



A Partnership To Restore And Protect The Sound

UPDATE

FALL 1996

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The past few months have been a tremendously exciting time for those involved in restoring Long Island Sound! Following is a list of some of the significant events that transpired. Taken together, they indicate increasing momentum-in efforts on many fronts-to implement the management plan and achieve our collective vision for the Sound:

- On October 16, nitrogen reduction efforts took another major step forward with the ground breaking for a new sewage treatment plant in Norwalk Connecticut, designed to maximize nitrogen removal;

On October 31, Governors Rowland and Pataki and EPA Regional Administrators Jeanne Fox and John DeVillars reaffirmed their commitment to jointly implement the *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* at an event on the shores of the Sound; On November 2, the EPA/Natural Resources Conservation Service watershed initiative on the Norwalk River was recognized by the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut for their "innovative, collaborative and visionary efforts" to address water quality on a watershed basis;

On November 5, New York voters approved a bond act that will provide \$200 million for Long Island Sound projects, including sewage treatment plant upgrades, habitat restoration and **nonpoint** source pollution controls; Earlier this year, Congress appropriated \$300,000 for a partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Westchester Soil and Water Conservation District and the EPA Long Island Sound Office to address land use and water quality issues affecting the Sound-giving our watershed management initiatives a boost;

Save the Sound became a strong partner in our efforts to develop a bi-state habitat restoration strategy with the award of a major three year grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. Under the grant, Save the Sound will help coordinate public review of the **draft** habitat restoration strategy, and will work to bring together partners to help implement priority restoration projects.

We report on all of these **events-** and more-in this issue of UPDATE. To me, these actions provide a strong sense of a plan that is working! People from many different agencies and organizations have teamed up, and are working together in ways that will make a significant difference in the water and habitat quality of the Sound.

In the long-run the success of our clean-up efforts will depend on the personal involvement and commitment of individuals **from** around the Sound. Ever wonder what triggers personal involvement in a cause? In the case of Long Island Sound activists, it is **usually** their personal experiences in and on the Sound, or living and working along its shores, that inspires people. In this issue, we introduce a new feature **called** "On a Personal Note", where we will meet some of the individuals who live or work on the Sound, and those who have dedicated their lives to restoring this magnificent resource.

Featured in this issue are Bob Abrams - Coordinator of Outdoor/**Environmental** Education K-12, Great Neck Schools, New York and Hillard Bloom - the co-founder of Talhnadge Brothers, Inc. **in Norwalk**, Connecticut. Both have interesting stories to tell. We'd also like to extend special thanks, to Dianne Selditch and Peg **VanPatten** for conducting the interviews. Dianne is a former newspaper reporter who works at **SoundWaters**, is a member of our Citizens Advisory Committee and currently chairs our Public Outreach Workgroup. Peg VanPatten works at Connecticut Sea Grant and is an active member of our Public Outreach Workgroup.

-- Carolyn Hughes

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CAC CORNER

Governors Meeting a Good Idea

by John Atkin

Witnessing the signing of the 1996 Long Island Sound Agreement by Governors John Rowland and George Pataki, and the EPA Regional Administrators this fall, I sensed a strong commitment by the two states and the federal government for the continued protection and restoration of the Sound. The original signing event occurred in 1994 with the completion of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. This precious estuary is the habitat for many thousands of species of animals and plants, as well as a resource of immense pleasure for the people who swim in it, fish in it, and those who just appreciate its beauty. The Sound is also an important economic asset, contributing over \$5 billion annually to the region's economy.

This signing ceremony has several positive ramifications. Primarily, it is the governors' first public appearance together to discuss the issues important to the Sound. I hope that this is the beginning of an annual

meeting of the two governors to define issues to be addressed by the states in the following year. In the Chesapeake Bay region, a similar annual event draws much attention to the Bay, which results in positive public awareness and needed federal and state funding, ensuring continued progress towards water quality and habitat improvement. The CAC and environmental groups like Save the Sound, will continue to suggest areas to be included in the annual agreement.

