

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee

ZOOM Online Meeting

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – Meeting Summary



Welcome

- **Nancy Seligson** (CAC NY co-chair; Town of Mamaroneck) called the meeting to order at 9AM with 39 people in attendance (28 CAC members and alternates were ultimately in attendance). Nancy noted it has been a year since we started meeting via Zoom, but hopes things are looking up with the vaccine.
- **David Miller** (NYLCVEF) made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the December 10, 2020 CAC meeting. **Denise Savageau** (CT Association of Conservation Districts) seconded; the motion carried.

Sustainable and Resilient Communities Work Group Plan

Sylvain DeGuise (CTSG) and **Rebecca Shuford** (NYSG), co-chairs of the Long Island Sound Study's new work group for Sustainable and Resilient Communities (SRC WG), provided an overview of the group's plan.

- The SRC WG is made up of people from both public and private institutions, academia, other LISS work groups, etc. The purpose of this new group is to tackle local municipal resiliency [IAs under Theme 3 of the CCMP](#) that have not advanced.
- The WG used a 3-step process to create its work plan and make sure gaps were identified; they are currently on the third step which is presenting the work plan. During the first 2 steps, member break out groups worked on different elements of the work plan, then wrote a cohesive work plan with a rough timeline and budget. The work plan combines socio-ecological issues and approaches.
- Desired outcomes identified for the plan include: a coordinated regional response, trained community decision-makers, plans for infrastructure improvements, viable government services, and implementation of LIS sustainability and resilience projects. The work plan has 7 major tasks including a needs assessment, the onboarding of 5 circuit riders to assist municipalities regionally in NY and CT, and a clearinghouse of resiliency resources and tools. The complete plan was sent with the minutes.
- Next steps: begin preparing for implementation in October if funds are granted in April 2021.

Discussion

- **Denise** (Greenwich Conservation Council) commented that economic models should be used for this work to encourage governments to adopt this. She also asked how many people in the work group were from municipalities and how this effort will work with GC3? **Sylvain** and **Becky** clarified that municipal folks were not the majority, but there

was some representation from counties. These stakeholders are the ones who will work with the circuit riders will. As for GC3, the last session of the work plan is on recording and the idea is to cross-report and share success stories with that effort.

- **Kamazima Lwiza** (Stony Brook University) asked to see a lot more community engagement activities to ensure community buy-in. He also asked why there were 2 circuit riders in CT and 3 in NY. **Sylvain** and **Becky** explained that the different geographies of the states required the 3 – 2 split. Circuit riders are the core of the effort, and their purpose is to build relationships with communities and to listen to concerns and be a neutral party with no conflicting relationships or efforts.
- **Mickey Weiss** (Project Oceanology) said the Groton Task Force for Resiliency and Sustainability was meeting that evening, and he would like to share it with them.
- **Nancy** emphasized that the need for a systemic outreach approach to municipal governments to get them to consider the efforts in their budgets and sustainability discussions. Most municipalities have appointed volunteer environmental committees
- **David Miller** asked what the budget request was for next year and whether there is discussion on how to link this with the EJ work group? The budget request is about \$1.7 million, the entire budget is about \$7.5 billion. Sylvain explained that EJ is seen as an overlapping theme and they are happy to align with the new EJ WG. He also noted **Jimena Perez-Viscasillas** (NYSG), co-chair of the EJ WG, was involved in this SRC WG effort so there was some overlap. It is absolutely a priority. **Nancy** asked whether there is any intent to prioritize EJ communities, to which Sylvain replied he thinks the first step is the needs assessments (EJ and SRC) before pointing out specifics.
- **Paul Stacey** (Footsteps in the Water) agreed that success will hinge heavily on municipal engagement and communications, and questioned whether 5 people can accommodate the need, or whether this is limited to just coastal towns, which is still an enormous task. **Sylvain** said coastal towns will probably be the first line, although there is an understanding that flooding not only happens on the coast.
- **Nancy** and **Holly** (CAC CT co-chair; The Nature Conservancy) thanked **Tracy Brown** (Save the Sound) and **Bill Cavers** (Darien Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters) for being involved in this SRC WG. **Mark Tedesco** (EPA LIS Office) thanked Becky and Sylvain for their presentation and their great work with this new work group, commenting that the CAC has been critical to what they have developed so far. He also noted that the timing is just right to work on this; under the new EPA administration, climate change and environmental justice are among the top priorities. He encouraged everyone to keep providing feedback, given this is an ongoing process and there is still time to adapt approaches based on input.

