

Long Island Sound Study Science and Technical Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes

14 November 2008 (Stony Brook, NY)

Welcome & 2009 NY STAC chair

NY STAC co-chair Larry Swanson called the meeting to order. Swanson welcomed everyone and mentioned the meeting might be smaller than normal due to CT travel limitations. Swanson then asked for self introductions. Swanson then discussed getting the search for the next NY co-chair started. Swanson stated that the election will take place during the next STAC meeting. Carmela Cuomo and Peter Sattler volunteered to head the nomination committee. Mark Tedesco asked people to send nominations to the nomination committee. Cornelia Schlenk asked how long the term was. Swanson responded saying that it was a two year term.

Environmental indicators review (Shimon Anisfeld)

The presentation is attached so notes of the presentation will not be included. Instead topics that arose that were not included in the presentation will be mentioned, this includes questions

During the presentation Swanson asked Anisfeld if the meetings he had with researchers had been selected to reduce lack of bias. Anisfeld answered by saying that it was not his goal to quantify the discussions in a quantitative way but instead was just a way for him to get more information. Anisfeld said he started with the indicator team and then followed leads. Anisfeld stated that it was not as extensive as needed but that it got him up to speed with the project. Swanson asked if he included members from CT and NY, to which Anisfeld replied that he had.

Anisfeld was discussing the types of data the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) had collected and suggested that data that was specific to one site not be included. He suggested changing the website so that the primary data was for the entire Long Island Sound (LIS) basin or state. Cuomo questioned Anisfeld about including more estuary sites even though those were site specific. Anisfeld answered that embayments do not fit into these categories, but embayment data does need to be included and data already collected needs to be categorized more.

Anisfeld mentioned that maps should be associated with data, and that there were some scale issues associated with the project. Cuomo suggested to have the website refer to other websites that have more data on regional topics with larger scales than LIS.

Anisfeld wanted more embayments included in the indicators. Anisfeld suggested that volunteer groups may be a good way to get more data on embayments. He mentioned how the Norwalk Harbor group was a good example, but urged that with volunteer groups there could be quality control issues that need to be monitored with strong supervision.

Anisfeld mentioned how a lot of the data included in the project was very good because it was over very large time scales. Anisfeld stressed the need to include long term monitoring programs that are consistent and do not get cut.

Anisfeld then began to discuss how to choose and organize indicators to maximize their usefulness. Anisfeld suggested starting with things people were worried about, then coming up with the indicators to monitor them. Anisfeld said that the problem with current organization is that it is not flexible. He mentioned how temperature was a good example because it didn't really fit into any of the current categories. Anisfeld suggested a different organization of the indicators that will be more comprehensive and flexible.

Anisfeld then compared the LIS website with the Chesapeake Bay website. He said that Chesapeake Bay did a good job because they kept all the graphs consistent. Anisfeld suggested creating graphs that were consistent on the LISS website so that all the graphs could be easily understood.

Joseph Salata then questioned Anisfeld's way to display data. He asked Anisfeld if they should have a map of the data that can be clicked on to get more specific data. Anisfeld responded by saying that that is not what he suggested, but rather have a graph of the data that can be clicked on to get the map. Anisfeld suggested having maps for everything possible but always have graphs as the first screen.

Anisfeld also discussed trying a new untested approach to display relationships. Anisfeld said that there were problems with the current indicator report which made connections hard to interpret. Anisfeld suggested having indicators in a central box with clickable boxes above and below the indicator to show causes and effects.

Salata questioned Anisfeld's hypoxia example by saying that the bottom effect box of commercial fishing was actually a cause. Anisfeld responded by saying that the indicator was hypoxia so commercial fishing may not influence that. Anisfeld said had the indicator been shellfish harvest, then commercial fishing would have been a cause. Louise Harrison felt that this new format was good because it provided a temporal aspect. Anisfeld began to present on grades, and stated that efforts were underway but they were not complete. Art Glowka asked

where there were not targets. Glowka stated that there were targets for hypoxia, marshes, and streams. Anisfeld answered by saying that there were no targets for fish. Salata stated that fisheries management targets are in other organizations such as the CT DEP. Salata stated that it is not the LISS job to manage things but rather the states. Cuomo stressed the need to consider what is needed on the website because not everything can be included. Cuomo recommended having links to other sites.

