

**Long Island Sound Study
Management Committee Meeting Summary
Thursday, October 20, 2005
UConn Stamford**

Mark Tedesco called the meeting to order at 10:10 am, asking attendees to introduce themselves and sign the attendance sheets. Tedesco noted the presence of the New York and Connecticut Long Island Sound Fellows, and asked them to introduce themselves and briefly describe their project assignments. Kari Heinonen, the Connecticut LIS Fellow from the University of Connecticut will be working on an assessment of non-native species in LIS; Christine O'Connell, the New York LIS Fellow from Stony Brook University will be reviewing marine zoning models for potential application to LIS.

Tedesco asked if there were any changes to the agenda; as none were offered, Tedesco noted that Lynn Dwyer had been delayed and her time on the agenda would be adjusted accordingly. Tedesco asked the members to endorse the 2006 meeting calendar, noting the dates for a second two-day Management Committee meeting in July, and a proposed joint CAC/STAC meeting in June; this latter date would be confirmed by those groups at their upcoming meetings on November 18 and December 8 respectively. Tedesco pointed out that due to the EPA/ANEP national meeting during the week of March 6, 2006, the CAC meeting normally scheduled for that week had been rescheduled for March 16, 2006. As no other schedule conflicts were identified, the Committee approved its 2006 meeting dates as proposed.

Reports

Citizens Advisory Committee. Nancy Seligson reported that the CAC voted in a new member, Joel Reinbold, LLC. There was significant debate over the application because Mr. Reinbold is a paid consultant of the Broadwater energy project, and there was a question over whether his company represents any constituency. However, Seligson said that the consensus of the CAC was to remain an organization that is open to hear and represent all views on issues affecting the Sound, and the CAC approved the application with no conditions. As a result of the discussion, Seligson reported that the CAC is developing a conflict of interest policy to clarify members' status on issues that may come to a vote before the CAC. Seligson also reported that the CAC used a multi-voting process to decide on 2006 funding priorities, and that these were reflected in the materials that will be presented to the Committee later on the agenda under the budget discussion. In some cases, the CAC priorities were in line with the Committee's, but in a few cases the CAC felt strongly about an area that was not high on the Management Committee's list. When the CAC conducted its multi-vote, it was not aware of the Management Committee's rankings; the CAC voting was independent of the Committee's. Seligson also indicated that the CAC learned that the LISS will not be receiving any EPA State and Tribal Assistance Grant (STAG) appropriation funding in 2006. Seligson said that the CAC was very concerned over the circumstances that led to this situation, and was inviting the co-chairs of the Long Island Sound Congressional Caucus, Reps. Rob

Simmons (R-CT) and Steve Israel (D-NY), to attend the December 8 CAC meeting to explain the federal budget process and how the CAC might play a stronger role in that process.

Nutrients Work Group. Mark Tedesco reported that the work group had not met in several months, but tasks have been proceeding via teleconference. In particular, tasks were completed to establish a pastoral loading condition for input into the SWEM model. USGS provided assistance in obtaining and interpreting natural baseline loading conditions for all tributaries in watershed using the USGS SPARROW model (Spatially Referenced Regression on Watershed attributes). HydroQual performed the model scenario and provided outputs for comparison against water quality criteria.

Nonpoint Source/Watersheds Work Group. Walter Smith reported that the work group will meet on Tuesday, November 1, 2005 in Wilton, CT. The work group will meet with the Columbia University Principal Investigator (PI) who is developing the 2005-funded LISS project for a riparian buffer protection “toolbox” for local and municipal officials. On December 14, 2005 work group members will also meet with the Manhattan College PI who is developing the 2005 LISS-funded project for a nonpoint source nitrogen load tracking tool to assess the model’s performance and application. Manhattan College will be using existing GIS data layers from the UConn CLEAR program, also a recipient of a 2005 LISS-funded project to map coastal riparian buffers in CT and NY.

Habitat Restoration Work Group. Ron Rozsa reported for the work group and distributed copies of the Habitat Restoration Initiative 2005/2006 work plan, and an abstract report of sudden wetlands dieback. The work group met on October 19 in Stamford to finalize its work plan. The work group is recommending that the habitat restoration coordinators continue to be funded by the LISS. Rozsa reported that the work group also recommends funding a habitat restoration database. This item was discussed during the 2005 budget process, but the work group recommended waiting until it could clarify what the database would consist of and how it would be used by the program before any funding was allocated for the project. That work having been completed, it is once again on the priority funding list for 2006. Rozsa also reported that the LISS had established 10 year goals in January 1998 of restoring 2000 acres of tidal wetlands and reopening 100 river miles to anadromous fish passage. While it is likely that the fish passage goal will be exceeded, it is unlikely that the 2000 acre restoration goal will be met. This is due to the nature of the projects that remain in the inventory; these are the more complex projects that require more time and effort; the program focused on the simpler projects first. As of today, 81 river miles have been reopened, but only 512 acres of tidal wetlands have been restored. The program does not count *phragmites* control projects towards the completion inventory until it can be determined that the control effort has been successful, without any recurrence of the invasive or need for further eradication efforts. Rozsa reported that the team recommends beginning planning for a 10-year commemorative event, and that the interagency Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 1998, be revised and updated. Rozsa indicated that since the next Estuary Research Federation Conference is scheduled for Fall 2007 in Narragansett, Rhode Island, this may be an opportunity to organize a special session around wetlands submerging around the nation.