LISS Updates

Mark Tedesco, LISS Director, EPA LIS Office

- **Nikki Tachiki** (EPA LIS Office) is out on detail at the Drinking Water Program in EPA Region 2. The program lasts 120 days, and she will be back in June. Esther Nelson will be here in her place for that time, hopefully on March 25.
- Also on the personnel front, Region 1 hired a new person to work on LISS. Details pending.
- The Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) research fellowship will bring in full-time staff to do research; the Fellow is expected to begin in April
- The CCMP IA Update for 2020-2024 has been approved by the EPA and [is posted on the LISS website](#).

- The EPA LIS office is working on updating its tracking and reporting process. Cayla Sullivan (EPA LIS Office) will be offering webinars on this new process on March 24 and April 13. LISS developed a report to Congress on the program's progress over these last 5 years. The report was submitted to EPA in December during the transition and has been delayed waiting for new appointees. It must be approved by all the EPA offices. We are waiting for formal approval to post it on the website and to print copies for distribution. The LISS will use the program assessment to produce a version of the progress report every 2 years.

Discussion

- **Paul** asked whether the Sustainable and Resilient Communities WG would continue and be sustained if funding were to shrink?
 - **Mark:** As with everything, it depends on resources. If we decide to move forward with the proposal, we have to do it knowing it's a commitment for the next 5 years and if the total budget changes, it would require cutting other elements of the program or making choices across priorities.
- **Maureen Murphy** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment): What is the amount the Management Committee is considering for next year's budget?
 - **Mark:** Approximately \$31 million for FY21. All that funding is made available for review broken into 2 brackets: base budget (core activities that are ongoing), and enhancement grants.
- **Dave** commented that we have been very successful to get to that funding level and that the new Sustainable and Resilient Communities Work most aligns with current needs. He noted that although the Management Committee is weary of funding commitments across multiple years, if we continue as we are with funding, this new work group's budget will only be 5% of the program budget, which he thinks seems reasonable for an initiative like this.
- **Adrienne Esposito** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) agreed and commented that not only should we maintain this level of funding, but the CAC has considered asking for more. She also said that funding the SRC work plan is "a level of practicality that you should feel comfortable with making this commitment"; several people agreed with these sentiments and Mark encouraged CAC to share this at the MC meeting.

Strategic Communications Plan

Robert Burg (LISS/NEIWPC) gave a brief update on the process currently underway to develop a new 5-year Strategic Communications Plan. The increased LISS budget creates an increased need for communications. The project team has been working to finalize an RFB. CAC members will probably be contacted by the consultant over the summer to determine their needs. The project team hopes to complete the plan by June 2022. The public perception survey should be approved too, and if this happens the consultant will be asked to develop and test messaging based on those results.

- **Holly** added that it has been an exciting proposal with a robust approach to make sure the team is able to collect input from everyone, especially the CAC.
- **Maureen** was happy to hear the public perception survey will be funded—it's been a while since the last one (15 years)!

