

**Long Island Sound Study
Citizens Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
Thursday, June 10, 2010
1 University Place, Stamford, CT. 06901-2315**

Welcome/Introductions

Connecticut CAC co-chair Curt Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:45 AM. A quorum of 22 CAC members was present.

Open Discussion about LIS

Curt Johnson initiated a discussion about LIS and the Gulf oil spill, which elicited a flurry of responses and issues. The CAC may need to review what preparedness means for Long Island Sound. The next issue of Sound Health will cover the topic of oil spills and preparedness. Had the Broadwater LNG proposal gone through, the CAC would have had to operate from scratch in the event of an accident, underscoring the importance of a contingency plan for existing and proposed proposals affecting LIS. The Norwalk Maritime Aquarium has focused on education; particularly drip-by-drip oil spills in LIS. One of the greatest challenges is getting the public to change their behavior, based on an awareness of the scope of the problem locally. Some members reported that the Gulf Stream will bring oil up east coast. The gulf spill means that resources for not-for-profits in this area are going to that region. The CAC and others can use this accident to refocus and stress that “you can make a difference here too”. The Riverhead Marine Foundation rehab facility is preparing for an increase in the number of impacted animals such as marine mammal strandings. Migrating birds are being impacted, as are sea turtles and marine mammals.

A number of helpful websites were suggested for information on the Gulf oil spill:
CTDEP: http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2692&q=322572&depNav_GID=1648
NYDEC: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/>
New York Audubon: <http://www.audubon.org/>
<http://www.intellicast.com/>
<http://www.ifitwasmymyhome.com/>
Sea Grant: <http://gulfseagrant.tamu.edu/oilspill/index.htm>

Reports

Nancy Seligson and Curt Johnson began the report section with the emphasis on this being a critical time for the CAC and Long Island Sound. Discussion items included the following:

1. Reauthorization of LIS Restoration Act

The CAC Policy Committee is working with the Congressional delegation toward reauthorization, which allows for CAC program and LIS office funding. The Senate reauthorization incorporates and combines the LIS restoration Act and Stewardship Act with the existing authorization levels (a combined allowable annual authorization of \$65

million). The House is working on a much more ambitious comprehensive bill to protect LIS and its watershed, including substantial improvements concerning climate change research, bioextraction pilot work, nutrient trading requirements and a major emphasis on stormwater permitting and funding for water quality standards. It currently does not include the LIS Stewardship Act. Discussion by CAC about the bill continues with Congressman Bishop's office (the author in the House version) and Senator Gillibrand (on the Senate sponsoring committee). The CAC Policy Committee sent a letter in May that raised both support and concern for the enormous scope of the House draft legislation and whether or not it could threaten its passage. Although the annual requested appropriation of \$20 million could happen without authorization, it is not *guaranteed* without it.

What should CAC members do over the summer? Legislators are not hearing about LIS from their constituents; letters are needed. The policy committee will send out an email with specific requested actions. A consistent request for \$20 million for LIS from both houses would be helpful, with the message that estuaries – not just the Gulf – are under siege. We need to look at these great waters together. There is a proposal to bundle the LIS request with six other estuary bills (including the Chesapeake, Puget Sound, Lake Champlain). Adrienne Esposito, from Citizens Campaign for the Environment reported that the NY assembly is working on creation of a bi-state commission. Leah Schmalz, from Save the Sound/CT Fund for the Environment, provided an historical context of the NY/CT bi-state commission of CT and NY state legislators that, 20 years ago, worked well together advocating for LIS, which is not the case today. Although not currently in the CCMP, Curt asked CAC if there is interest in taking a position on/supporting the Assembly. Collaborative actions could be to review laws, coordination, fisheries administration, islands oversight, and it could engage and focus government on LIS issues. Concern was raised about this simply adding another layer of bureaucracy, and that the Commission, as it was passed in Connecticut, was not to be composed of state legislators, which is the level all agreed it should be operating at. The concept of CAC supporting a bi-state commission was tabled to the September meeting and the Policy Committee's input.

