

Long Island Sound Study (LISS) Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

March 27, 2014

EPA Region 2 Headquarters, 290 Broadway, New York, NY

Welcome, Housekeeping & Logistics

Nancy Seligson, *Supervisor, Town of Mamaroneck* and the *NY Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Co-chair*, welcomed the group at approximately 9:45am. A quorum of 18 CAC members was present.

Nancy Seligson reminded the CAC that the EPA Regional Administrators (RAs) from Region 1 (Curt Spalding) and Region 2 (Judith Enck) will participate in the meeting today. Nancy and Curt Johnson, *Save the Sound/CT Fund for the Environment* and the *CT CAC Co-chair*, explained that this is an excellent opportunity to build on the communications initiated with both RAs over the proposed relocation of the EPA Long Island Sound Office (LISO). Both Judith Enck and Curt Spalding showed great leadership in listening to the concerns of the CAC and Congress that resulted in a decision change to keep the EPA LIS Office in Stamford, CT.

Curt Johnson emphasized that the CAC Policy Committee of the CAC was very helpful in communicating how important it is to have the EPA LISO remain in Stamford, CT. He emphasized that the dialogue now creates an opportunity to advance the goals of the LISS by asking the RAs to meet to provide their input to the update of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). Twenty years ago, the CCMP was cutting-edge and had nutrient trading and a bi-state TMDL, and we would like to see that vision happen again. Nancy Seligson added that we need to seize this opportunity to inspire the EPA leadership to get more involved in the CCMP process.

Curt Johnson mentioned that the CAC Policy Committee recommends asking the Region 1 and 2 RAs to participate in a working session on the revision of the CCMP with the NYSDEC and CTDEEP leaders.

Grant Westerson, *CT Marine Trades Association*, asked Mark Tedesco, *Director of LISS, EPA*, if he is fearful for staff cuts. Mark Tedesco said that there will not be staff cuts in 2014. He mentioned that most of the staff positions come from the EPA Long Island Sound appropriations. EPA uses a separate pot of money for the funding for the office.

Nancy Seligson wrapped up the discussion by saying she is excited for the Long Island Sound Study to receive attention from the EPA Region 1 and 2 RAs and that the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) CAC needs to see this as a positive opportunity.

CAC Member Priorities/ Break-out Groups

Nancy Seligson introduced the purpose of the break-out group session. She said that the purpose of the session is to make sure that the environmental work we do in our day jobs is supported by the work we do in the CAC. We want to create synergies among the CAC and member groups. She also wanted each CAC member to think about what they want to see in the CCMP.

Curt Johnson added that the break-out groups should think about the following questions: (1.) How can the CCMP help your organization's mission? (2.) What do you think are the absolute top priorities/visionary goals for the CCMP themes?

Nancy Seligson added that the CAC has an important role in ensuring the CCMP revision has visionary language for goals and objectives. She thinks that the CAC should provide over-arching visionary goals language. A CAC sub-committee was formed to help draft this visionary language. Dianne Selditch, *SoundWaters*; Jennifer Wilson-Pines, *Manhasset Bay Protection Committee*; Pat Aitken, *Whaling Museum and Education Center at Cold Spring Harbor*; David Miller, *NYLCVEF*; and Marty Garrell, *Adelphi University*, volunteered to be a part of this sub-committee all volunteered to participate