Environmental Justice WG Update

Jimena Pérez-Viscasillas (NYSG)

- First WG meeting was on February 11 and had representation from all work groups and committees within LISS as well as people who are not otherwise typically involved in the program. Expectation is to bring more people to the table as well.
- It was meant to be an introduction meeting. Discussions of definitions, which can be found as resources in the [work group page](#), and an overview of how the LISS program operates.
- Draft outcomes, goals, and strategies were also presented to the group to begin receiving their input on them. Draft outcomes can also be found in the work group page.
- The group co-chairs – **Jimena, Nikki, and Bessie Wright** (EPA Region 2)—met with the EPA EJ office personnel before the LISS meeting, who suggested a “2-pronged approach”: an ‘inward-facing’ effort to assess and improve diversity and accessibility within the program, and an ‘outward-facing’ effort to begin forging relationships with new partners, finding overlaps, and assessing and addressing barriers to participation. Work group members were asked to sign up for one of two subgroups (one for each approach) to help move these efforts forward.

CAC Survey Results

Holly shared and discussed the results of an evaluation survey CAC members had taken a couple of months prior (n=24).

- Many of the questions addressed the make-up of the members. The bulk of the members have been involved for more than 3 years, and many have been involved from the beginning.
- Members expressed appreciating the opportunity for updates, presentations, information exchange, and networking, plus the flexibility of Zoom. On the flip side, some expressed missing in-person meetings and some wished to have more opportunities to provide input to the MC.
- Members were also asked which of the CCMP themes and priorities were important to their organizations. All of the themes were of some importance to all groups. Holly noted this was an improvement from the last time 3 years ago, when there had been some confusion about what sustainable and resilient communities referred to.
- Increase in how members see themselves contributing to the CCMP outcomes.
- Comments submitted suggested streamlining the LISFF process, a joint CAC and MC meeting, and having the CAC help convert the CCMP’s “science-speak to public-speak”.

Discussion: CAC Budget Priorities

Nancy provided an overview of past CAC priorities, LISS budget increases, and instructions for the budget discussion. The budget for the LISS has grown from \$4.6 million in 2016 to \$30.6 million in 2021, and Nancy called on the CAC to re-evaluate past priorities, and help provide input and focus to the MC. Meeting attendees then broke into 7 break out groups and asked to discuss 2 questions: *What specific changes should the CAC consider in FY21 Budget priorities? Given increased funding, how can the CAC support the Management Committee with budget guidance?*

FY20 Priorities:

- Enhance visibility and links between cross-cutting issues for all programmatic activities including Environmental Justice, Climate and Sustainability
- Increase investments in CCMP tracking and performance reporting (staff capacity, reliable online systems, enhanced stakeholder and partner reporting and engagement)
- Bolster investments and capacity for public communication and targeted municipal engagement to speed up local implementation of CCMP actions.

Break Out Group Priorities and Discussions

Peter McCartt (Westchester County Department of Sustainability) presented - Room 1

- Conduct more research on emerging issues and their relationship to LISS (PFAs, plastics, etc)
- EJ and communications
- Identify gaps in monitoring and research
- Leverage infrastructure projects already in place; augment them
- 'Poster child project' and highlight success stories

Denise Savageau presented - Room 2

- Should we be looking at what percent of funding is spent per activity, especially as funding increases (research, monitoring, implementation, education/outreach) How much is it and how much should it be?
- Challenges for small monitoring groups that are very local and directly tied into implementation. The LISFF does not work easily for small groups and has gone from easy grant process to something much more difficult for small groups.
- Address the challenges of the match requirements. Consider a public private partnership to help with match. Matching getting higher as we get more funding too. What do we need to do to figure out matches? Discussions needed on how to do that match.
- Need more funding for implementation and to increase education outreach. When reaching out to public, we need to simplify the language so it can be understood in simple bullet points. We need an assessment of where we are with funding and do not make any changes to the priorities if we don't need to. Increase accessibility and enhancing grants from LISFF.

Phil Brencher (The Sound School Regional Vocational Aquaculture Center) presented – Room 3

- Agreed that existing priorities are good. Program should track how the money is used and its impact.
- Communicate results to the public; there is lots of good info there. Suggestion was made that the role of the CAC could be to be the 'first customer' to see the messaging and assess how accessible it is to the public.