Second, the signed Agreement sets out a commitment to reduce nitrogen levels entering the Sound as well as a commitment to continue to aggressively implement the CCMP. The CCMP, a result of nine years of study by the two states and the federal government, identifies the problem areas in Long Island Sound that are in need of special attention. They are: hypoxia (low dissolved oxygen); toxic and pathogen contamination; floatable debris; habitat degradation and land use. By making nitrogen reduction the top priority in the Agreement, the urgency of reducing hypoxia is specifically addressed.

The Agreement proclaims that the states and the EPA agree to "bring specific nitrogen

targets to the public for review and approval, and to effectuate targeted nitrogen reductions as expeditiously as possible." In doing this, a third phase of nitrogen reduction will get underway.

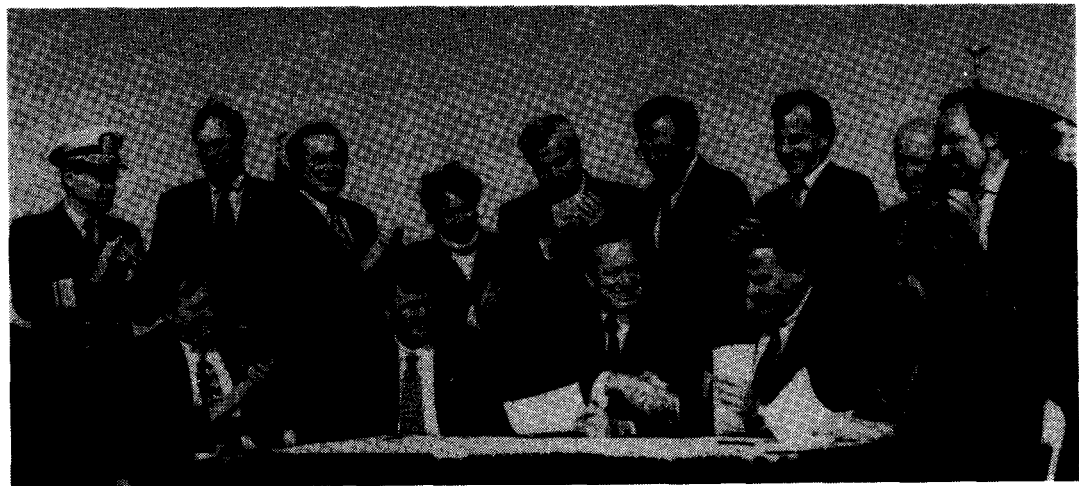
An additional benefit of the event in New York State was that it enabled Governor Pataki to promote his \$1.75 billion Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act less than a week before the vote.

Public events, like the signing ceremony, are tremendous vehicles for raising awareness about the issues surrounding the Sound. But if the appropriate follow up does not occur, their value diminishes. On behalf of the CAC, I'd like to thank Governors Pataki and Rowland and EPA Administrators Fox and DeVillars for their continued support of Long Island Sound clean-up efforts and ask that they continue to adopt strict but attainable nitrogen reduction targets. By working together, citizens, environmental organizations and government will all see a cleaner Long Island Sound.

John Atkin is executive director of Save the Sound, Inc. and Connecticut co-chair of the Long Island Sound Study's Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Signing of Long Island Sound Agreement

At SUNY Maritime College on October 31, 1996 New York Governor George Pataki, Connecticut Governor John Rowland and EPA Regional Administrator Jeanne Fox met to sign the Long Island Sound Agreement. This event shows further commitment to vigorously pursue Phase III Nitrogen Reduction actions and aggressively act to fulfil the commitments set forth in the Management Plan.