Break-out Group Highlight Reports

(1) Waters and Watersheds, led by Curt Johnson

- a. Citizen monitoring and water quality
 - Expand the area to include embayments
 - Use better science, pilot programs
 - Better depiction of info
 - Invest in rapid monitoring techniques
 - Address other symptoms of excess nitrogen (red tide, habitat loss)
 - Develop biological indicators beyond hypoxia
 - Expand funding and resources (labs, centralized system)
 - Include further research in other biological indicators (e.g., How is nitrogen related to red tide? How much nitrogen reduction will reduce red tide frequency?; Habitat loss, e.g., sea grass and wetlands; What other factors other than nitrogen influence problems, e.g., red tide and temperature?)
- b. Creating a single estuarine system
- c. Shellfish and bioextraction
 - User conflicts and seafloor destruction
 - Best viable in NY harbors (CAC member position: don't want to see farmers disappear; "common beds" do not work, "historical friction")
- d. Fisheries management: there is no local mechanism in place
- e. Aquaculture
 - Policies are needed for expanding aquaculture industry
 - Aquaculture has water filtering benefits
 - Protected areas have hatchery and spillover benefits
- f. TMDL
 - Stormwater, aging infrastructure
 - Encourage investment and credits for reduction of non-point sources
 - Alternative system research
- g. Outreach and education to municipalities: coordination among water-front towns and villages
- h. Coastal management programs: need to be consistent throughout
- i. Water quality indicators: need to be consistent across the Sound and throughout the agencies; for example, DEC and Health Dept.
- j. Energy and water connections: fracking waste

(2) Habitats and Wildlife, led by Vicky O'Neill

- a. Bacteria associated with septic systems and cesspools
- b. Invasive species
- c. Public access
- d. Adaptation to climate change
- e. Education & Outreach
- f. Marine Reserves – "Fisheries Replenishment Zones"
- g. Stewardship
- h. Green development

- i. Wildlife Protection: Endangered species, marine mammals, birds
- j. Habitat Restoration: Urban/Other
- k. Aquatic Connectivity

This group also had the following visionary goals for the CCMP:

1. Prioritize critical habitats to protect and restore
2. Plan for coastal resiliency and climate change adaptation using ecological infrastructure
3. Encourage communities to embrace their role in protecting the Sound's environment

(3) **Sound Communities**, led by Amy Mandelbaum

- a. Behavior change: car wash, litter, plastic (bags)
- b. Hands-on experience through citizen science
- c. Science education: public schools
- d. LIS Identity: maritime; cultural; ecological resources; a public that recognizes their connection and impact on LIS; Need connection with watershed communities; Sound shore communities pride; elevate Long Island Sound by conducting regular PSAs, email blasts, blogs; Designate Long Island Sound as a national heritage area
- e. Pharmaceuticals: elimination
- f. Pesticides: reduction/elimination
- g. Public Access: have a Sound-wide trail; combat private beaches
- h. Environmental Justice
- i. Sustainability planning for every community: energy, water, and walkability; create a "Sound community" certificate; green infrastructure should be required
- j. Determine the economic impacts of flooding hazards
- k. Green jobs: build eco-tourism
- l. Resiliency planning for sea level rise: infrastructure protection and natural habitat protection

This group also had the following visionary goals for the CCMP:

1. Make recycling of Pharmaceuticals easy
2. A watershed without plastic bags
3. Reduction of pesticide use/elimination

(4) **Science and Management**, led by Mark Tedesco

- a. Build common approach to dredging, disposal windows (CT/NY)
- b. Common regulations LIS: Fisheries; Boating
- c. Still need progress on DMMP and EIS: DMMP still doesn't address recreational harbor needs (Can recreational harbors' needs be considered in navigational disposal efforts?)
- d. Small "windows" have reduced number of companies qualified to bid for work
- e. Fill deep trench hypoxic WLIS basin with dredge material
- f. Borrow pits: e.g., Port Washington
- g. Need forum to discuss these issues (fed, bi-state); make sediment a resource that benefits the region: Identify successes; can they be duplicated; Mamaroneck, Mystic, New Haven
- h. Use of micro, historic disposal sites
- i. Consider restoration and resiliency needs regionally

This group also had the following visionary goals for the CCMP:

1. Foster open dialogue among ACE, CT (DEEP), NY (NYDOS, NYSDEC, etc.,) to build bi-state synergy for maintaining commercial harbors and to explore beneficial re-use of dredged material.