Vicky O'Neill (NYSDEC) - Room 4

- Focus on engaging municipalities and enhancing communication. We really felt that this has not advanced in the last two years. Focus on efforts to engage municipalities in LISS, local universities, media. CAC can assist with all of this. Munis can be pulled in many different directions and with LIS being so large it is hard to attract their attention and they may not know how they fit in. Communication efforts should be active, not just passive (website, social media).
- Need to get the LIS story out to the public. Meet people where they are or bring them out to a project site. LISFF can be complex and comprehensive and takes a lot of time and energy, which can deter some. Can we make it easier for applicants?
- Also, regarding EJ, coastal communities on LI are not EJ. Most coastal areas on LI (Suffolk and Nassau) are now exclusive neighborhoods.

Judy Preston (CTSG) presented – Room 5

- Align with Blue Plan; Scale up, think big, use the money that we have to demonstrate that

- Water quality monitoring at local level should be integrated with Unified WQ Program (including tracking bacteria to inform public use of waters/safety; there is great value to place-based data gathering, especially long term as we evaluate climate change impacts;
- WQ monitoring programs should remain competitive but match can be a hardship to smaller groups that want to think big; money needed at local level for septic replacement to assist municipalities and homeowners (cheaper than sewerage...); make sure states have funds to implement at the local level;
- Keep states as vital partners; how much of the money going to SRC workgroup will get to local communities? Must focus funds to local communities.
- Support for the public perception survey and planning for a sound-wide social marketing campaign.

Nancy presented - Room 6

- New outreach person
- Stormwater
- Information to create community campaigns
- Marine debris as a new priority

Kathleen Knight (CTDEEP) - Room 7

- Overarching takeaway was accessibility to LISS
- Translating science to the public
- Translation services for different languages
- Build into budgets the funding needed to make deliverables accessible
- LISFF - Reporting and application is very complex without help. Hesitancy to even apply. They are key since they are the ones who work at a local level with EJ communities

Beacon Wind Project

Beth Treseder, Scott Lundin, Julia Bovey, and Elizabeth Marchetti from Equinor US Wind presented information on an offshore wind project being developed in NY.

- Project was provided a NY award which will be used for its first phase. It will be 60 miles off Montauk, 20 miles off Nantucket, in a shallower portion, and will produce 1,230 MW (1.23 GW) of power. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2025 with COD in 2028. Power will be delivered to Astoria, Queens and there will need to be decisions regarding transmission, real estate, and cable routing.
- They've met with a variety of stakeholder groups and are moderating all potential impacts including potential marine fauna impacts. More survey work to happen in this spring.

Discussion

- **Marty Garrell** (Adelphi University): Does that structure serve as a gathering point for marine life? Do the turbine bases - could those provide any positives besides the obvious one of providing power? **Scott Lundin** said they were able to learn from the Block Island firm, which formed artificial reefs dynamics there. It remains to be seen, but they think it is likely to serve as an artificial reef effect. **Beth Treseder** clarified that a base has not been chosen yet.

- **Jennifer Wilson Pines** (Manhasset Bay Protection Committee): Have bird migration studies been done? **Scott** said they are mapping with high resolution to study birds flying in the area as well as sharks and whales. The New England aquarium looking is at regional populations. Starting second study now to determine species distribution. **Pat Aiken** (The Whaling Museum & Education Center at Cold Spring Harbor) added that a lot of birds migrate at night and asked whether they can monitor that. **Scott** explained that buoys are being used to measure wind as a normal part of the process and they are planning on using similar technology as FWS's buoy avian tracking receivers on their buoys to track anything that flies by them. They will compare night vs day data. More data can be found at beaconwind.com. **Phil Brencher** added that Block Island must have a wealth of data on this because it was a hot topic before they got approval, and they spent a lot of time and money assessing that. Cornell also has a robust tracking of migratory birds.
- **Bill Cavers**: Asked whether using the Flag Communications link has provided any lessons to improve upon or mitigate? **Scott**: Our expectation is that by following the route they will be equally consistent across the area, but it is a good question, and they are hoping to learn more about how those cables were installed.
- **Mickey**: Why can't that cable plug into the grid at the nearest point to land rather than going under LIS? And how are you coordinating with other transmission-needs projects like the Eversource New London Project? Cooperation with some other similar projects to piggy-back on existing efforts? **Beth** said that in terms of ability to interconnect, they are required to connect into the NY ISO. **Scott** said that the idea is maximizing the amount of power in a single the cable, it reduces the number of cables needed. One of the advantages of plugging this into Astoria is that it is a really robust point, so it minimizes the number of cables needed to deliver all this total power. This place serves to distribute the power.
- **Peter**: Do you know if any of the other projects also have cables going down LIS? **Adrienne** said that the 5 that are advancing, no. However, the state goal for NY is 9,000 megawatts of offshore wind and the 5 projects now advancing are about half of that, so we don't know what the future projects hold. She also clarified that this cable has no dialectic fluid, which is what some CAC members might be concerned about.

