



Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee

ZOOM Online Meeting

Thursday, March 12, 2020 – Meeting Summary

Welcome and Roll Call

- Nancy Seligson (CAC NY co-chair, Town of Mamaroneck) called the meeting to order at 10am with a quorum of 16 members present. The welcome included a celebration of the \$21 million fiscal year 2020 appropriation for the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) and a thank you to all who called in to this completely online meeting, the CAC's first.
- David Miller (NYLCVEF) made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the December 12, 2019 CAC meeting; Denise Savageau (CT Association of Conservation Districts) seconded; the motion carried.

Management Committee Meeting: Overview

- Nancy provided a brief summary of the January 16 Management Committee (MC) meeting. She pointed out that the budget increase presents an opportunity to fund most of the proposed projects, that the MC recognizes the CAC's efforts and input, and that there is a lot of overlap between the MC's and the CAC's interests.
- Nancy noted that the NYSDEC and CTDEEP appear to be collaborating more on recent proposals, which is a new and very positive development.
- Also noted was the potential to use drones to assess embayments for restoration, which would significantly reduce mapping costs.
- Nancy also remarked that the new working group for Sustainable and Resilient Communities will be planning and developing a budget over the next year, and they need feedback from the CAC.

FY20 Budget Priorities, Management Committee Budget Actions and Endorsed Topics

Mark Tedesco, LISS Director, EPA LIS Office

- The LISS has experienced significant funding increases in the last four years, which has expanded implementation opportunities related to: better understanding sources of nitrogen loading to LIS and how this affects CCMP ecosystem targets; larger, more complex habitat restoration and land acquisition projects; and understanding marsh migration and impacts of sea-level rise. Budget increases have also been proposed for the Long Island Sound Futures Fund (from \$2.3 to \$3.5 million, along with increasing individual caps to projects) and the LIS Research Grant (increase to \$3 million).
- The LISS has approximately \$11 million available for enhancement proposals. At the January 16 MC meeting, the MC identified topics for which they would welcome proposals, following the themes of the CCMP. Mark pointed out that the hope is for a sizable portion of the funds to be used toward implementation of ongoing monitoring and assessment actions, in addition to exploring the potential benefits of new project opportunities.

- Two of the proposed enhancement proposals are developing a 5-year Communications Plan for the LISS and establishing priorities for the new work group focused on Sustainable and Resilient Communities. The CAC will be involved in both, especially helping to identify target audiences for communication. Under the Sound Science and Management Theme, the LISS is considering onboarding new staff to help manage the increase in funds.
- Mark also noted that the STAC has nominated two liaisons to the CAC.

Discussion

- Denise pointed out that the geographical limitations in the Long Island Sound Futures Fund restrict project proposals in the Pawcatuck River in Rhode Island and suggested that Rhode Island should be considered for inclusion in the Futures Fund, as is the case for Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Mark pointed out that the Futures Fund is used to implement the 2015 CCMP, which does not include Rhode Island actions. If the CCMP 2020 update includes actions targeting portions of the Rhode Island watershed, the LISFF would be adjusted to make those areas eligible for funding. Holly Drinkuth (CT CAC co-chair, The Nature Conservancy) gave the example of a Pawcatuck project she has been working on that had to be limited to Connecticut because of these restrictions. Mark noted that as long as proposals clearly connect projects to LIS and the CCMP, they can be considered for funding.
- David Miller and Paul Stacey (Footprints in the Water) expressed support for the new Sustainable and Resilient Communities work group, and Paul underlined the importance of defining ‘sustainability’ not just in ecological and sea-level-rise terms, but to also include human well-being. *“I love you, Paul!”*, someone said in support.
- Tracy Brown (Save the Sound) asked about the new position being funded under the NYSDEC Division of Water and pointed out that most of LINAP’s work takes place in the south shore of Long Island. Mark responded that the position would be targeted to support LIS activities.

