



The National Estuary Program was established in 1987 by amendments to the Clean Water Act to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries of the United States. Unlike traditional regulatory approaches to environmental protection, the NEP targets a broad range of issues and engages local communities in the process. The program focuses not just on improving water quality in an estuary, but on maintaining the integrity of the whole system — its chemical, physical, and biological properties, as well as its economic, recreational, and aesthetic values.

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Long Island Sound



Progress/Goals for the Future

What Partnership Progress has Been Made?

- In 1998, the LISS reached historic agreements to reduce human-caused nitrogen loads to the Sound from Connecticut and New York sources by 58.5% by the year 2014 and to restore 2,000 acres and 100 river miles of natural habitat by 2008.

What Major Actions are Planned for 2001?

- EPA will approve the states Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for nitrogen discharges into Long Island Sound. This plan describes the actions necessary to achieve state water quality standards for dissolved oxygen.
- The states will start modifying sewage treatment plant discharge permits with nitrogen effluent limits designed to meet the goals of the TMDL.
- The CT DEP will propose a nitrogen effluent trading program that may help the state meet its nitrogen reduction target in a more cost-effective way.
- The LISS partners will complete ten high priority habitat restoration projects in CT and NY, including fish passage and tidal wetland restoration, as identified in the *Long Island Sound Habitat Restoration Strategy*.
- The LISS will issue a "Sound Health 2001" report describing the health and quality of the water, habitats, and living resources of the Sound as measured by a wide range of indicators.
- EPA and NRCS will communicate "lessons learned" from the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative to other new or evolving watershed management initiatives.

What Makes Long Island Sound Special?

- Long Island Sound is an estuary, a place where salt water from the ocean mixes with fresh water from rivers and the land. Long Island Sound is unique in that it has two connections to the sea — The Race to the east and the East River to the west — and several rivers feeding fresh water from as far north as Canada.
- The Sound provides feeding, breeding, nesting, and nursery areas for a diversity of plant and animal life, and contributes an estimated \$5.5 billion per year to the regional economy from boating, commercial and sport fishing, swimming, and sight seeing.

Why Does it Need Special Attention?

- More than 8 million people live in the Long Island Sound watershed, and the associated development has increased some types of pollution, altered land surfaces, reduced open spaces, and restricted access to the Sound.
- Despite significant improvements in water quality and coastal zone management over the past 30 years, serious problems remain, particularly hypoxia (low dissolved oxygen), which is caused by excessive nitrogen loading from sewage treatment plants and polluted runoff into the Sound, and the historic loss and degradation of fish and wildlife habitat.

Long Island Sound



Who are the Partners?

EPA New England • Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection • New York Department of Environmental Conservation • New York Department of State • New York City Department of Environmental Protection • USDA/NRCS • New York Sea Grant • Connecticut Sea Grant • Long Island Sound Watershed Alliance • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • U.S. Geological Survey • University of Connecticut • University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System • SUNY Stony Brook • New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission • Interstate Environmental Commission

Background

- **Getting Resources:** With leadership from the Long Island Sound Congressional Caucus and support from local environmental groups, Congress passed legislation in 1990 establishing the EPA Long Island Sound Office with its own funding authorization. Connecticut and New York both have committed millions of dollars to upgrade sewage treatment plants, control polluted runoff, and restore habitat.
- **Making Plans:** In 1994, the LISS completed the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which describes the major problems affecting the health of the Sound's ecosystem and the actions necessary to solve them, outlines a "phased" plan for reducing nitrogen loads to the Sound, and recommends development of a regional habitat restoration strategy.
- **Setting Goals:** In 1998, the LISS reached historic agreements to reduce human-caused nitrogen loads to the Sound from Connecticut and New York sources by 58.5% by the year 2014 (described in the report, *Phase III Actions for Hypoxia Management*) and restore 2,000 acres and 100 river miles of natural habitat by 2008 (described in the *Long Island Sound Habitat Restoration Strategy*).
- **Measuring Progress:** The LISS has provided funding for an ambient water quality monitoring program to measure changes in dissolved oxygen levels since 1991, and both states monitor sewage treatment plant effluent to measure changes in nitrogen loads to the Sound.
- **Getting Results:** Since 1990, nitrogen discharges from sewage treatment plants in Connecticut and New York have been reduced by 24 percent. Since setting habitat restoration targets in 1998, LISS partner agencies have restored approximately 115 acres of degraded tidal wetlands and opened 26 miles of river for passage of anadromous fish.

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