Back Row (L to R): Re. Admiral David C. Brown, USMS; NYS Secretary of State Alexander F. Treadwell; Senator Guy J. Velella, Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey, Nassau County Executive Thomas S. Gulotta; Suffolk County Executive Robert J. Gaffaney, David Miller, National Audubon, CAC Co Chair; NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner John Zaggata; John Atkin, Save the Sound, Inc., CAC Co Chair;
Front Row (L to R): CT Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Sidney J. Holbrook; Chief of EPA's CT Programs Unit John Hackler (representing EPA Region I Administrator John DeVillars); NY Governor George E. Pataki; CT Governor John G. Rowland, EPA Region II Administrator Jeanne Fox

Robert Abrams, Coordinator of Outdoor/ Environmental Education, K-12, Great Neck Schools

by *Dianne Selditch*

Bob Abrams was five years old when he discovered Long Island Sound. Relatives were building a house in Great Neck, Long Island, walking distance from the shore. He wandered to the waters' edge, put his feet in the Sound, and experienced a moment he has never forgotten.

"My relationship and love for the Sound started with that first step into the water. It was a wonderful place to swim," says Abrams, who grew up to become Coordinator of **Outdoor/Environmental** Education, K-12, Great Neck Schools.

That wonderful place to swim is "no longer," he said. However, Abrams has spent most of his professional and personal life working to reclaim the Sound. "I consider it the Mediterranean of North America," he says, borrowing from the title of the book by Marilyn Weigold, Ph.D.

As an adult, Abrams "just fell in love with the view." He began his career teaching biology. But having completed a masters' thesis on the genetics of tropical fish, he admittedly knew very little about the marine environment-until he attended his first meeting of the New York State Marine Education Association. "I walked in and said I needed help and before I knew it, they were throwing lesson plans and curricula at me," he said. Today, as secretary of the organization, Abrams makes sure that other new teachers have the same access to materials.

Twenty-five years ago, when he was named coordinator of outdoor/environmental education for the Great Neck Schools, he applied for a grant to study the characteristics of the waters of the Sound around Great Neck. The program acquired a research vessel, from which students identified and measured various forms of pollution, salinity, dissolved oxygen, clarity, temperature and coliform count.

"What was astounding in the beginning is that the coliform count was in the hundreds of millions," he said. "Over the past 25 years, the count around Great Neck has been reduced to allow swimmable **waters**-maybe for only a few days, but swimmable!"

Abrams has spent a lifetime exploring and learning about the Sound, and making children and adults aware of the value of clean water and the availability of recreational activities. Yet his most memorable experience occurred just recently, when he was invited to Groton, CT, to observe US Navy activities aboard the USS Philadelphia, a nuclear attack submarine.

"Here I was in this submarine," Abrams recalled. "We submerged and suddenly we were emerging from the depths of Long Island Sound, surrounded by party boats and recreational fishing vessels." Observing the Sound from the inside out-and it all began with wet toes.

*Dianne is a former newspaper reporter who works at **SoundWaters**, is a member of the **LISS** Citizens Advisory Committee and currently chairs the **LISS** Public Outreach Workgroup.*

Hillard Bloom Farms Long Island Sound for its Oyster Bounty

by *Peg VanPatten*

Long Island Sound means one thing to Hillard Bloom-his life. Bloom and his family grew up along the Sound's shores and depend on its bounty of mollusks for their livelihoods today. Bloom is a co-founder of Talhnadge Brothers, Inc., in Norwalk, one of the nation's largest and oldest oyster industries. The Long Island Sound oysters that they sell, Connecticut Blue Points, are valued worldwide for their flavor and quality.

