

Long Island Sound Study  
Citizens Advisory Committee  
Meeting Summary  
Thursday, September 8, 2011  
Pfizer Corporation Headquarters, New York City, NY

Meeting started at 9:30 am

**Interactive Discussion: Summer on the Sound**

Abbie Coderre, from the Saybrook Point Inn and Marina, reported that commercial fishermen and marina owners are trying new things and enjoying the Sound, including just anchoring their boats to swim in the Sound, which is perceived to be cleaner, despite some beach closings. Fishermen are reporting great fishing, including more fluke, bluefish, and strippers, including a new record 82-pound striper caught off the Westbrook shoreline. Concern was raised about the impacts of Hurricane Irene and the large amounts of silt on fish populations. Abbie suggested that fertilizer, golf courses and lawns, and sewage are the biggest problems for the Sound, and after the hurricane, erosion has exposed septic systems locally. Maureen Dolan-Murphy from Citizens Campaign for the Environment commented that because of the bad economy people are not pumping their septic tanks; Dan Natchez from DSNA, Inc., reported that due to the heavy rains this summer, sewage treatment plants have discharged more raw sewage into LIS. The discussion focused on septic and sewage pollution in Long Island Sound, particularly the inability of sewage treatment plants to handle the heavy rains that the region has had. Adrienne Esposito, from Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE), reported that six major sewage treatment plants on Long Island discharged raw sewage as a result of Hurricane Irene. Pat Aitkin, from Friends of the Bay, reported that the wet August resulted in a lot of beach closures, in contrast to last year's dry summer that resulted in fewer beach closures.

Alternative on-site sewage treatment issues were discussed, with emphasis on the need to monitor these systems. Carol DiPaolo from Hempstead Harbor Coalition reported that there was *no* fish kill in Hempstead Harbor – or anywhere else in the Sound that she knows of this summer. This summer in Hempstead Harbor, 2500 acres of shellfish beds have been re-opened – a wonderful event and the best indicator of water quality improvements. Some of these shell-fishing grounds have been closed for 70 years. Approximately 10 commercial clammers fished every day. They are now trying to assess what the allowable harvest levels should be to maintain the resource. A large pod of Bottle-nosed dolphins appeared in the Sound this year. Carol also reported on the creative uses of over 22,000 plastic discs recovered on Long Island from an accidental discharge from a sewage treatment facility in Mamaroneck, New York. Artists have created sculptures, including a 5' fish, in a show called *Reclaiming Eden* (<http://www.artleagueli.org/node/429>). Adrienne Esposito reported that an EPA audit of stormwater discharges in Northport found disturbing violations and evidence of raw sewage discharges.

Hurricane Irene increased dissolved oxygen levels in the Sound due to mixing, as reported by Brian Mitchell from Interstate Environmental Commission (IES). A lot of garbage was swept away due to the Hurricane; International Coastal Cleanup day is September 17<sup>th</sup>. The hurricane also resulted in a large amount of unusual bird sightings,

including white and brown pelicans, a number of terns, including one dead bridled tern. Curt Johnson, CT Fund for the Environment, showed visual images of storm damage along the Branford and East Haven, where there was a six-foot tidal surge. In East Haven 18 to 20 structures were destroyed by the hurricane. Nancy Seligson, Town of Mamaroneck, suggested that the CAC has not dealt directly with the issue of climate change and sea level rise, and the fact that we will likely be seeing more violent storms in the future; this is a topic that the CAC needs to figure out how to address, as it relates to protection and rebuilding. Art Glouka suggested that this summer saw the “complete collapse” of the food chain in western Long Island Sound. Dan Natchez suggested that the CAC have The Nature Conservancy come talk about their work with coastal resilience.

### **Welcome, Housekeeping & Logistics**

Introductions were made, noting new member *Boyd McDonald* from MWH Americas Inc.

