to address these issues, from the scientists who study Long Island Sound. The Connecticut and New York Sea Grant Programs, through funding from the Long Island Sound Study, will be hosting the biennial Long Island Sound Research Conference at Danfords Hotel, Marina, and Spa overlooking Port Jefferson Harbor. Over 100 scientists will be presenting their research on Long Island Sound topics from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The registration fee of \$40, includes a continental breakfast and lunch. The deadline to register is March 1.

The plenary speaker will be Dr. Parker MacCready of the School of Oceanography at University of Washington. Visit the New York Sea Grant [website](#) for information on how to register.

The Long Island Sound Research Conference began as a response to a recommendation by the Long Island Sound Assembly that there should be a venue where all of the current science relating to Long Island Sound could be presented. The first Long Island Sound Research Conference was held in 1992.

AROUND THE WEB

LISS Sponsors River Herring Monitoring Training Session



Alewives in the Peconic River. Photo credit: Byron Young.

Restoring the traditional spring spawning run of river herring from the ocean to Long Island Sound to upstream rivers is an important goal for the Long Island Sound Study and many of its partners. As part of LISS's response, Vicky O'Neill, the New York habitat restoration coordinator, through a partnership with Save the Sound and the Cold Spring Harbor Whaling Museum, is providing an opportunity for citizens to help join the restoration effort. by taking training sessions on learning how to monitor river herring in their local streams. The sessions are being held in March in Long Island and Westchester on the following dates:

TUESDAY, March 5

4:30pm – 5:30pm

Cold Spring Harbor Whaling Museum, 301 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor

THURSDAY, March 7

6:00pm – 7:00pm

Save the Sound office, 545 Tompkins Ave, 3rd Floor, Mamaroneck

MONDAY, March 18

6:00pm – 7:00pm

NYSDEC-Marine Resources office, 205 N. Belle Mead Rd, Suite 1, East Setauket

Volunteers are needed to watch for spawning Alewife and Blueback Herring, which are native to Long Island and Westchester. Like salmon, they split their life cycle between salt and freshwater. Most tributaries once supported spring runs of returning river herring. Unfortunately, river herring runs have been decimated by dams, habitat loss, and declining water quality. While remnant populations exist in a few rivers, little is known about their overall status in our area. Documenting existing spawning runs is an important step in the restoration effort.

To register for the training, email Vicky O'Neill at victoria.oneill@dec.ny.gov or call at (631) 444-0441.

AROUND THE WEB

Floating Trash Bin Device Planned for Manhasset Bay

Here's a new idea to tackle the problem of plastics in Long Island Sound. The Manhasset Bay Protection Committee, a LISS Citizen Advisory Committee member organization, is looking to acquire for this summer a "Seabin," a floating rubbish bin that would trap debris in Manhasset Bay. The committee wants to attach it to a floating dock at the Town Dock in Port Washington. Watch a video from the [Seabin Project](#), the organization that makes and distributes the bins.



Photo credit: Seabin Project.

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Long Island Sound Study | EPA Long Island Sound Office
888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT 06904-2152 | Phone: (203) 977-1541