Policy Subcommittee Update

Adrienne Esposito and **Tracy Brown** provided policy subcommittee updates.

Federal Updates:

- **Adrienne** began saying that the CAC needs to determine what our asks will be for our federal visits. The CAC has good access to key people that will make accessing funding easier, but they do not want to overwhelm the LISS program with too much money. The timing is not right yet to make decisions given what's happening in DC. The Policy Subcommittee is waiting to see what happens with President Biden's actions and NOAA.
- Wastewater and drinking water as budget items
- Cable route in the Sound
- Recommendation of high-speed rail system under the Sound
- Army Corps of Engineers Sea Gate project
- Continuing support for Plum Island Preservation Plan
- Work in underway with Rep. Suozzi's office to improve the current septic system replacement grant program, which currently taxes people on the grant money they receive.

- **David Miller** suggested an agenda item for the Fall: get the new EPA administrators more engaged in the program including new regional administrators. **Adrienne** reiterated that this is a year of transitions with lots of new people and the policy subcommittee needs to rebuild those relationships. “We have a lot to do, but we actually just can't do it right now because the puzzle pieces are still falling into place”.

Connecticut State Updates

Tracy Brown, Save the Sound

- Clean Water Fund: \$75 million this year, asking for increase next year.
- The Blue Plan is poised to pass.
- Anticipating updates on new “Sewage Rights to Know” plan; public report coming with cooperation from CTDEEP.
- **Holly** added that Sarah Bronin (DesegregateCT) has a bill that moved to committee just this week.
- **Bill Lucey** (Save the Sound) said there is a governor’s bill on climate change and conveyance fee for towns to put taxes to buy farmland but can also be used for resiliency needs.
- **Denise** added that Bill 6496 on Soil Health will require education because people are not connecting the dots between soil health and water health.

New York State Updates

Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment

- There is a \$500 million dollar budget allocation that remains with \$300 million for environmental protection. There is a current struggle deciding whether to put the Environmental Bond Act in the ballot this year. If included, there will be money for wastewater for infrastructure, climate change adaptation, etc.
- **Mickey** discussed the new [NEERS](#) overlaps with a lot of what the CAC wants to do. He commends Jamie Vaudrey for looking at overlaps between their work and LISS's and suggests she speak at an upcoming the next CAC meeting. **Jamie Vaudrey** (UConn) said President Biden wants to share the new NEERS as one of their accomplishments for this year, so the process is moving along fast. There have been a series of 10 meetings, and tomorrow is their final meeting on DEIJ and supporting those issues in CT NEERS. **Tracy** expressed concerns about the ArmyCorps being a partner in that. She thinks they will suggest goals and projects that will not align with CAC priorities and concerns. Adrienne agreed. Nancy also agreed, but said that communicating will still be important. Hopefully we can leverage in ways that are helpful to LISS. **Mark** noted that participating doesn't tie anyone's hand on any particular project, but it could provide opportunities to work on projects that we all support.

Announcement

Carl Harvey announced the Audubon Bird Fly In event is scheduled for April 12-16. Find info at the event [webpage](#).

Adjourn

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the CAC will be held on June 10, 2021.