### **Sound Vision Action Plan**

Nancy Seligson introduced the objective for the CAC meeting: to prioritize funding and actions in the Sound Vision Action Plan to report at the October Management Committee and to form the focus of the CAC for the next year. Curt reiterated that votes should represent what each CAC member’s organization is most vested in as well as the focus for potential modest additional investments to add to our federal LISS budget. Curt also acknowledged and thanked Leah Schmalz from Save the Sound (STS) for her extraordinary efforts making the Sound Vision Action Plan come to fruition. Leah reported that there were over 100 press pieces from the summer’s seven events, and gave credit to many CAC participants, including Sandy Breslin, from Audubon CT., who was at every event. Many dignitaries and state elected officials participated as well, including CT DEEP commissioner Dan Esty, DEC representatives, CT state attorney general, Congressmen Bishop, DeLauro, Himes and Courtney as well as Senator Blumenthal, a wide array of NY and CT state legislators and EPA regional administrator Curt Spalding. Leah acknowledged both Nancy and Curt for their hard work for this effort. Diane Selditch from SoundWaters reported about the efforts to move the SoundWaters boat around because of Hurricane Irene, and gave credit to Save the Sound staff for their solid coordination. On September 30<sup>th</sup> a final event will be held in Mystic, CT and will involve volunteers weaving eelgrass into planting mats that will be planted as pilot eelgrass restoration beds. Curt reported that there were a lot of participants that are very excited about the good news and progress being made for Long Island Sound. Nancy thanked SoundWaters for the opportunity to have access to the boat. Mark Tedesco reported that the Action Agenda is closely aligned with Sound Vision.

Adrienne reported that in August a bi-state meeting convening New York and Connecticut officials talking about what the needs of Long Island Sound was held in Port Jefferson, LI. The meeting was well represented by state legislators from both states that collectively agreed upon 15 topics that need to be addressed. They agreed to meet again in October, with the objective of addressing what legislation can go through both state legislatures. Each state also committed to creating a LIS caucus. The meeting was closed to the press; there was good chemistry among participants. Curt reported that

two key people, Representatives Lonnie Reed of Branford along with Pat Woodlitz, who chairs the finance/bonding committee, are excited about the LIS bond package, and that's good news for LIS. Al Caccese from Audubon New York said that Assemblyman Bob Sweeney was absent from the meeting and that he and Adrienne would be following up on the NY Assembly caucus.

Mark Tedesco commented that the Sound Vision Action Plan was huge endeavor of which the CAC should be enormously proud. Peter Brandt from EPA Region 2 was very impressed after visiting a CAC meeting on the depth of discussion and willingness to share ideas. The planning process has come so far and exceeded expectations. Nancy thanked Mark for his "generosity of spirit" through the Sound Vision process. Leah reminded everyone that on October 28<sup>th</sup> the LISWA conference topic will be about Sound Vision. The meeting will be held in Bridgeport at the Housatonic Community College. Curt asked the CAC to think of a free facility on Long Island for next year's LISWA meeting.

The CAC next voted for their priorities [attached].

### **Policy, Legislative and Advocacy discussion/update**

Al Caccese from NY Audubon reported that the Governor's office in NY has little interest in an environmental bond act for Long Island Sound, and that support will need to be built for a statewide initiative with broader appeal. Clean water polls high, but if sold as infrastructure improvements, then roads and bridges will be the focus. Joe McGee, from SACIA, reported that both Governors would announce commissions to investigate the impacts of Hurricane Irene. The initial focus will be on electricity losses, but will move on to flooding and infrastructure. In NY, emphasis will be on damages in upstate.

Adrienne reported that Congressman Bishop reintroduced the same LIS Improvement bill that was introduced in 2010. The policy committee has recommended a simple reauthorization bill and staff of Cong. Israel and Sen. Gillibrand support that approach. The recommended strategy is to introduce a simple reauthorization bill in the Senate and then use that as a model for the House. Sandy Breslin noted that reauthorization will be a challenge and that a strong letter writing campaign in support of the bill will be needed.

The Policy Committee agreed to: organize a trip to DC to meet with the congressional caucus in support of LIS reauthorization; meet with the NY Governor's staff on September 23; advocate for a "right-to-know" about raw sewage releases; and discuss disaster planning with FEMA.

### **CAC Subcommittee/LIS Work Group Reports Nominating Subcommittee**

Nancy Seligson announced that the CAC needs volunteers for a nominating committee. Abbie Coderre and Joel Ziev, from Town of North Hempstead Town Hall, volunteered, and it was thought that Grant Westerson, from Ct Marine Trades Association, had

formerly volunteered, although he was not at the meeting to confirm this. A slate is needed thirty days in advance of the next CAC meeting on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Nancy, Curt and Marty Garrell, from Adelphi University, wish to run for re-election.

