

**Long Island Sound Study
Citizens Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
Thursday, December 9, 2010
UConn, Stamford, CT**

Open Discussion: Elections & Cross-cutting Issues

Adrienne Esposito reported that Congressman Tim Bishop will be going back to Congress, and state senator Suzi Oppenheimer also won re-election. Curt Johnson remarked that for the first time since the 1980's there will be a democratic house, senate and governor in Connecticut. Despite the huge budget deficit in Connecticut, Governor Malloy (former Mayor of Stamford) has said that DEP has been starved for 20 years (75 less positions than in 1998), and that economy *and* environment are concerns. Malloy was aware of and supportive of LIS environmental issues as Mayor. DEP Commissioner Amy Morella announced \$3.5-4 million for 17 habitat protection and restoration projects around Long Island Sound to be funded by penalty money, with 600K from the CT license plate fund. Conversation continued about the tenuous state of New York's DEC, with the firing of NYDEC Commissioner Pete Grannis, massive DEC lay-offs – 200 more since the firing; the department is suffering from very low moral. The official reason for the firing was a memo leak discussing damage to the agency and the environment from lay offs, including extended shell fish bed closures, water quality managing, spills etc. Adrienne reported that the NY Environment and Energy Transition team is focusing on recruitment, review and recommendations for DEC and Parks, Environment and Facilities. They will recommend a slate to Governor Cuomo.

Mark Tedesco gave an update from the LISS Management Committee and stressed the interest in and importance of strengthening embayment monitoring and volunteer efforts throughout LIS. This includes addressing the proposal process for better objective setting and funding. The funding challenge remains. The Management Committee wants to identify specific proposals for funding at its January meeting, with the final decisions expected in April. Curt Johnson sought input from the CAC, receiving comments from Pat Aitken and Pete Sattler about existing monitoring efforts and the observation that there exist high levels of cooperation and agreement between organizations, which extends the funding impact. Jon Kachmar underscored the importance of standardizing the collection of data so that the results are comprehensive, the process is repeatable, and the information can be used for long term analysis, further suggesting that it shouldn't be done unless it is done right. Cesare Manfredi commented that we need an inventory of existing programs. Ann Rodney (EPA Reg1) reported that EPA is committed to volunteer monitoring, and that a (5-year) equipment loan program exists; details may be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/region1/lab/volmonequiploan.html>. If people or organizations want to be placed on an email notification list, e-mail switzer.diane@epa.gov or contact Ann at (617) 918-1538, rodney.ann@epa.gov. Curt asked for a showing of hands that believe that there should be increased support for citizen's monitoring that is standardized and repeatable. A majority of hands went up.

Short Updates:

Management Committee: Nancy Seligson reported that the CAC had a very big impact on budget discussions within the Management Committee, with suggested budget proportions being very closely adopted. The Management Committee Executive Steering Committee has agreed to meet three times a year in advance of the MC budget meetings, and to develop a one to two page action agenda.

NEP Region 2/CAC meeting: Curt Johnson reported that Judith Enck (EPA Region II Regional Administrator) presided over the gathered EPA Region II NEP programs at the October meeting. The meeting was a good opportunity for regional interaction. Nancy Seligson will be sending out minutes soon. Curt also acknowledged that, thanks to Adrienne and Sandy, that LIS advocacy is way ahead, in part because we have been at it longer.

Plum Island trip: This was a very popular trip, complete with interest in the ongoing conspiracy theories. The *Preserve Plum Island Coalition* is working to get more information about Plum Island, and the USFW is trying to push for a full environmental assessment of the site. The draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) will be coming out in the spring. Louise Harrison, with the Stewardship Workgroup, will coordinate a meeting on the islands of LIS in the spring. Sharon Marino (USFWS) is interested in focusing on LIS islands, with the added advantage of a dedicated staff person. Cesare Manfredi spoke of David's Island, off the coast of New Rochelle. A former 1950's army base (like Plum Island), then owned by Con Edison, it is now owned by New Rochelle. The City has a committee looking at existing conditions (including hazardous waste left by the military) and vision for this LIS island.

Long Beach Celebration: Curt Johnson reported on the celebration for approvals to remove 35 cottages from this barrier beach in Bridgeport. The dune complex is being restored; this site is an area of major investment for restoration and support from the LISS.

STAC Update: Mickey Weiss reported that the STAC meeting took a focused look at climate change and LIS. At the LIS Research Conference, presented papers looked at physical processes, mapping, hypoxia and chemical and biological interactions. The abstracts can be found at the LIS Foundation website: <http://lisfoundation.org/researchConf2010.php>. A presentation by Mike Whitney looked at drifter (floatables) in LIS, and where they would go via modeling. This study generated interesting patterns of movement in tidal cycles, and demonstrated how interlinked LIS and Block Island Sound currents are. Grant Westerson commented that a parallel article is in the latest Soundings magazine. Mickey suggested that volunteer monitoring programs should make the effort to report their findings at the research conference; this would force the monitors to compile and analyze their data and potentially find anomalies that would be of scientific interest. Nancy Seligson agreed and suggested that this be added to the LISFF RFP.