Bloom grew up in a community rich in centuries-old oystering traditions. When he and his twin brother (now deceased) graduated from high school in 1947, they took to working the waters too, like their grandfather, uncle, and neighbors. As Bloom Brothers Seafood, the brothers worked beds for small oyster companies, using sailboats. They learned techniques from the old-timers and saved to buy their own boat. Unfortunately for other oystermen of the time, stormy weather and pollution from war technology damaged the natural beds, leading to years of oyster harvest decline and plummeting profits in the 1950's. Undaunted, the brothers turned to clamming as an interim harvest, working long hours and shrewdly reinvesting their profits to acquire equipment and oyster businesses that went **belly**-up. In 1967 they acquired the Talhnadge Brothers operation, founded in 1875 and owned by Hillard's wife's family, and decided to keep the name for the entire operation.

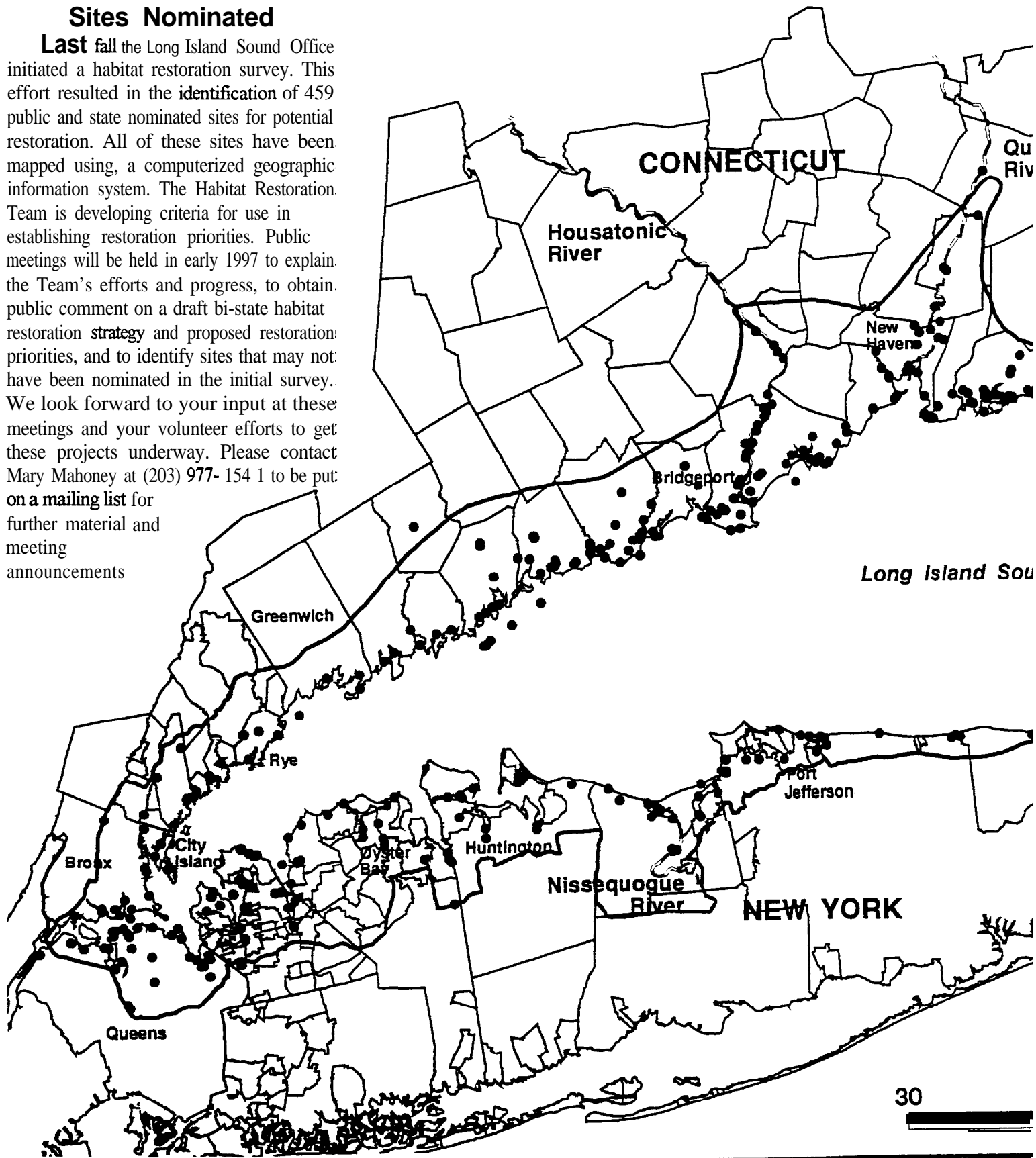
When water quality improved, oyster abundance underwent a dramatic revival and Bloom was poised to take advantage of the situation. "The water quality in Long Island Sound is much better now than it was twenty years ago," Bloom says. "That really helps business." He attributes the improvement to the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. In 1994, for example, the Connecticut oyster harvest was about 900,000 bushels, with a sale value of \$50 to \$60 million. Bloom and the other oyster growers really consider themselves farmers of the Sound as much as fishermen. Their crop needs to be seeded onto prepared beds, transplanted from one bed to another as they grow, then harvested by dredges, followed by sorting, packaging and marketing.

