

**Long Island Sound Study
Science and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
November 18, 2005
Room 135, Stamford Campus, University of Connecticut**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by New York co-chair Dr. Larry Swanson. There were 25 attendees, 15 of which were STAC members (Attachment 1).

1. Introductions and Review of Agenda

Attendees introduced themselves and it was suggested that Jeanette Brown give a brief overview of the grant that SWPCA received from the Department of Energy (DOE), in addition to other items on the agenda.

2. Connecticut Co-chair Election and Review/Approval of 2006 STAC Meeting Calendar

Larry Swanson asked for any nominations for CT Co-chair from the floor. There were no nominations. Jane MacLellan collected and tabulated the ballots. Charlie Yarish was unanimously re-elected as the CT co-chair to STAC.

Jane MacLellan presented the proposed 2006 meeting schedule [February 17th (NY), June 16th (CT-joint meeting with CAC), and November 17th (NY)] and asked if there were any conflicts. It was brought to everyone's attention that February 17th is the Friday before President's Day. As a result, it was agreed that the meeting would be rescheduled. [Note: The spring STAC meeting has been rescheduled to Friday, March 24, 2006.]

3. Stamford Water Pollution Control Authority (SWPCA) Grant from DOE

Jeanette Brown announced that the SWPCA received a \$1.5 million grant for producing energy from the production of dried sludge. It was explained that dried sludge will be used to produce a pelleted fertilizer (12,000 BTU/lb). During the biomass conversion, 98% solids are put in a gasifier and methane is released, which powers a gas turbine that generates electrical power.

4. 2006 Budget Process

Mark Tedesco led the discussion on the 2006 LISS budget process. The Long Island Sound Study received level funding compared to 2005, for a total of \$2.7 million. Mark explained how these funds were assigned into four categories: base, enhancement, implementation, and research. The base program provides funding for continued operation, water monitoring, public outreach, and staff support. It was also stated at this time that support for the ferry monitoring project would not be continued through the base program. The enhancement program provides funding for specific projects and products, often with a shorter duration. The LISS also provides funding for research grants through a competitive RFP and for implementation projects through an RFP administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Larry Swanson asked if the STAC agreed with the Management Committee's decision to terminate funding for the ferry monitoring projects. Johan Varekamp stated that he thought it was a very valuable project. Mark Tedesco indicated that the LISS has provided two years of funding and needed to consider whether it can provide long-term funding for these projects,

since the LISS provides substantial support to CTDEP for water quality monitoring. Sylvain DeGuise stated that CT Sea Grant provided two years of start-up funds for the ferry monitoring project, but would not consider additional funding. Discussion focused on how these data sets are being used and if they are available online. Larry Swanson recommended that the STAC ask the LISS Management Committee to provide an additional year of funding in support of the ferry monitoring projects, since the Department of Environmental Protection does not sample often enough and there are no other comprehensive monitoring projects. Larry then called for a vote on this recommendation -- there were nine votes in favor and 3 votes opposed to this recommendation. Mark Tedesco stated that he would contact the Principal Investigators for the ferry monitoring projects and ask them to submit base budget requests. These requests will be considered at the January 2006 Management Committee meeting.

5. 2005 Research Grant Program

Jane MacLellan explained the LIS Research Grant Program is being operated under the Environmental Protection Agency's new competition guidelines. There were four specific topic areas identified in the Request for Proposals, and 15 initial proposals were received by the November 15 deadline. Fourteen of those proposals were determined to be eligible and will be subject to a relevancy review. The top-ranked proposals identified by the review team will be invited to submit full proposals, which will be due at the end of January. Full proposals will be subject to external peer review. There is \$450,000 available for distribution and grants will be awarded in May 2006. Hans Dam inquired about the decision on the four main topics to be addressed, and Jane MacLellan explained that ongoing/past research topics that have been funded were considered in the process. Attachment 2 summarizes the information considered in identifying the research areas.

6. Contaminants of Concern (COC) Update

Jane MacLellan announced that Azalea Mitch, the 2004 CT STAC fellow, was working on revising the COC update based on the STAC's comments. Several STAC members recommended that Azalea cite the Journal of Shellfish Research issue devoted to the results of the lobster die-off research. This journal was not available when the initial draft of the report was developed. Paul Stacey recommended that Azalea refrain from making comparisons between contaminant levels in the different LIS basins. He recommended that she include a statement indicating that disparate data sets were summarized in the literature review, thereby making it difficult to draw strong conclusions. Overall, the STAC is very pleased with Azalea's efforts and would like her to resubmit the final version for consideration by the STAC. Jane MacLellan will forward these comments to Azalea.

7. STAC Fellow Projects

The NY STAC Fellow, Christine O'Connell of Stony Brook University, presented the focus of her STAC project. Christine's independent project will focus on examining the feasibility of marine zoning in Long Island Sound and its potential environmental, economic, and political impacts. She will review and conduct case studies of other marine zoning initiatives, as well as examine how marine zoning in LIS could help increase and strengthen local fish populations and protect ecologically sensitive areas. She will also outline different tools and resources that will be necessary for the creation of a marine zoning initiative.

The CT STAC Fellow, Kari Heinonen of University of Connecticut, presented the focus of her STAC project. For her independent project, Kari will review a current draft of the CT Aquatic Nuisance species management plan for marine fauna and flora. She will use the Generic Nonindigenous Aquatic Organisms Risk Analysis Review Process as guidelines to formally assess the status of non-native marine species in LIS. As part of the review process, she will estimate the risk associated with the introduction of a particular species and how to manage for that risk.

STAC members provided comments and feedback, and were encouraged to provide fellows with any further information to assist them in completing their independent projects.

8. Monitoring of the Marine Environment of LIS at Millstone Power Station

Milan Keser presented information on the long term data sets collected by the Millstone Environmental Lab. They included the rocky intertidal program, benthic infauna monitoring, Millstone eelgrass study, fish ecology study, and the lobster study. Milan highlighted the fact that many peer-reviewed journal articles have been published as a result of these programs (Attachment 3). Milan suggested that all LIS researchers needed to do a better job sharing and communicating about their data. Roman Zajac commented on the incredible value of the long term data sets. Several STAC members suggested that the LISS should provide support for a workshop to bring together researchers to discuss available data, develop plans for sharing data, and identify data gaps. Ann Bucklin reinforced the idea that there is a need for a proactive approach to close the gap between science and management.

9. February Agenda Items and Public Comments

Larry Swanson proposed a follow-up to Milan Keser's talk on the February agenda, and suggested a possible workshop with better communication among all stakeholders. Paul Stacey recommended that the STAC discuss the final version of the COC update. Jane MacLellan stated that the February meeting should focus on identifying STAC priorities for the next budget cycle. James Latimer suggested that subgroups or committees should be established to provide input for priorities. Mark Tedesco noted that the four existing subcommittees had not been meeting regularly via conference call and that some other means must be considered for accomplishing STAC objectives.

Bob Alpern suggested that the LISS and the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program should more fully coordinate their programs. Art Glowka expressed his concern that there is a lack of basic biological research in Long Island Sound, and suggested that if western LIS lobstermen were outfitted with the correct instrumentation, they could assist with the ferry monitoring project. Art Glowka also expressed concern over the Japanese shore crab, menhaden dying from whirling disease, consistent levels of hypoxia despite clear water, and *Crepidula fornicata* becoming overly abundant – stating that these issues need to be addressed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.

NOTE: Complete versions of STAC meeting minutes, including any attachments, are available from the EPA – Long Island Sound Office.