Land and Water Conservation update: Sandy Breslin reported on the impact of the recent election on LIS and environmental legislation. An exciting piece of legislation was developed with multiple inputs, incorporating the reauthorization of the LIS Restoration Act and the LIS Stewardship Act, Plum Island, expanded water quality efforts, climate change, regional storm water permitting, and sewer upgrades. There was also a big increase in the authorization request: \$125 million. With the results of the November election the political landscape has changed; the process has stalled and it is unclear if the bill will go through. The chances of authorization are pretty slim. The National Wildlife Federation has started the *Great Waters Coalition*, which would include upper watershed states, and Republican votes. LIS got rolled into Great Waters, which got rolled into a bigger Land & Water omnibus (over 100 bills). We can still get appropriations without authorization, but we would like reauthorization as well. We're still advocating, and we need everyone to thank elected officials and ask them, via letters and calls, to continue to advocate for LIS. We are not alone – this is an issue for all estuaries, except for the general NEP program. There are two separate efforts: the continuing resolution for Federal funding and long-term re-authorization of the LIS legislation, (via Peter King as the sponsor)?. We need to focus on a common strategy and local initiatives, and work to tie together the Great Lakes and LIS again. EPA has created a map of Futures Fund projects by congressional districts, showing the importance of locally funded projects. We need to re-invite congressional representatives to come to a CAC meeting. Nancy Seligson requested feedback from CAC members who call legislators. Curt encouraged the CAC to look at the letter sent out last week; all senators and representatives are important.

Dredge Committee Funding update: Curt Johnson reminded the CAC that 5% of the funding allocations were recommended to focus on small, recreational harbor planning and management (including dredging) issues. This has been cut to 3%. He turned the topic of use of these funds over to Grant Westerson, who reported that Joel Ziev, who was not in attendance, recommended that money be given to the NY Department of State for the maintenance committee working with the regional dredging team. In CT, Grant suggested looking at historic disposal sites near small harbors, as transportation of dredge spoils is costly. Second, look at sources of cadmium contamination in dredge spoils vs. existing background levels; this may or may not be as big a problem as has been suggested. Grant's third point was: many disposal sites are subject to closure windows because of marine species breeding or migrations, although there is a lack of scientific data to back this up. This is problematic, because windows for dredging are already small because dredging can't be done in summer when marinas are in operation. Drew Carey commented that the Massachusetts Department of marine fisheries has done a review of dredging windows, at www.nerdt.org, tab - environmental windows. Maine has also done a review; that report may not be out yet.

Sound Vision update/Priority Discussion: Leah Schmalz and Drew Carey reported on the results of the recent workshops that queried CAC members for opinions about the established seven focus areas (water quality, wildlife and biodiversity, public access and acquisition of land, navigability and multiple uses of public water, protect and restore vital habitat, maintain healthy watersheds, public engagement). The Vision Process is: Focus – topic – desired result – threats – strategies. The detailed results will be made available to the Committee via a website address that Leah will send out. The overall goal is to get the watershed closer to natural conditions. Drew stressed that the message should not be that we have yet another need, but rather that we have one need: *Healthy Watersheds Lead to a Healthy Sound*. Drew recapped the salient points that came from the four workshops that were held: **Water Quality:** It's not just nutrients; nonpoint source/stormwater management and climate change are new priorities. **Wildlife and Biodiversity:** Extends far past the coastal areas, as species move back and forth. Need broad based and adaptive management. Species and habitat are so linked they must be managed together. Think in terms of broad categories, charismatic wildlife, species that use a lot of different habitats (terrapins, horseshoe crabs). Delineate habitat boundaries by watershed, not political lines. Update biological inventories. Climate change; identify species most likely to be impacted. Recognize that temperature change may drive out certain species and introduce others. **Public Access, Open Space, Navigability, and Multiple uses of Public Waters:** Develop the perception that LIS belongs to everyone. Increase public access; quantify value of open land to municipalities. Maintain existing access; reduce sediment (and contaminant) loads that limit access; protect lands impacted by climate change; reduce conflicts over multiple uses via marine spatial planning. **Protect and Restore Vital Habitats and Maintain Healthy Watersheds:** Preserve pre-development hydrology. Broad diversity is important; habitat is important for commercial and recreational purposes, and for the intrinsic value of wildlife (quality is as important as quantity). Keep soil structure close to pre development conditions; improve water quality in watersheds; reduce erosion, sediment load, and minimize flooding. Protect ecological function during sea level rise and changing hydrology; provide guidance on flooding and sea level simulations. **Next steps** are to have a webinar for feedback on priorities, host a workshop on education and messaging, create a draft Sound Visioning document, with the final deadline in March of 2011. Mark Tedesco asked to consider recommendations that can become actions in this process. Cesare Manfredi stressed the importance of the floatable debris problem because that is what people see. David Miller asked, "How do we take this info and paint the vision?" and stressed the importance of being specific, before the actions, in order to create a picture that captures what is tangible. Leah suggested that next steps would be to compile actions and seek public engagement by hiring a consultant to determine messaging. This would be crafted into a final document and possible public outreach campaign. Drew noted that the sheer volume of information gathered (and strategies), although useful detail, is overwhelming. We will need to find out what excites people, before we can condense. In the end, the CAC will need to decide what are the five most important ideas. Several people commented about the importance of living resources as ambassadors. Other comments included: hypoxia needs emphasis; need to use the term "climate change *adaptations*",

final recommendations should be linked to responsible agencies; people feel blocked out from access to the Sound; people are integral to the “urban sea” of LIS, and “LIS is not a problem, but a place.” David Miller suggested looking at www.projectearth.net.

Other Business

Curt Johnson proposed the idea of a CAC fieldtrip to Jamaica Bay, New York, where the Army Corp of Engineers has been doing marsh restoration. This trip could be timed to coordinate with the spring bird migrations, with assistance from Audubon. The idea was well received.

Meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.