Salata said that it would be nice if NY and CT had similar fish data goals and common fish advisories but that he does not know if that is possible. Salata stated that LISS is a virtual organization and that the authority rests with the states. Salata said that they do not want to duplicate their management and information systems.

Salata asked if it would be beneficial to put all the data in one place. Anisfeld stated that he thought it was the goal of LISS to bring data together because other agencies do not put their information out there. Cuomo said that it was a good idea, but the states management of fish is done by people that are not on the committee. Cuomo said that there are different targets and goals that the states manage on and they are not managing them the same way. Cuomo said that she does not know how much data can be crammed onto the website. Anisfeld said that LISS is an organization that brings in outside data and he is just presenting a better way to organize it. Anisfeld said that he believes LISS is a program for integrating data even if states have different management goals.

Anisfeld then began to discuss how he doesn't believe there is a good basis for evaluating indicators with grades. Charles deQuillfeldt said that grading is difficult when there is no good baseline. DeQuillfeldt said that grades are arbitrary, and in order to make management decisions you need a really good baseline and that is not available for most things in LIS. DeQuillfeldt finished by saying that grading is always a way to show data to the public but not good for management.

Anisfeld ended his presentation by saying that one big problem he sees is a way to organize the data. Anisfeld said it was tempting to include all data but wise to have some kind of consistency, and only include long term data that is updated regularly. Anisfeld also said that it might be worthwhile if LISS wants to implement management to have a committee do it. Finally Anisfeld said that economic indicators still need a lot of research.

Questions. Robert Wilson asked what Anisfeld envisioned with the clickable indicator boxes. Anisfeld said that the basic page would be a graph of the indicator, from that you should be able to click upstream drivers, downstream effects, and a map of the indicator distribution with links to additional information.

Tedesco thanked Anisfeld for his report. Tedesco said he wanted to talk more about indicators that relate to primers that may not temporally vary in annual timescales. Tedesco mentioned lead shows the status of the system and trend of the system that would be lost if there was only a more recent annual basis approach. Tedesco said there is a disconnect with spatial variability and temporal scale. Tedesco said an annual approach is not needed with some indicators to show status and trend. Tedesco asked if Anisfeld suggested getting rid of things that were not collected annually. Anisfeld agreed, stating that toxins and land use may be indicators that do not change annually. John Mullaney said that things maybe measured annually but may not be appropriate to manage them on an annual basis. Anisfeld said that for some things a longer term five year interval would be more appropriate. Anisfeld said that at the same time it is hard to use 100 year trends in management time but it can be used as secondary data. Anisfeld said that regularly updated data is needed when dealing with the period of management.

Anne McElroy said LISS is a unique bi-state holistic approach to LIS that has two functions; make things in LIS available to the public, and identifying information and understanding gaps in how LIS functions. McElroy stated that the management of the resources is not the role of the LISS and that monitoring of these resources is not in the budget. McElroy suggested that all the LISS can do is look at information and tell other agencies how to adjust their programs. McElroy asked if the LISS should be identifying monitoring programs. Tedesco responded that the LISS does have monitoring plans and monitoring funding. Tedesco said however there is no way to fund all the monitoring. Tedesco said there is something to be said about highlighting what the needs are to make better sense out of them than the original organizations do.

Glowka said he have a different point of view. Glowka said the report was a massive document and questioned how many people read it to which a couple people raised their hands. Glowka then said that the report was all based on the Chesapeake Bay study in which the governor said tell me what you are doing or you will not get \$5 million. Glowka said they got off their butts and had people come in and see what they were doing. Glowka then stated people have been studying the western sound for 20 years and nothing has improved. Glowka then stated the top 20 money fish taken from 1988-2000 have declined in weight from 17.4lbs to 14.3lbs. Salata suggested that all the big fish had been caught. Glowka said that the LISS should not have people making their own grade cards but instead have an outside view and audit.

Salata asked Anisfeld if he thinks the two year dispersal interval for Sound Health is good. Anisfeld responded saying that two years is good but that people are more likely to go to website. DeQuillfeldt disagreed, saying that Sound Health is good for people and politicians.

Anisfeld replied saying the mass distribution is not good. Salata said that the Sound Health inserts cost \$30,000. Wilson said that he is more confident people will read the inserts instead of going to the web. Wilson said that the problem is fewer people are reading the newspaper so there is a need to go to the web.