#### **Dredging Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Joel Ziev reported that the subcommittee continues to participate on the Regional Dredging Group, but that the workgroup has not met since the last CAC meeting; there was no update.

#### **Tracking and Accountability Subcommittee**

No update

#### **Communications Work Group**

Judy Preston reported that the latest edition of Protection and Progress is hot off the press. It is an impressive publication that documents progress that is being made on many fronts to clean up and protect Long Island Sound. Anyone who would like copies mailed to them should let Judy know, or contact Larissa Graham or Robert Burg. The communications team continues to work on the LISS website, including a planned "Sound Landscaping" page, and continue to pursue a strategy for social marketing.

#### **Habitat Restoration Initiative Work Group**

No update

#### **NPS and Watersheds Work Group**

Sarah Deonarine reported that the entire Long Island Sound is now a no discharge zone, which was well received by the CAC. The Work Group is working to prioritize their work plan, and continues to look into issues concerning one consensus recommendation for the northeast for slow release plant fertilizer. Nancy talked about responsible lawn care as being one of the three themes for the upcoming regional CAC meeting.

#### **Stewardship Initiative Work Group**

Sandy Breslin reported that there is a stewardship team meeting coming up. They continue to work on the decision-support model to help them refine the search for viable areas to protect.

#### **Updates/Announcements**

Nancy Seligson reported on plans for an upcoming EPA Region 2 Joint CAC Workshop (date to be determined). The suggested focus: 1) *valuation of estuaries* and 2) *a communications campaign*. A panel of 2-4 speakers would discuss topics including communications and government relations, and responsible fertilizer use and related lawn care pollution reduction practices. After the speakers, a facilitator will lead a discussion about opportunities to communicate both as individual programs and with a unified voice on various topics.

Curt Johnson gave an overview of the CAC Jamaica Bay wetland restoration tour, where dredge material have been used to create bird habitat. A brief conversation ensued about the potential for using dredge material in LIS to create habitat. All participants agreed that it was an exciting trip.

Mark Tedesco reported that five states are trying to create an agreement on a tentative framework for an enhanced implementation of the current TMDL. This will take two to three years to complete.

Mickey Weiss, from Project Oceanology, reported on the July 8 STAC meeting in Stony Brook, LI and gave an update on the LIS synthesis book. A few chapters have been completed or are near completion, with others far behind. Mark Tedesco remarked that the project has gone from mostly undone to mostly done and there is a concerted effort to complete the project being made. Mickey dispelled the notion at the STAC meeting that the CAC is resistant to supporting monitoring. The STAC was complimentary about the CAC's planning efforts and efforts to go after funds for LIS, especially for research. Mickey also said that he would like to see the SWEM model used as a model tool to evaluate our progress at nutrient reduction in LIS. STAC sentiment is that the SWEM model could be substantially improved; Mickey suggested that whatever is done to the model to improve it should include the ability to look at the impacts of nitrogen on the LIS system. Mark Tedesco said that a model evaluation group will be forming. The CAC expressed interest in participating as an observer; Mickey would be willing to do this. The next meeting of the STAC will be on November 18 in New Haven.

Potential Next Meeting Topics:

TNC to discuss their Coastal Resiliency program

Jim Tierney, NYS DEC, to discuss NYS Coastal Hazard Program

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:24 pm.

## ATTACHMENT

### CAC Sound Vision Action Plan, overlapped with LISS Action Agenda

#### 2011-2013 Action Item Summary

Tallies: The top choices are highlighted in green; grey denotes a tie.

Final scores are to the right of the action item.

#### ***Investing in an Economically Vibrant LIS***      **Prioritize 3**

1. **Maintain current or increase federal investment in LIS** **33**
2. **Advocate for CT and NY capital investments in Sound to create jobs and clean LIS** **22**
3. ~~Improve and implement voluntary re-registration LIS auto plate in CT~~ **6**
4. ~~Create voluntary LIS license plate program in NY~~ **3**
5. ~~Create voluntary LIS trailer and boat registration contribution program in both states~~ **6**
6. ~~End tax on CT shellfish landings~~ **1**
7. ~~Oppose increased fees on boat sales and maintenance of boats less than 28 feet~~ **3**