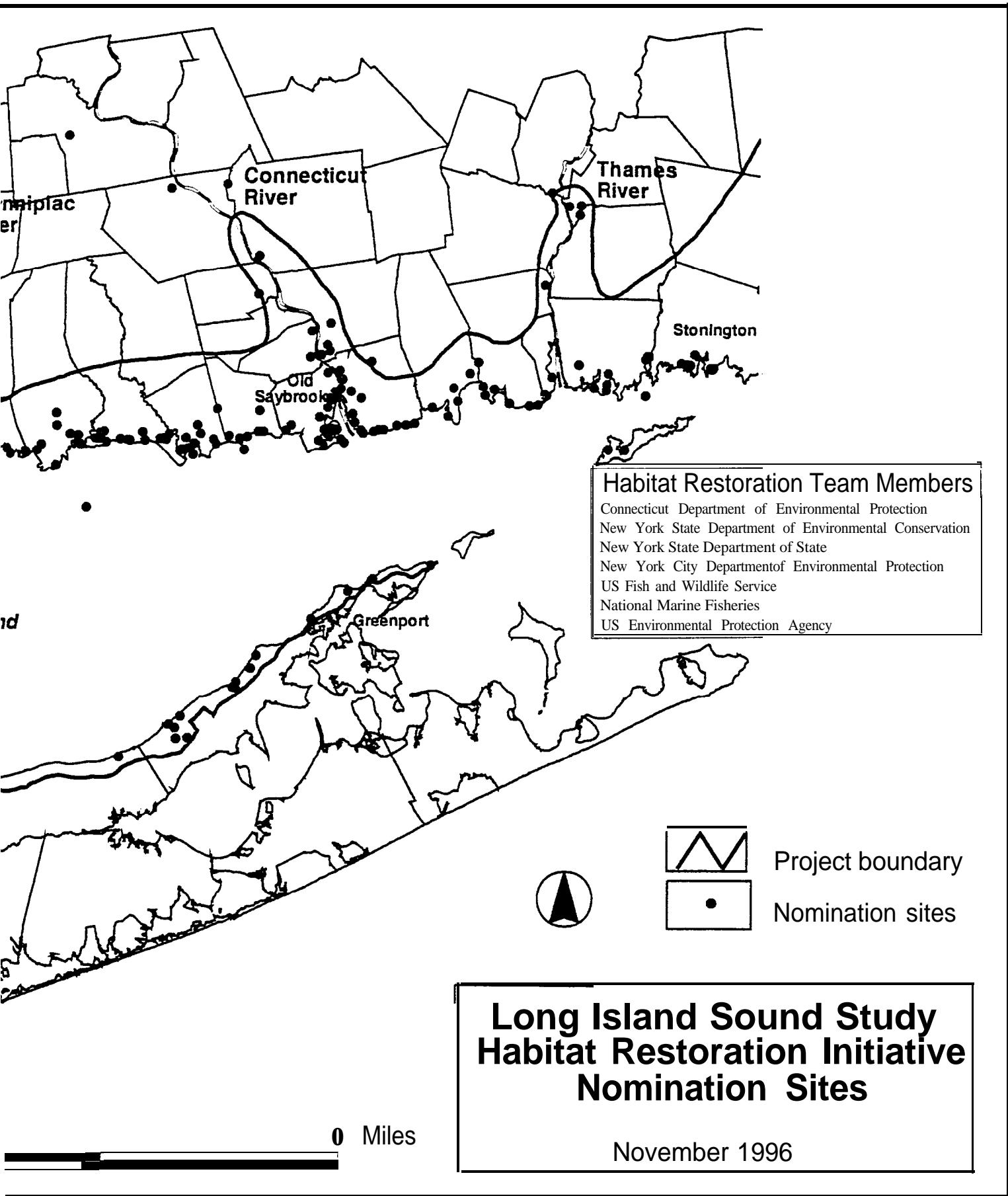
Today, Tallmadge Brothers Inc. is an amalgam of 12 oyster companies, nine in Connecticut and three in New Jersey. They farm 24,000 acres of oyster bed in Long Island Sound and Delaware Bay. The company owns its own packing plant, processing and refrigeration facilities, and a shipyard to maintain its fleet of 22 boats. In addition to their own employees, they support many smaller oystering efforts

