

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee  
IN PERSON Hybrid Meeting at the Housatonic Community College  
in Bridgeport, CT  
Thursday, June 13, 2024



## Meeting Summary

### Welcome and Introductions

- **Holly Drinkuth** (CT co-chair, TNC) kicked off the meeting at 10:40am with a round of introductions from attendees in person and online. Final attendance: 23 CAC members and around 68 total attendees.
- **David Miller** (NY League of Conservation Voters Environment Fund) moved to approve the March 2024 meeting minutes, **Marty Garrell** (CAC Secretary, Adelphi University) seconded.
- **Nancy Seligson** (NY co-chair) introduced the **Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMSEAS)**, and their representatives **Alli DePerte** and **Eli Sywak**, as representatives from the potential CAC member organization. **Adrienne Esposito** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) moved to accept AMSEAS, **Carl Harvey** (Menunkatuck Audubon Society) seconded. All were in favor. AMSEAS is a new CAC member. Alli gave a few words, excited to share what they are doing and hear about what others are doing.
- Holly gave an overview of the agenda. Nancy encouraged the CAC to get their “opinion juices” going for the CCMP feedback session, noting the importance of the CAC sharing their input.
- **Shahela Begum** (Restore America’s Estuaries) spoke about the upcoming Annual Learning Exchange on June 27 and the Long Island Sound Community Impact fund (LISCIF) which had 18 subawardees in its first year. The Annual Learning Exchange, at the CUNY Graduate Center, was the first regional meetup of all subawardees together. For more information on LISCIF, contact Shahela at [sbegum@estuaries.org](mailto:sbegum@estuaries.org).
- **Denise Savageau** (Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts) gave a project update from the CT Soil and Water Conservation District. The group is working to bring watershed operations funding to CT through a project modelled after the successful Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project in partnership with NRCS. They are looking to fund 2 types of projects: 1) stormwater quality infrastructure improvements with a focus on impacts to shellfish beds and 2) tidal marsh and/or coastal habitat restoration. For more information contact Denise at [dmsavageau@msn.com](mailto:dmsavageau@msn.com).
- **Nancy** announced she has been attending meetings and is now the co-chair of the Westchester Coalition for Clean Water (WCCW). She would like to participate as a representative of the CAC. Dave moved to have Nancy represent the CAC, **George Hoffman** (Setauket Harbor Task Force) seconded. Many resounding Aye’s from the CAC; the motion carried. CAC members encouraged Nancy to represent the CAC as well as share with the group motions passed by the CAC and bring in information from the group meetings to the CAC.

## **Policy Subcommittee Updates**

- Adrienne Esposito announced planning for the CAC's visit to Congress in Washington DC for July 10. Meetings with Representatives LaLotta, Garbarino and Senators Schumer, Blumenthal, and Murphy have already been scheduled. Adrienne thanked **Tripp Killin** and his organization the Jeniam Foundation for providing funding support for the trip CAC members. Agenda items for discussion with congressional representatives include the permanent preservation of Plum Island, reauthorization of the Restoration and Stewardship Act, funding levels, and project stories.

## Adrienne Esposito then provided **NY State Legislation Updates:**

- Extended User Responsibility Act aims to put the burden of material recycling and proper disposal on the manufacturer. Senate passed the bill, but the assembly did not vote on it. Citizens Campaign for the Environment has a different strategy for next year.
- A bill to ban horseshoe crab harvesting passed. Protect the Horseshoe Crab Coalition formed and got many sponsors in Albany. Letters of support and tons of phone calls helped get the bill passed.
- In November, Suffolk County residents will vote on whether to raise sales tax an eighth of a penny to support the septic replacement program and sewer expansions. The state already offers up to \$10k for septic replacement, and county funds could provide an additional \$10k.

## **Denise Stranko (Save the Sound) provided Federal and CT Policy Updates:**

### **Federal Updates:**

- The Reauthorization Bill just passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee and onto the floor.
- The Interior and Environment Bill was scheduled to have a markup in its subcommittee on June 28. H.R.5441 - Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023 passed the House on July 9, 2024.