**[Comment: Need Outreach and Education option]**

#### ***Protecting Clean Water to Achieve a Healthy Sound***      **Prioritize 6**

8. ~~Update the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the Sound~~ **7**
9. ~~Update the legal limits and framework for nitrogen pollution (TMDL) for the Sound~~ **5**
10. **Coordinate and support Sound Wide citizen monitor water quality in local bays, coves and harbors and provide a common, visual data tracking system** **19**
11. **Reduce nitrogen pollution from sewage plants to meet 58.5% TMDL reduction goal by 2015** **9**
12. ~~Pilot mussel and algae bioextraction projects to filter nitrogen pollution~~ **2**
13. ~~Pilot at least one LIS oyster sanctuary restoration project to filter nitrogen pollution~~
14. ~~Pilot citizen engagement as shellfish cultivators to filter nitrogen~~
15. ~~Support sustainable aquaculture to filter nitrogen pollution~~ ~~Pilot shellfish restoration; involve citizens~~ **11**
16. **Continue CSO and SSO amelioration projects to continue in both states** **4**
17. ~~Create a Sound wide vessel on board toilet discharge ban~~
18. ~~Create storm water green infrastructure projects, especially in CSO communities~~ **16**
19. ~~Educate all municipalities on green infrastructure stormwater treatment~~ **7**
20. ~~Create stormwater construction permits in entire LIS watershed to require no net increase in runoff~~ **3**
21. **Control septic tank pollution in specific hotspots** **12**
22. ~~Research sources and cost-effective techniques for controlling nonpoint source pathogens~~ **4**
23. ~~Promote local stormwater control projects~~ **5**
24. ~~Develop~~ ~~Advance guidance for non-agriculture turf fertilizer use~~ **6**
25. ~~Implement low impact development programs~~ **3**
26. ~~Eliminate plastic bag garbage and create Sound restoration fund~~ **5**
27. ~~Negotiate a re-formulation of fertilizers with the fertilizer industry to control the release of nutrients from lawn fertilizer~~ **4**

- 28. Protect buffers along streams and rivers for flood protection and water quality benefits **11**
- 29. *Outreach and Education: What we put on the land is delivered to the Sound. Invest/seed a significant professional social marketing campaign for the Sound* **18**

**Create Safe and Thriving Places for All Sound Creatures** **Prioritize 3**

- 30. Protect 820 acres of coastal stewardship habitat locations **11**
- 31. Improve urban habitats for wildlife and people **9**
- 32. Identify and protect 175 acres of upland areas into which coastal marshes could migrate **8**
- 33. Restore eelgrass to six new locations **2**
- 34. Restore 200 acres of coastal habitat & reopen 80 miles of rivers & streams to fish migration **5**
- ~~35. migrate~~
- 36. Expand recreational fishing access **4**
- 37. Stop poaching of shorts and out of season fish **0**
- 38. Control black-market netting of menhaden **0**
- 39. Engage coastal urban [**underserved**] neighborhoods **4**
- 40. Protect undeveloped portions of Plum Island **9**
- 41. Create a LIS-wide Islands for People campaign **3**
- 42. Analyze 100 year fishery and climate correlations **3**
- 43. *Outreach and Education: Both wildlife and people need places of refuge. We need natural functioning beaches, dunes, marshes, wetlands and forests along our coasts and rivers to protect us from increasing flooding risks. Invest in an associated outreach plan and new public perception poll.* **13**

**Building LIS Communities that Work** **Prioritize 3**

- 44. Implement sustainable dredge management to maintain recreational boating access **18**
- 45. Invest to create 7,000 clean water, habitat restoration and green infrastructure jobs **14**
- 46. Protect and expand marine-dependent working waterfronts and public access **11**
- 47. Convene stakeholders to plan for sea level rise **9**
- 48. Investigate softer coastal engineering alternatives **2**
- 49. Begin coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP);-Collect data and initiate analysis **7**
- ~~50. Collect data and initiate analysis for CMSP~~
- 51. Create legal framework for CMSP in CT **2**
- 52. Create CMSP regional outreach plan; Facilitate communication for all parties **0**
- ~~53. Facilitate communication for all parties for CMSP~~
- 54. Convene and educate LIS citizens that a clean LIS creates jobs, helps the economy and is critical to our communities **11**

*Outreach and Education: Partner with tourism and economic development in a Come to the Sound campaign that highlights the wonderful eateries, marinas, inns and recreational facilities along the Sound, to inspire more use and “staycations”* **14**