Continued on Page 6.



459 Habitat Restoration Sites Nominated

Last fall the Long Island Sound Office initiated a habitat restoration survey. This effort resulted in the identification of 459 public and state nominated sites for potential restoration. All of these sites have been mapped using a computerized geographic information system. The Habitat Restoration Team is developing criteria for use in establishing restoration priorities. Public meetings will be held in early 1997 to explain the Team's efforts and progress, to obtain public comment on a draft bi-state habitat restoration strategy and proposed restoration priorities, and to identify sites that may not have been nominated in the initial survey. We look forward to your input at these meetings and your volunteer efforts to get these projects underway. Please contact Mary Mahoney at (203) 977-1541 to be put on a mailing list for further material and meeting announcements.





Habitat Restoration Team Members
 Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
 New York State Department of State
 New York City Department of Environmental Protection
 US Fish and Wildlife Service
 National Marine Fisheries
 US Environmental Protection Agency

 Project boundary
 Nomination sites



**Long Island Sound Study
 Habitat Restoration Initiative
 Nomination Sites**

November 1996

0 Miles

LISS Funds 7 Small Grant Projects

The Long Island Sound Office has awarded 7 grants to organizations in New York and Connecticut for projects that will increase public awareness and a sense of stewardship for the Sound. The grant recipients include:

Fairfield Conservation Commission, Connecticut. The Commission will prepare an illustrated pamphlet on the significance of tidal wetlands and how to successfully restore these valuable areas.

Save the Sound, Inc., a bi-state organization, will establish a LIS curriculum for fourth grade students in Bridgeport and Stamford. This **SoundShore** Ecology Project will stimulate an appreciation for the Sound in urban youth.

Connecticut Sea Grant will print a **SoundFacts** booklet, including illustrations of the Sound's ecology, biology, physical characteristics, geology and chemistry.

SoundWaters, Inc. from Connecticut, will expand the Urban Ecology Project to the Carver Community Center in New York. Twenty elementary aged children from a high-rise housing project will be introduced to the Sound through hands-on activities and field trips.

Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee from New York, will gather data on storm drains and initiate a stenciling program to increase public awareness of the connection between storm drains and pollution in the Harbor.

Port Washington Chamber of Commerce from New York, plans to plant 4,000 square feet of *Spartina alterniflora* within Manhasset Bay to restore wetland habitat.