### **CT Updates**

- The Good News:
  - o Law SV292 passed prohibiting the use of PFAS chemicals in a host of products including fabric treatments and cleaning products; it goes into effect in 2028.
  - o CT will now have a Seagrass Coordinator, which will hopefully help with conservation and coordination with NY.
- The Bad News:
  - o Environmental issues are being pitted against affordable housing challenges. An amendment to a new Housing Bill emerged that would prevent the public's ability to intervene in any housing permitting issues.
- The Ugly News:
  - o A major new bill was in the works that would have included several significant actions for climate change mitigation, including updating emissions lines and incentivizing a green economy. It passed the House and failed in the Senate.

Following policy updates, the CAC discussed septic tank system replacement programs. There are more nitrogen-removing septic system technologies being approved. Stony Brook University recently introduced a new system that is cheaper, that should allow the available funding to stretch further. Some LI towns are requiring innovative technologies for any new septic system installations.

### **Presentation: A New Vision for Riker's Island**

Tracy Brown, Riverkeeper

- A suite of legislation called Renewable Rikers was passed by the NYC City Council in 2021. It requires that NYC shut down the jail on Rikers Island by 2027. Most people in this jail are waiting for their day in court and have not been convicted. The law requires multiple small community jails be built instead of Rikers. Construction for these smaller community jails has begun in Brooklyn, Chinatown, etc.
- Another piece of the Renewable Rikers legislation requires a feasibility study for a new wastewater treatment plant and energy plant at Rikers Island. This is important because NYC is a significant source of sewage, with CSOs dumping around 21 billion gallons of untreated wastewater and stormwater per year into local harbors, including areas that flow into LIS. The city has long term control plans to address this but needs more treatment capacity to meaningfully reduce CSOs.
- The new DEP commissioner plans to eliminate CSOs in NYC by 2060, but it will only be possible by creating the new plant on Rikers Island. There are 4 very old WWTP that are responsible for more than half of the CSO discharges. Once they build the island's WWTP, this will allow enough redundancy in the system to allow for the other plants to be taken offline for upgrades.
- It's clear that the deadline for closing Rikers Island by 2027 is too ambitious but could be possible by 2030.
- NYC DEP has moved forward with an initial feasibility study that has shown a triple bottom line. It would also assist with renewable energy efforts in the city.
- **Discussion:**
  - o Impacts on renewable energy: The Major's Office of Climate and EJ did a study that explored 5 different scenarios. One of them takes the WWTP into consideration, and the recommendation coming from that office includes a WWTP and offshore wind considerations.
  - o Best way for the CAC to stay informed: There are 2 coalitions: *Close Rikers* focuses on incarceration reform and justice, and *Renewable Rikers* is a combination of environmental groups and incarceration reform. Renewable Rikers would be an appropriate forum for the CAC.
  - o There is no other city-owned land that could comprise such a project. There are other groups pushing for the island to be transformed into a park, others having issues with the construction of the local jails. Tracy believes those groups are not

seeing the big picture of potential impacts to water quality, energy, and justice this project could accomplish. She encouraged CAC members to join the Renewable Rikers coalition and help support the project.

- The project site is 413 acres. Mark Tedesco noted that DEP's feasibility report estimates the project cost around \$34 billion, but it also highlights the potential of going from 4 old plants into a single, modern plant that could result in significant savings from increased energy and operations efficiencies. Tracy added that building a \$1.6 billion CSO tunnel would no longer be needed.
- Save the Sound is part of the Renewable Rikers coalition. David Miller suggested they serve as a liaison for the CAC. He also suggested Save the Sound, Tracy, and others develop a concept resolution that the CAC could use to support the feasibility plan. **David Ansel** (Save the Sound) said he would be happy to serve as a liaison. *Action item for David Ansel: Provide draft generic resolution to be shared at the CAC meeting supporting DEP's feasibility study.*
- Is SLR being taken into account? Yes.
- There are many questions of what to do with the existing plants including considering making them public access sites and stormwater treatment facilities.
- **Jim Ammerman** (NEIWPC) suggested looking through the Rikers feasibility study, which is not lengthy and includes pictures. *Action item: Share feasibility study with the CAC.*

## **Presentation: ERG**

Mark Tedesco introduced **Kettie Graziano** and **Isabella Espinoza** of ERG, the consulting group who has been assisting LISS in its revision of the CCMP. As part of this process, LISS hosted virtual (3) and in person (4) public input sessions and received online feedback via email. ERG presented a summary of the feedback received through those sessions:

- Engagement sessions began with an ice breaker, asking folks *Do you live in a watershed?* and *What three words would you use to describe Long Island Sound?* Most people used the word "Beautiful". Attendees were also asked what brought them to the session.
- All sessions began with a presentation about the Sound and LISS, then moved to separate tables or break-out sessions (one per goal, plus one on the mission, vision, and name of the program). Attendees were asked to indicate what they liked, what they would change, and what was missing.
- Overarching themes in the feedback included:
  - A desire for the program to be more intentional about how it engages, communicates, and works with local organizations.
  - Keeping language consistent across all goals.
  - Tying the health of the Sound to the health of people living in the watershed.
  - Concern that the objectives are too restrictive and a need to keep them dynamic and adaptable.
  - Interest in seeing more language about sub watersheds and sub-estuaries.
- Comments online expressed concern for the wildlife in LIS, pollution, more clear advisories for public safety, etc.

- People were asked to respond to six potential name changes for the LISS. The top two names were Long Island Sound Estuary Program followed by Long Island Sound Estuary Partnership.
- To see the direct feedback received during the sessions for each goal, as well as the mission, vision, and values, see [the PPT \(attached\)](#).

After lunch, the CAC participated in break out group tables modeled after the feedback sessions, and added their own thoughts for each. Attendees online also participated via Jamboards. Following this exercise, a member from each table shared some of the discussion. **Lillit Genovesi** (NYSG) and **Elizabeth Hornstein** (NYSG) shared the comments from the online discussion that included making sure people are represented in the mission and vision statements, the inclusion of sub estuaries, and considering the wording used under the environmental justice value to ensure it does not come across as just a process, but to communicate LISS's intention to really being inclusive and engaging and ensuring the impacts to disadvantaged communities are considered.

- George Hoffman commented that decisionmakers should be more engaged in the process.
- David Miller commented that the values are outstanding but need to flow better and have a better structural order. He suggested this order: Respect, EJ, Science, Management, Adaptive Management.
- Marty Garrell commented that he doesn't think we are effectively communicating what LISS is doing and the progress made. Holly encouraged Marty to follow LISS on social media and noted **Anya Grondalski** (NEIWPC) has been very active in sharing updates through new communication efforts. Anya shared that our engagement numbers are higher than industry standards, and that she's been working on more collaboration with other groups on social media so the public understands that LISS is a partnership.
- **Maureen Murphy** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) suggested we add communications updates so the CAC can help amplify products and information. *Action item: Coordinate with Anya Grondalski (NEIWPC) for a Communications update at the next CAC meeting, and others moving forward.*
- Denise Savageau noted that at one of the public meetings, they wanted to know *who* (which organization) is doing what, and whether they are part of a greater effort. Nancy Seligson noted that CAC member organizations should try to communicate how they are part of a greater LISS partnership effort.
- Mark Tedesco shared some of the comments he received at his table, which housed the mission, vision, and values. One comment was the meaning of making science "Fair" - is it the process, or the actions taken, or the science itself being somehow fair? Another comment included reordering the order of the values. There was also a suggestion to define Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK).
- **Deb Abibou** (CTSG) and **Sarah Schechter** (CTSG) shared comments from the SRC table. Additional context for the numbers established, phrasing being in more active language, and ensuring how - despite the SRC goal having an objective related to informed decision makers - LISS should consider that within other Goals as well were part of the comments. Also, the including tribal nations, and considering how to support communities looking further into the future for their planning.

- Nancy spoke about the importance of the inclusion of “watershed” in the CCMP so the public can see themselves in the plan even when not on the coast.
- **Kate Knight** (CT DEEP) gave a recap of comments from the Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds table, that included being specific regarding green infrastructure, ideas on metrics for marine debris, and pathogen tracking.
- There was some discussion over the balance of being specific enough to be helpful, but broad enough to ensure enough flexibility for the wide range of pathogens, technologies, etc. There was also discussion about the use of the term “physical debris”, with a suggestion to include something that makes clear that its man-made debris. Alli Deperte said the recommendation is to call it “ocean pollution” over marine debris.
- **Jimena Perez-Viscasillas** (NYSG) shared some comments from the Informed and Engaged Public table that included the idea of highlighting or separating youth education from general education, using active language, adding specificity and steps towards public access, publicizing public access, etc.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20PM. The next meeting will take place in-person in Port Jefferson, NY on September 12th.