Policy Committee

Sean Mahar, *Audubon New York*, gave the Policy Committee update. With the Federal FY 14 budget request, LISS received a slight increase from Congress – one of the only National Estuary Programs to receive a bump from the Omnibus budget. With the FY 15 request, the President will reduce LISS funding; as such, the Policy Committee is working to increase funding Sean added that the CAC Policy Committee is also working on a “Dear Colleague” letter requesting \$10 million for Long Island Sound (LIS). In early February, Senator Gillibrand reintroduced the LIS Restoration bill. The CAC Policy Committee would like to see the bill reauthorized. Sean Mahar said that there will be a Lobby Day in late May/ early June to go to DC (exact date is to be determined). As part of this day, they want to see more of LIS support community join fight for LIS. Please let the Policy Committee know if you are interested in going to this spring’s Lobby Day.

As for the NY State level, Sean Mahar reported they are advocating for more money for the Environmental Protection Fund - stay tuned for more information. Also, they are working on the issue of microbeads, and introduced legislation to ban microbead personal-care products.

Curt Johnson reported that at the CT state level, they are working on bonding for LIS for the Clean Water Fund. They are also working on the issue of fracking waste going into sewage treatment plants (CT Citizens Campaign for the Environment is working with legislature and CT DEEP on this issue).

Chantal Collier, *The Nature Conservancy (TNC)*, said that TNC is leading the work on the Blue Plan bill. This bill will enable the State of CT to do marine spatial planning in LIS and to work better with NY and throughout the northeast (regional plan). The bill that passed through the committees still needs work on addressing stakeholder needs. Working on getting a chair – DEEP and UConn might lead this, but still working on sorting it out. Curt Johnson added that there was a letter of support for Marine Spatial planning from the CAC. Chantal Collier added that marine spatial planning is included in CCMP.

Curt Johnson reported that EPA Deputy Administrator, Bob Perciasepe, and Matt Fritz, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy’s Chief of Staff, encouraged the CAC Policy Committee to have a visionary and cutting-edge CCMP.

Curt Johnson talked about the potential closing of the NOAA Aquaculture Lab in Milford, CT. Julie Rose and Gary Wikfors work there. They are involved with the Oyster Bay hatchery program and the 3D oyster and bioextraction projects. NOAA is proposing to cut three quarters of the funding to the lab. The CAC will send a letter in support of maintaining the lab for LIS. Curt Johnson said that a draft letter will be sent and that the CAC will have a 24 hour period to comment.

Discussion with the EPA Region 1 & 2 Regional Administrators: CAC Perspective on Opportunities to Work Together

Nancy Seligson welcomed Curt Spalding, *EPA Region 1 Regional Administrator*, who was on the phone, Judith Enck, *EPA Region 2 Regional Administrator* and Joan Matthews, *EPA Region 2 Clean Water Division Director*, to the CAC meeting. Nancy said the CAC would appreciate the RAs providing their vision and goals for the LIS program. She asked the RAs to meet with State environmental agency leaders to put their leadership stamp and vision into CCMP priorities and on the CCMP update.

Curt Spalding said that much has changed in the last 12 months regarding coastal ecosystem management. He mentioned that we now have 2 big issues: (1) climate and ecosystem changes; (2) EPA is undergoing a transformation – the EPA Administrator put forth themes on how to do business regarding water quality monitoring, working with

communities, information technology and the flow of information, water quality permits, etc. He ended by saying that he's eager to engage with what goes on moving forward.