Cuomo said that a lot of schools find the Sound Health inserts helpful. Cuomo agreed that it may be too complex, but teachers in high schools find it very good for awareness. Cuomo said that when people get it in the newspaper it makes them aware but that perhaps there should be two releases, one simplified and one more complex. Cuomo said she liked what Anisfeld did but has concerns about how is trying to be pulled together.

McElroy said she really liked the clickable link boxes. Schlenk asked if there was going to be some action out of this like a committee. Tedesco said that changes have been made all along especially over the past five years in areas Anisfeld emphasized. Tedesco said that for him he feels like it is a continuum but that it was helpful to get an outside view. Tedesco said that there will be continued internal staff working but whether a formal committee needs to be formed is another question.

Swanson said that he thinks it would be reasonable for a small group to get together and assess what was presented and how to take it from there. Tedesco asked if it should be a STAC group. Swanson suggested that it should start with the STAC.

Swanson then asked what the review criteria were for what gets printed in Sound Health because it seemed to paint a rosier picture than the truth. Tedesco said if the articles rely on primary data then researchers review it. Tedesco said the overall tone is edited so that the general public understands it. Swanson finished by saying that sometimes data gets smoothed out when things are looked at over entire sound, and that it may be helpful to look at basins.

LIS synthesis report

The next discussion pertained to the LISS book. Swanson led the discussion. Swanson began by saying he was disappointed in the response he has gotten so far and that he had not seen outlines of any of the chapters. Swanson spoke for the physical oceanography group and said there was activity but that was about it. Swanson said that when Corey Garza pulled chapter leads he did not get any responses. Swanson said he was concerned that with the published date of January 2010 because they were woefully behind. Swanson asked if some people could speak of there sections and began with McElroy.

McElroy said that she had trouble getting the co-leader to discuss status. She said her perspective was to reassess the number of chapters to something that is achievable. She said she is going to find out who is still willing to work on it and push forward. McElroy also said that until these things get real it is not going to be on anyone's plate, but now with the deadlines approaching with nudging it may move forward. McElroy said that emails, phone calls and something at a STAC meeting could be used to get a meeting together of people who are trying to get things together by February.

Swanson said that when money was put aside to pay authors it did not have to all go to them but could go to workshops. Swanson suggested having an extended STAC meeting in February or take some money and put together their own meeting. McElroy said that she did not think they needed another big workshop. She also said that setting some hard deadlines now and following up with an organizing committee would be a real good idea. McElroy also said that there were still conflicts between groups and the only way to get that solved would be to get everyone together.

Cuomo said that she agreed with McElroy. Cuomo said that she had talked to people who said that they were not going to do anything until they figured out payments. Cuomo also said that she is sitting down with people next week to discuss the books. She said that they need hard deadlines for all of the groups such as a detailed outline. Cuomo suggested that at the February STAC meeting the chapter leads can get together and discuss who is stepping on whose toes. Cuomo said that she knows some other groups are not talking, but that she would have something for them by end of December.

Swanson said that they sent something out with hard deadlines that have already past and they only got one response. Schlenk asked what would happen if there were only a few groups ready by December. Swanson said that there would be no point in the book

Cuomo said that once they figured out what everyone was getting paid then they got the motivation to finish it. Cuomo said that she knows hers and McElroy's chapters will get done. McElroy said that they will have something done but it may not be to the extent of what was discussed during the first meeting.

Tedesco asked if anyone had received Garza's outline to which no one replied. Tedesco said that they need more communication between the groups. McElroy said that she didn't think the project was unsalvageable but that they needed more deadlines to get people going. Cuomo said that she liked Garza but he had been out of site and out of mind. Swanson said that they have a new NOAA liaison and whether or not he should be stepping into Garza's role

needs to be discussed. Swanson acknowledged that it was not helpful having Garza 3000 miles away.

Harrison said that when she worked on book publishing she got warnings from book editors. Harrison said perhaps a copy of the contract should be sent out to people to make the deadlines more real. Swanson said that the contract did go out. Swanson also mentioned that Yarish will be on sabbatical and going to URI where he will be close to the publisher and dealing with this on a daily basis. McElroy suggested setting a June 2009 date for a rough draft deadline.

Swanson said that they have editorial services and graphic art services set up to ease the burden and make it consistent. Swanson asked if everyone had a copy of the proposed agenda for next year and began confirming dates. Cuomo asks if the Feb 20th STAC meeting could be moved a week due to February vacation. Tedesco said since it is a break we would want to move it and asked if February 13th would be ok. No one objects and the next STAC meeting will be held February 13th 2009.