Jane MacLellan reported that on September 7th, the New England District of the US Army Corps of Engineers convened a meeting of state and federal agency partners working on habitat restoration. The Corps is interested in becoming more involved in Long Island Sound restoration activities and is looking for opportunities to work on large-scale restoration projects. Potential projects under consideration include the Mill River in Connecticut. As a result of the meeting, two Corps representatives have joined the LISS Habitat Restoration Team.

Communications Team. Robert Burg passed out a new Long Island Sound brochure, *Partners in Protecting the Sound*, which replaces the former LIS brochure entitled *Long Island Sound, an Estuary of National Significance*. He also described the success of a brochure distributed to municipalities earlier this year: *Step by Step: A Citizens Guide to Curbing Polluted Runoff*. About 50 municipalities have used that brochure as part of their education campaigns to teach residents about urban runoff. The brochure is available on the LISS website, <http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net>. Burg also reported that *Sound Health 2006* is scheduled for publication in Spring 2006, and a text-only draft is circulating internally for comments. Dr. Gary Wikfors suggested circulating a draft of the publication to the STAC for technical review, and Mark Tedesco agreed that a draft would be available to STAC members.

Connecticut River Work Group. Laura Blake reported that the work group is working with the states to develop a states meeting, and that NEIWPC will be receiving \$62,000 from EPA New England Region to continue limited support for upper basin monitoring; the LISS-funded portion of the monitoring work has been completed.

NEIWPC Overview

Beth Card, water quality director of the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPC) presented a PowerPoint™ slide show of the organization and its mission, vision, core values, and roles and responsibilities. NEIWPC is a Congressionally-authorized not-for-profit interstate agency that serves and assists its member states—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. NEIWPC coordinates activities and forums that encourage cooperation among the states, educates the public about key water quality issues, supports research projects, trains environmental professionals, and provides overall leadership in water management and protection. NEIWPC's initial emphasis was on surface water protection, but that role has grown over the years to include such matters as wetlands restoration, nonpoint source pollution, water allocation, and underground storage tanks.

NEIWPC is overseen by 35 Commissioners--five from each member state--who are appointed by their state governors or, in some cases, assume the post due to their position. The Commissioners are a diverse group, representing state water pollution control agencies, environmental protection agencies, health departments, industry, municipalities, and the general public. The chairmanship of the Commission rotates between states every two years. Contact Beth Card at bcard@neiwpc.org for a copy of the presentation.

LIS Futures Fund

Lynn Dwyer, assistant director of the New England Region of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) presented a PowerPoint™ slide show detailing the status of the 2004 Long Island Sound Futures Fund (LISFF) grant program and projects. The LISFF awarded nearly \$1.0 million to 28 local community groups to implement projects that help restore and protect the Sound. The LISS contributed \$500,000 in FY2004, which was supplemented by \$300,000 from USFWS and \$100,000 from NOAA. Summaries of the projects are posted on the LISS website. For a copy of the presentation contact Lynn Dwyer at lynn.dwyer@nfwf.org. Lynn also discussed the status of the 2005 Futures Fund. The LISS awarded \$85,000 in FY2005 funds to NFWF for funding to administer the Public Involvement and Education Small Grants Program as part of the Futures Fund RFP. The 2005 Futures Fund RFP is still being developed and should be announced in early November. Funding is available from NOAA and USFWS; LISS funding will be considered by the Management Committee at the January 19, 2006 budget meeting. **[NB: The 2005 Futures Fund RFP was released on November 10, 2005. The closing date for proposals is January 13, 2006.]**

2005 LIS Research RFIP

Jane MacLellan, USFWS Coastal Program liaison to the LISS, reported that the 2005 LIS research Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP) was issued on September 27 and it is open until November 15. The RFIP is posted on the LISS website, and is also posted on the universal government grants website, www.grants.gov. Because of EPA policy, this is an EPA announcement of funding availability, which requires more stringent limits on review of proposals, and EPA must make the final funding decisions on projects. Organizational members of the review team will include the New York and Connecticut Sea Grant College Program partners, NYSDEC, CTDEP, USFWS, and EPA. Independent peer reviewers will be identified for any proposals that make it through the relevancy review.

2006 LISS Budget Process

Mark Tedesco reviewed the 2006 LISS budget priority-setting process and referred the Management Committee members to the budget information packet they had received under separate cover. The packet included copies of the 2006 proposed budget schedule, work group 2005/2006 work plans, a summary chart of LISS funding sources and priorities for 2004-2006; and a summary of the July Management Committee meeting priorities, which included the CAC's separately developed priority list. Tedesco handed out a summary of the priority recommendations for 2006 that included the combined Management Committee, CAC and work group inputs, and also the funded 2004 and 2005 CCMP Enhancements Projects. The Enhancements needs in 2004 were: CT River nitrogen monitoring; Eelgrass Mapping & Management Objectives; Stewardship Initiative Coordination; Riparian buffer mapping and pilot restoration; LIS curricula support; and Load allocation tracking tool. In 2005 the Enhancements needs were: Water

quality and living resource data analysis; SWEM model assessment; Coastal riparian buffer analysis; Riparian buffers toolbox; and LIS public perception survey.