Long Island Chapter of the New York Environment Association from New York, will expand the existing Adopt A School Program to middle schools in the Long Island Watershed. Chapter members will present videos on water conservation and wastewater treatment and encourage discussion on these topics.

Continued from Page 3.

by purchasing their harvests. Bloom oversees the operation from its modern building and harbor in **Norwalk**, continuing the tradition by getting the whole family involved, even the two dogs.

Bloom is excited about participating in a state program initiated by John Volk, director of the aquaculture division of the state Department of Agriculture. In this program, the state provides millions of bushels of clean oyster shells, much of it contributed by Bloom's company, to oystermen to spread on the sea floor at spawning time. The oyster larvae need the hard shells to attach themselves in order to grow.

"Long Island Sound has been good to us," he says thoughtfully, looking out the office window. No one following his glance to the boats unloading at the pier, or inside at the workers sorting heaps of oysters, would argue.

Peg VanPatten works at Connecticut Sea Grant and is an active member of the LISS Public Outreach Workgroup.

LISS OFFERS GRANTS

A request for proposals for the next round of **Public Participation Information** and Education **Small Grants** is now underway. **Proposals are due December 31, 1996.** Projects that focus on public education and public involvement in activities to protect and restore the water quality and habitat of Long Island Sound are eligible for funding. Successful proposals should demonstrate innovative approaches to encourage public participation in protection of the estuary. Nonprofit organizations, local governments or public agencies, private businesses, educational institutions and classroom teachers are encouraged to contact Kimberly Zimmer at (516) 632-9216 for further information on obtaining a grant.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SAVE THE SOUND, INC.

Save the Sound was awarded a \$5,000 grant from EPA for Environmental Education Projects in the New England area.

In conjunction with University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, Save the Sound will train 100 upper elementary school teachers from communities within the Long Island Sound watershed on how to integrate information about preservation and restoration of the Sound into their curriculum. At each of 5 locations within the watershed, 15-30 teachers will receive 10 hours of training, involving them in hands on learning about the Sound, its watershed, and water quality to help them feel comfortable teaching this subject matter with their students.

New York Bond Act Passes

On November 5, 1996 New Yorkers voted by a 56% margin to approve the Clean Air/Clean Water Environmental Bond Act. What does this mean for Long Island Sound? The Bond Act provides \$200 million for Long Island Sound projects, including sewage treatment plant upgrades, habitat restoration and nonpoint source pollution controls. For more information on Long Island Sound related Bond Act issues please contact Karen Chytalo at (516) 444-0468.

Watershed Management Efforts Heat Up

Just over a year ago, the EPA Long Island Sound Office and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) joined forces to address watershed management issues as they relate to the Sound. It's been a very productive year! Here are some of the highlights:

Norwalk River Watershed Initiative

An 18-month planning project is now underway for the Norwalk River watershed. The Watershed encompasses the towns of Norwalk, Wilton, New Canaan, Redding, Weston and Ridgefield in Connecticut, and Lewisboro, New York. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the Fairfield County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, Westchester County Planning Department, and all of the watershed communities have signed on as partners in this effort. A committee consisting of representatives of key stakeholder groups, will work with municipal officials and federal and state agency staff to guide development and implementation of a watershed management plan.

The plan will look at innovative approaches to maintaining and restoring water quality; protecting flood prone areas; and restoring habitat for fish and wildlife. The potential to expand open space, public access, and recreational use opportunities will also be evaluated. To date, teams of scientists have updated flood hazard information, and are preparing computerized watershed maps, reviewing census and water quality data, and analyzing existing regulatory programs, fish restoration plans and recreation and open space plans. More than 50 volunteers worked in teams over the summer to survey each mile of the watershed's rivers and

streams. The results of the volunteer stream survey are now being compiled, and will be presented to the public early next year. For further information on this effort, contact Project Coordinators Walter Smith at (203) 977-1541 or Tess Gutowski at (860) 424-3096

Norwalk Initiative Wins Award

The EPA Long Island Sound Office and the NRCS Connecticut Office received the 1996 *River Conservationist of the Year Award* from the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut. Carolyn Hughes and Walter Smith were on hand at a November 2 Ceremony to accept the award from Alliance President Lynn Werner. The two were honored for "their innovative, collaborative, and visionary efforts in the Norwalk River Watershed." Werner called it a "model project that unites federal, state and local government with non-profit organizations, business, and citizens to address river conservation and water quality on a watershed basis."