LISS fellows presentations

Mark Hoover (University of Connecticut) and Santiago Salinas (Stony Brook University) were introduced as this year's fellows. Each gave a 10-minute presentation about their research and answered questions. Mark uses GIS/Remote Sensing to study natural resources and is interested in salt marsh response to sea level rise. Santiago is an ecologist/evolutionary biologist interested in how fish life histories change in the face of disturbance (e.g., fishing, climate change) and in assessing impacts of power plants to fish populations.

Sentinel site monitoring

Sarah Deonarine gave a presentation on the progress thus far of the sentinel site monitoring program (see appendix). After questions on what the existing current funds are for, Deonarine explained that each state was apportioned \$75,000 for strategy and development of one pilot sentinel site. Thomas Halavik briefed the committee on the CT meeting regarding the project (follow-up to the 2007 Avery Point CTDEP and UConn-sponsored workshop). He said that 5-6 main questions will be developed in the next 4-5 weeks based on information gathered by the online database. Tedesco noted the project needs more NY participation and suggested the creation of either one bi-state group, or two coordinating groups with a mix of agency personnel and researchers along with a smaller coordinating committee. Joseph Salata also thought a core group in each state would be a good idea.

It was suggested to invite the NY Oceans & Great Lakes Council and the NY State Climate Change Office to participate. Charles deQuillfeldt believed it would be hard to get Albany to do anything and maintained that DEC involvement would likely only involve himself, Karen Chytalo, and Deonarine. Cuomo, Harrison, and Schlenk suggested NOAA and climatechange.gov as places to research so as to not replicate efforts.

On the question of what sites to choose, Glowka and Cuomo suggested to look for sites that have been monitored in the past and use those. Halavik was dismayed at the lack of collaboration between NY and CT, especially in something as important as choosing sites. Swanson asked if sites need to be necessarily marshes. The committee agreed that they did not have to be, and deQuillfeldt added that there is already long-term monitoring being conducted on marshes. Salinas suggested that it may be best to select two different habitats for NY and CT. Robert Burg offered that should the committee choose to designate stewardship areas as sentinel sites, it may be possible to obtain funds through the Stewardship initiative. This would also insure that the sites would not be developed in the near-future. Harrison questioned whether the committee is overemphasizing the “sites” over the “sentinel” (i.e., we should be more concerned with the “what” over the “where”). Cuomo agreed and affirmed that, as a geologist, early signs of great changes brought about by climate change include plankton and benthos (she further noted that marshes change all the time in geologic time). Salata wondered if it would be better to identify food webs instead of sites, thinking the goal of the monitoring was to alert policymakers of impending change.

Regarding the fellows’ role, Salata felt the work should not be dumped on the fellows and that he had envisioned the staff would take leadership. He suggested existing committees take responsibility. Schlenk quoted from the fellowship notice, noting that it was specifically included that the fellows will be working on sentinel site monitoring, that they should provide support to STAC (conducting literature reviews, etc.), and that their goal is to prepare questions that monitoring should address, identify parameters, and implementation strategies. Swanson wanted to insure that fellows add another dimension to the project and should not be viewed as employees of NY DEC or CT DEP.

2009 budget and priorities

Tedesco informed the committee that funding for 2009 is on a continuous resolution and would thus be expected to be similar to 2008. However, if the president’s 2009 budget request passes, funding would be reduced drastically. In the management committee meeting (7 October 2008)

it was decided to not move forward with aggressive funding requests and to continue with base programs and staff.

Future agenda items

Swanson stated that he received complaints regarding the review process of grant proposals (e.g., “invited to submit proposal and got a two-line rejection”, “same people funded every year”, “proposal was three minutes late and was rejected”) and would like to discuss these issues further in the next STAC meeting. Cuomo agreed with these sentiments. Tedesco suggested to let this cycle continue as is and to create a subgroup to improve review of grants. Schlenk echoed Tedesco’s suggestion to finish this round of proposals with current methodology and explained that SeaGrant is following a process that was accepted by all. She also added that timing should be improved (reviewers are asked to judge proposals between Thanksgiving and Christmas) and that the needs document must be accurate and clear. Tedesco agreed with the need to discuss and clarify the needs document.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 13:56.