

Long Island Sound Study Habitat Restoration and Stewardship Workgroup Meeting Summary- Fall 2014

Long Island Sound Study Habitat Restoration and Stewardship Workgroups had a joint meeting in September at Caumsett State Park, one of the Long Island Sound Study's largest Stewardship Sites.

Members discussed **low impact development projects** funded through the Future's Fund and recent Stewardship Workgroup RFP. This discussion included a focus on the opportunity to **leverage ecological services** provided by Stewardship Sites for the benefit of human communities that surround them. We also touched on targeting low impact development projects to help abate threats, like nitrogen loading that limit seagrass populations in Long Island Sound as described in a recent study through The Nature Conservancy.¹



Workgroup members & presenters. Sept. Meeting, Caumsett State Park

Back row left to right: Tim Wenskus (NYC Parks), Chantal Collier (TNC), Harry Yamalis (CT DEEP- HRWG Co Chair), Annie McIntyre (NYSOPRHP), Jeff Main (Westchester Parks), Rebecca Oyer (Audubon NY), Sue Feustel (The Caumsett Foundation), Cassie Bauer (NY DEC), Rebecca Swadek (NYC Parks), Jamie Sutherland (Douglaston Manor Environmental Association), Bill Purtill (NYSOPRHP, Park manager Nissequogue River State Park), Amy Mandelbaum (NY SeaGrant), Dave Kozak (CT DEEP, SWG Co Chair)

Front row left to right: Georgia Basso (USFWS/LISS, HRWG&SWG CoChair), Holly Drinkuth (TNC), Erin Brosnan (GEI Consultants), Marybeth Billerman (GEI Consultants), Jane Jackson (North Shore Land Alliance), Kathleen McCarthy (NYC Parks), Kerri Dikun (Audubon NY), Vicky O'Neill (NY DEC/ HRWG Co Chair), Suzanne Paton (USFWS)

Not pictured but in attendance: Paul DeOrsay (Friends of the Bay), Aline Euler (Community Board 11's Environment Committee), Henry Euler (Community Board 11's Environment Committee), Mike Gannon (Douglas Manor Association), Jamie VanDyke (Town of Oyster Bay), Anthony Graves (Town of Brookhaven), Lara Urbat (NPV), Carrie O'Farrell (NPV)

Members discussed recent efforts by partners around the Sound to **raise public awareness of Stewardship Sites** by hosting series of Stewardship Days in NY and CT. We premiered one of the Stewardship films² created this summer featuring volunteer engagement through **Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge**. Several films for various Stewardship sites will be posted on the website in the near future in an effort to raise public interest and awareness of these sites.



Suzanne Paton (USFWS, Coastal Program) offers insight on ordering separate seed mixes of coastal grassland species to ensure the desired species composition. Other members including NYC Parks shared their experience with grassland restoration in urban areas

The afternoon session focused on a grassland habitat presentation and restoration tour given by Suzanne Feustel (The Caumsett Foundation) & Annie McIntyre (NYSOPRHP). This 35 acre restoration is a **Future's Funded project**. Sue described the meticulous and thorough site preparation the Caumsett Foundation has led to control invasives and prepare the site for native grassland seeding in 2015.



Development pressure had reduced much of the **Long Island Sound Area grasslands** to patchy fragments. Loss of this habitat affects grassland birds like horned lark and eastern meadowlark as well as pollinator populations, like the Baltimore checkerspot butterfly which has disappeared nearly completely from Long Island. Sue Feustel found what is considered the only known breeding population for the butterfly on Long Island in the grasslands at Caumsett State Park³.

Restoration projects like the 35 acre parcel at Caumsett (pictured above) can help these species, which have experienced significant declines in recent years. The grassland above is roped off and seeded with a rye cover crop to help reduce invasive species. It will be seeded with native grasses in 2015. This **35 acre grassland** restoration effort being led by The Caumsett Foundation in partnership with NY DEC is **one of the largest of its kind** in the Long Island Sound area.



Restoration and protection of grasslands in the Long Island Sound Area can benefit species in decline including the eastern meadowlark, Baltimore checkerspot butterfly and horned lark

¹ The Nature Conservancy's Sea Grass Research Initiative <http://nature.org/seagrassresearch>

² Short Film: Volunteers participate in a Stewardship Day led by Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge on Sheffield Island <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsUFz9AeYGE&list=UUjd5jLWL3sVwZ7Eys2sGkog>

³ For more information on the Baltimore Checkerspot
http://www.naba.org/pubs/ab174/ab174Baltimore_Checkerspots_on_Long_Island.pdf