2. Plum Island

Curt Johnson thanked the CAC for comments to the letter that was sent June 2nd requesting a full-year survey of Plum Island and a real assessment of a bifurcated sale keeping the natural part of the island subject to a conservation sale, preferably to the USFWS. Plum, Little and Great Gull Islands complex is one of the inaugural 33 LIS Stewardship Sites, and is an important breeding area for the Roseate Tern, as well as other listed bird species. Louise Harrison from USFWS suggested that these islands interact, and an impact to one island will be felt on the other nearby islands and breeding grounds. The North Fork Audubon Society has excellent bird statistics for the past three years that underscores the significance of this site. Many organizations and government officials have aligned behind the positions that were stated in the CAC letter. The USFWS has requested an extension to respond. A Greenport scoping session was well attended, with well-organized and thoughtful support. The town of Southold believes

they have a colonial patent to the island. The opinion was expressed that jurisdiction and protection should not be up to individual towns that are under pressure to undertake development. Cesare Manfredi suggested that the CAC should consider a systematic approach as to how to conserve important island resources of these two and other stewardship sites around the Sound, rather than dealing with them piecemeal. Others noted the tremendous potential to support green energy initiatives and suggested that this be added to any proposal for Plum Island, but it was pointed out that this might be outside the scope of the EIS process.

3. Management Committee and I-Team

Nancy Seligson reported that the Management Committee met in April to approve the \$7.8 million budget. The NYSDEC requested a dramatic change in how funds (\$600,000 for TMDL work) could be used as a result of being in bad financial straights. The Management Committee decided to award \$225,000 to NYSDEC, thereby not funding the Public Perception Survey and \$50,000 of SWEM work, and the CTDEP was able to reduce their budget by \$80,000. The budget has been accepted and approved, but there was a lot of discussion and discomfort about how the process worked. How the money is dispersed is now under discussion. Many agencies don't think LIS will get \$7.8 million this year; the worst-case scenario would be \$3 million. Nancy passed on kudos from the I-Team about the good work being done by CAC.

4. Harbor Estuary Program (HEP)

Nancy Seligson and Marty Garrell reported that at the joint meeting of the Long Island Sound Study and NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program (HEP) several collaborative opportunities were suggested: stewardship and habitat restoration, climate change, and funding. There is a geographic overlap in LISS and HEP jurisdictions at the East River. A vote was taken (20/3) in favor of collaborating on the issue of stewardship and habitat restoration.

5. Other Updates

Curt and Judy Preston discussed a possible trip to Plum Island. No quarantine is required, but a criminal background check will require all visitors to provide detailed background information in advance. A show of hands indicated that 29 CAC members expressed interest in a visit.

Joel Ziev from the town of North Hempstead, NY, and the CAC advisory representative for the dredge management plan, volunteered to serve on a regional dredge working group. TNC will also be represented on this group. A motion made by Cesare Manfredi was seconded by Marty Garrell and all voted in favor of Joel serving on the regional dredge working group.

Mickey Weiss, from Project Oceanology, reported that STAC has identified several categories for the LIS research grant program, including: food web dynamics, hypoxia, nitrogen control measures, LIS response to climate change, and habitat restoration. Sea Grant will administer these funds.

Sound Vision Update and Working Session

Drew Carey from Coastal Vision reviewed the purpose of the Sound Vision project: to work on a five year action plan, with the desire to link funding needs to specific results and the protection of living marine resources.

CAC focus areas are:

1. Protect & Restore Water Quality
2. Protect and Restore Fisheries and Marine Biodiversity
3. Protect and Restore Vital Habitats
4. Assure Public Access and Acquire Open Space
5. Maintain Healthy Watersheds
6. Foster Public Engagement
7. Enhance Partnering and Management
8. Multiple Use of Public Waters

Workshop ideas from CAC included: clean Sound, people and the Sound, infrastructure and the Sound, watersheds, engaging new people, and law enforcement. Four potential themes were discussed: Water, Land, Animals/Organisms, and People. Jennifer Wilson-Pines from Manhasset Bay Protection Commission, reminded all that the term “resources” is an 18th century concept of use of biodiversity and cautioned the application of its use. The need for a marketing program and branding was discussed. In the coming weeks there will be four workshops for CAC participation to continue the momentum of Sound Vision goals. Leah will send everyone a link to the Sound Vision presentation.

Updates/Announcements

Nancy Seligson gave a brief overview of the supplemental materials that were sent to all CAC members for the meeting. Jim Latimer will be spending 50% time doing LIS science work with the STAC, along with Julie Rose. Curt Johnson summarized the May 24th LIS Citizen’s Summit: an urban focus on green infrastructure. There was a lot of interest and good attendance.

It was suggested that at the next CAC meeting TNC present their coastal adaptation project.

The next CAC meeting in New York City has been **RESCHEDULED** from September 9th to **September 16th** due to the Jewish holiday.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.