Westchester County Watershed Implementation Projects

This summer, the Westchester County watershed planning process was a winner in the Congressional budget process. Congress provided \$300,000 to the NRCS for a partnership with the Westchester Soil and Water Conservation District and the EPA Long Island Sound Office to address land use and water quality issues affecting Long Island Sound. The funds are being used to support implementation of projects identified in Westchester County's watershed management planning process (see *Update*, Spring 1996 for more information on the County planning effort). Five possible project sites were field checked by a team of people led by County staff and District Board members, in early November. NRCS and District staff are now preparing preliminary design and cost information to facilitate final site selection. For more

information about this effort, contact Carolyn Hughes at (203) 977-1541.

Watershed Conference Proceedings Available

The proceedings of "Connecticut: Embarking Upon Watershed Management," a conference jointly sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the state's Rivers Advisory Committee, the EPA Long Island Sound Office and the NRCS in the Spring, are now available. To receive a copy, contact Jay Northrup at (860) 424-3877.

Working for a Cleaner Norwalk Harbor

On October 16, 1996 local, state and federal agency staff and elected officials gathered for the ground breaking of a new waste water treatment plant for the City of Norwalk, Connecticut.

This landmark project, a cornerstone of the CTDEP's Long Island Sound nutrient removal program, is the first full-scale plant approved by the CT DEP and funded under the Connecticut Clean Water Fund as part of its long-term, Sound-wide nitrogen reduction policy.

The \$40 million 3 year construction project is expected to meet anticipated water pollution control needs through the year 2020. Plans include expanding treatment capacity from 15 million gallons per day to 20 million gallons per day.

In 1990, facility planning at the Norwalk Harbor Wastewater Treatment Plant was begun to upgrade the plant to biological nutrient treatment, as a key element in the implementation of the Long Island Sound Study Management Plan.

In conjunction with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP), Norwalk conducted a demonstration pilot program of different types of biological nutrient removal process. Based on study results, state-of-the-art technology was applied in engineering the first large-scale facility designed to remove nitrogen year-round with a discharge to the Sound. Contact Fred Treffeisen at (203) 854-7769 for further information.

UPDATE

THE **LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY UPDATE** IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM OF THE **LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY** TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE STUDY.

Editors:

Kimberly **Zimmer, NY Sea Grant/Extension**
Carolyn Hughes, LIS Executive Director
Mark **Tedesco**, LIS Technical Director

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER, THE LISS PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM OR THE LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY, CONTACT:

CONNECTICUT EPA LIS OFFICE STAMFORD GOVERNMENT CENTER 888 WASHINGTON BLVD STAMFORD, CT 06904-2 152 (203) 977-1541	NEW YORK EPA LIS OFFICE MARINE SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTER SUNY AT STONY BROOK STONY BROOK, NY 117945000 (516) 632-9216
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Please let me know if this is a change or an addition and be sure to **include** your name, organization, address and phone.

Thanks!

KIDS! LOOKING FOR A SCIENCE EXPERIMENT? CHECK OUT THIS NEW HOMEPAGE ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Rohm and Haas Research Laboratories has launched a new **homepage** that allows users to tap into a vast array of more than 40 hands on science experiments. Interested individuals can access the page at www.rohmhaas.com/ProjectLABS.

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NY Sea Grant Extension Program
125 Nassau **Hall**
SUNY
Stony Brook, NY 11794-5002

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