Judith Enck introduced Joan Matthews with Clean Water Division at EPA Region 2 – she is doing work on pollution prevention. EPA Region 2 is doing work on septic systems, wastewater treatment plants, and toxic legacy pollutants. Climate change and resiliency are big priorities for EPA. President Obama tasked Gina McCarthy, EPA Administrator, to develop the first ever regulations to reduce carbon from fossil fuels. EPA is working on Storm Sandy recovery with HUD and FEMA by doing climate resiliency projects, such as green infrastructure, pollution prevention, etc. to help protect water quality. The EPA National Estuary Programs were developed to protect water quality and then things branch out from that. Judith said that she is committed to going to one meeting with the DEC/DEEP Commissioners from NY and CT to discuss and tackle the issues. The challenge ahead of us is to take important issues and communicate them better to the public and to different audiences (e.g., environmental report card, beach report, using technology, working with immigrant communities, reaching millennial and environmental justice communities, etc.). She also described the TNC/EPA Earth Day “Nature Selfie” project where EPA is asking people to take a “selfie” on Earth Day outside in nature and to do it every year to document the effects of climate change.

Dave Miller added that there is a need for resiliency to be incorporated into the CCMP. There are many federal agencies involved in these issues. He asked the RA's if they would help get the appropriate people from these agencies involved in the LISS. Judith Enck suggested the CAC develop an “Ask List” from which she and Curt Spalding will recommend contacts.

Curt Spalding stated that the game is very different regarding adaptation and resiliency, and we have to look at where other federal agencies are going and have them join us. Gina McCarthy's message is to figure out what other agencies do to see how they can leverage efforts.

Sean Mahar asked Judith Enck what other information she needs from the CAC to help EPA achieve its priorities. Judith Enck said that we should get results. Curt Spalding said that LIS is just one of many environmental priorities. We need to build connections and networks where we can knit together political and community will.

The EPA RAs agreed to meet with the environmental agency commissioners of CT and NY to talk about next steps on LIS protection. Also, the CAC will develop an “Ask List” for other agencies where can access other resources. The CAC will bring Congressmen out on the Sound to showcase it.

Next Steps

Joel Ziev, *Town of North Hempstead*, said that it would be good to go out with Congressmen on boats to show them the Sound. Jennifer Herring, *The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk*, mentioned that there is a new 65 foot catamaran being built for the Aquarium that will be operational in the summer. Dianne Selditch said that the SoundWaters boat is available May-October going up and down CT rivers.

Mark Tedesco said that we have plenty of examples of success stories by providing fact sheets that include our four big accomplishments. He also said that we have our newsletter that shows 20 years of accomplishments from the CCMP. He added that we will highlight local heroes to show what people have accomplished in a place, show a before/after photos, and put in perspective of organization and person that made a difference.

Nancy Seligson said that we will follow-up with EPA Region 1 and 2 RAs, where we'll list some of top five accomplishments and that we'll consider the possibility of working in a regional network (larger estuary program form) to look for a larger ask from Congress.

Rob Buchanan, *NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program CAC*, said that the NY/NJ HEP would like to work with us, especially when it comes to working with immigrant communities.

Federal Budget & Update on the CCMP

Mark Tedesco gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the update on the CCMP process and the federal budget. Nancy Seligson said that the budget will be discussed at the April LISS Management Committee meeting.

Updates, Announcements

Jennifer Wilson-Pines reported the CESSPOOL Project had their conference on March 25, 2014 (a conference funded by the LIS Futures Fund), where there were 130 attendees from Long Island. They received good feedback on the conference. In April, they will be do training for septic system inspections. Also, they received a NY State Department of State grant to conduct a public perception survey that was done at Stony Brook University, and they will be doing follow-up workshops as part of that project.

Carol DiPaolo, *Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor*, said that Hempstead Harbor is one of the pilot embayments, along with Norwalk Harbor, for the LIS Report Card project funded by the LIS Futures Fund. The work will be conducted by the University of Maryland (UMD). This is something to consider for future CAC meetings.

Nancy Seligson reported that she and Curt Johnson attended the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program CAC meeting last week, and said that it is good to develop a relationship with them.

Nancy Seligson ended the meeting at approximately 2:00pm. The next CAC meeting will be held on June 12th in CT.

For additional information on the CAC, visit: <http://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/committees/citizens-advisory-committee/>