



A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

The Long Island Sound Office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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NEWS RELEASE

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EPA and States Sign Major Agreement to Clean Up Long Island Sound; EPA Provides \$4 Million to Support Restoration Efforts

Norwalk, CT – Leadership of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the New York and Connecticut environmental agencies today signed a major agreement to restore Long Island Sound by 2014, including specific goals for reducing bathing beach and shellfishing closures, restoring fish river runs for migratory fish and improving ecologically-important habitats that support marine life.

Meeting this morning at the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, the Long Island Sound Study Policy Committee, which consists of regional administrators from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and commissioners from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, approved 30 new goals for restoring the Sound and announced \$4 million of new EPA funding for Sound-related projects. The \$4 million was awarded to CT DEP and NY DEC, with each agency getting \$2

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million.

The agreement sets an ambitious vision “to restore the health of Long Island Sound by 2014, the 400th anniversary of Adriaen Block’s exploration of Long Island Sound.” It builds upon the overall goals set forth in a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) approved by the states and EPA in 1994 for cleaning up the Sound. The Policy Committee oversees implementation of the CCMP.

In addition to ongoing work to reduce nitrogen going into the Sound by 58.5 percent by 2014 and to restore at least 2,000 acres of habitat and 100 river miles for fish passage by 2008, compared to 1998 levels, the agreement includes target goals and time frames for open space acquisition, protection and the creation of a Long Island Sound Stewardship System. Among the highlights:

- By 2010, decrease the acreage closed year-round to shellfishing due to bacteria pollution by 10 percent, compared to 2000 levels.
- By 2010, eliminate all chronic bathing beach closures in Long Island Sound due to bacteria pollution. (Chronic closures are bathing areas closed at least three days a year for at least three of the past five years)
- In 2003, nominate the Pawcatuck and Mystic Rivers in Connecticut and all Long Island Sound embayments in New York as federal No Discharge Areas where waste discharges from boats would be illegal.
- By 2003, map areas of Long Island Sound that support eelgrass, an important habitat for key fish and shellfish species, and promote research into the causes of its degradation.

“The agreement signed today continues Connecticut’s strong commitment to restore the overall

health of Long Island Sound,” said Connecticut Governor John G. Rowland. “Beyond strengthening our successful approach to significantly reduce the levels of nitrogen entering the waters of Long Island Sound, this agreement outlines a number of habitat restoration and natural resource protection objectives. These goals and the framework that have been set forth by Connecticut and its partners will be instrumental in meeting and, indeed, surpassing standards we have established for the health of the Sound.”

“New York has worked closely with EPA and the state of Connecticut to protect and restore Long Island Sound and we are strongly committed to building upon the significant progress we have made,” said New York State Governor George E. Pataki. “The signing of this agreement is another positive step for the Sound and will promote further improvement in the health of this treasured waterway, ensuring that it remains a healthy and vibrant resource for years to come.”

“Today’s agreement is another big step for an estuary that has already seen significant improvement in terms of water quality and the overall ecosystem,” said Robert W. Varney, administrator of EPA’s New England/Region 1 Office in Boston. “It’s gratifying to know that we’ve already restored 465 acres of habitat, reopened 43 miles of river runs for anadromous fish and achieved 26 percent of our long-term goal for reducing nitrogen loadings into the Sound. But there’s obviously more work to be done and this agreement gives us a clear road map and vision for a comprehensive restoration of the Sound.”

“Families that can enjoy a great vacation on Long Island Sound, businesses that are able to create jobs because of the Sound, and residents who can enjoy a higher quality of life along the Sound will all benefit from this agreement,” said EPA Region II Administrator Jane M. Kenny.

“We may not be able to return it fully to the pristine condition found in 1614, but we intend to make real progress in making Long Island Sound the very best it can be for everyone who lives, works and vacations here.”

The Long Island Sound 2003 Agreement was developed in partnership with the states and EPA, in coordination with the Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee, a bi-state group of environmental organizations, user groups, business, and industry.