At a question from the floor regarding the amount of EPA LISS funding available in 2006, Tedesco recognized Joe Salata to provide that information. Salata handed out copies of the 2005-2006 EPA NEP funding guidance memo from Suzanne Schwartz dated June 3, 2005. Salata indicated that, pending EPA's final operating plan approval and NEP guidance, the planning target for FY2006 is \$2.777 million. This is approximately level-funding in the Environmental Programs and Management appropriation from FY2005, which was \$2.793 million. As had been noted in the CAC report, no STAG funding is available to the LISS in 2006. Salata indicated that in previous years, Congress had provided line-item earmarks for specific projects, including Long Island Sound, in the House or Senate versions of appropriations bill language; however in 2006, the conferees agreed to work out details in conference, rather than in report language. A LIS earmark did not emerge from the conference committee discussions. Salata indicated that the 2006 LISS Base Program guidance call memo would be issued shortly after this meeting, and that the due date for base proposals is December 2, 2006.

Tedesco reviewed each 2006 recommendation for CCMP Enhancements Project funding:

- 1) Support for CT River nitrogen management plan development, proposed by the CT River WG;
- 2) Stewardship Coordinator position, proposed by the Stewardship WG;
- 3) Identify undeveloped NY coastal parcels, proposed by the Stewardship WG;
- 4) Watershed Management workshop, proposed by the NPS&W WG; and
- 5) Environmental indicator review and assessment, proposed by the I-Team.

Tedesco also noted several proposed changes to the Base program:

- 1) elimination of support for the eastern and western LIS ferry monitoring projects; and
- 2) inclusion of support for the LISFF/Small Grants programs in the 2006 budget cycle.

Tedesco called for discussion of these recommendations. Rick D'Amico stated that NYSDEC supported adding the condition of embayments as a general enhancement need. However, he did not have a specific proposal on address the condition of LIS embayments. After discussion, it was agreed that without a specific strategy in mind, the LISS should not include embayment conditions in the Enhancement RFP. Beth Card recommended that the support for the CT River nitrogen management plan was best administered through the NEIWPC base program coordination efforts. The Management Committee approved moving support for that task to the LISS Base program for NEIWPC from the CCMP Enhancements program. CTDEP recommended that the development of a publicly accessible bi-state restoration database be included as an Enhancements need rather than funded through the base bi-state habitat restoration initiative support. The Management Committee approved that change. Jane MacLellan, on behalf of the Habitat Restoration Team, noted that the aquatic nuisance species

management plan should be added to the Enhancements list, as this was a 2005 recommendation from the team that was deferred last year.

The Management Committee agreed to accept these recommendations for the 2006 funding cycle. Tedesco reported that the base program budget call memo would be issued shortly to those organizations with program elements funded by the base program. The Implementation Team will meet to review the base program request and make funding recommendations to the Management Committee at its January 19, 2006 meeting. Pending that decision, the funding levels available for the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, Research Fund, and CCMP Enhancements Projects would be determined.

Stewardship Initiative

Cara Griffin of the Regional Plan Association, presented a PowerPoint™ slide show on the progress of the Stewardship Initiative work group in identifying stewardship areas consistent with the Management Committee-approved strategy. The work group had identified 32 inaugural stewardship areas and held six public meetings, three in NY and three in CT during June 2005 to receive comments on the sites. As a result of strong local support, Hempstead Harbor was added to the list, making 33 proposed stewardship areas. Griffin reviewed the material that had been distributed to the Management Committee in advance of the meeting, including the map of proposed stewardship areas, descriptions of the areas and justification for their selection, and a summary of the public meeting comments. John Atkin of the Regional Plan Association, then gave an update on the status of the 2005 Long Island Sound Stewardship Act, legislation that has been introduced in Congress to formalize and provide support for the initiative.

Tedesco asked the Management Committee to approve the proposed stewardship areas for presentation and adoption by the LISS Policy Committee. Following discussion, the Management Committee approved the 33 inaugural proposed sites for adoption by the Policy Committee.

Sound Ideas

Mark Tedesco opened the floor to public comments, recognizing Art Glowka, who reported that he and a stakeholder group had met with the EPA/NEP team that was conducting the LISS Implementation Review, and that he would be obtaining a copy of the final report. Fred Stunkel, a LIS fisherman, expressed concerns over the apparent declining fish stocks in the Sound. Roger Frate, owner of Darien Seafood, expressed concern over the switch to liquid chlorine vs. the gaseous form of the chemical to disinfect sewage treatment plant effluent. Frate thinks this form of chlorine contributes to lobster stress. Tedesco thanked the speakers for their comments.

Tedesco adjourned the meeting at 2:45pm.