2015 CCMP Implementation Tracking: Overview

Mark Tedesco, LISS Director, EPA LIS Office

- The Long Island Sound Restoration Act requires the LISS to submit biannual reports to Congress. The next report is due in 2020, for which the LISS is currently undergoing a process of evaluation, tracking its implementation actions as established in the 2015 CCMP and assessing their status (partially completed/completed), their progress (ongoing/definitive), and requesting recommendations from staff on ways for each action to move forward.
- The LISS is requesting comments on this tracking sheet (circulated to the CAC) by **April 3** in order to be able to incorporate them into reporting for the April 16 MC meeting. CAC members should send any questions or comments to Nikki Tachiki at the EPA LISS office at Tachiki.Nicole@epa.gov, cc’ing Nancy and Holly. Mark will request Nikki to send specific guidance for feedback to the CAC.
- Comments are still welcome after this date, but they will not be able to be incorporated for the MC meeting.

- Input provided during this process will help report implementation since 2015 and inform future actions.

Discussion

- Maureen Dolan-Murphy (Citizen’s Campaign for the Environment) suggested choosing some successful on-the-ground stories to highlight during reporting in order to “put (the actions) in a context people can relate to”.
- Mark reminded CAC members that the annual Sound Update newsletter provides a map showing LISFF projects and highlights stories of successful projects. It was also suggested success stories from other grants can be used.
- Holly pointed out that the color coding used to identify the status of projects should use different colors to distinguish between “completed” and “significant progress” projects. Casey Personius (NYSDEC) explained the current challenges with this idea for projects with partially defined and partially ongoing phases. Denise suggested the use of pie charts to illustrate more effectively the status of implementation.
- Mickey Weiss (Project Oceanology) brought up the use of this when communicating with members of Congress on the upcoming trip to DC on March 24, noting the importance of distilling this information for them. Tracy agreed it might be a valuable discussion for Congress, but likely best to do so later given the report is currently a working draft.

Policy Subcommittee Update

- Tracy Brown led the policy recap and discussed the likelihood that the Long Island Sound Day to visit with Congressional offices in DC will have to be changed. Offices in Congress announced they will be closed to the public until April 1. Erin McGrath (Audubon NY) said their organization is meeting remotely with legislators. Molly Jacobs (Project Oceanology) suggested continuing with the plans for March 24, but meet through Zoom, which could allow for more meetings given it cuts out time walking between buildings and offices.
- Meetings have been confirmed with: Congressman Tom Suozzi, Senator Chris Murphy or his Legislative Assistant Emily Smith, Representative Kirsten Gillibrand, and Senator Blumenthal.
- The Policy Subcommittee is still trying to confirm meetings with: Representative Lee Zeldin, Representative Rosa DeLauro, Senator Chuck Schumer, and Representative Nita Lowey.
- Representative Nita Lowey is only meeting with people from her district; if anyone is from her district, please contact Tracy.
- The Policy Subcommittee will be preparing targeted agendas for each individual legislator meeting, including a presentation and possibly one in-district person to tell their story. The invitation to join on virtual Lobbying Day will also be extended to STAC co-chairs, STAC CAC liaisons, and STAC members who had committed to the in-person event.

New York State Update

- Tracy Brown reported policy updates for New York State:
 - A \$3 billion environmental bond, Restore Mother Nature, was proposed by the Governor for NYS, to be on the ballot in November. It could potentially go up to 5 billion

in the future. The CAC discussed the possibility of conducting an educational campaign to inform people about the bond for November's elections.

- LIS Day in Albany is set to happen in May as of now, pending further updates on the coronavirus pandemic.

Connecticut State Update

- Bill Lucey (Save the Sound) reported policy updates for Connecticut:
 - Connecticut approved \$150 million in Clean Water Fund General Obligation Bonds for grants to municipalities \$75 million for FY 2020 and \$75 million for FY 2021 and \$84 M in Revenue bonds for loans to municipalities from DEEP. There is a ban on fire-fighting foam and potential buy-back programs are being considered.
 - Bill recounted taking a group from CIRCA (CT Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation) to see vulnerable communities on his boat. He is hoping to have recommendations to provide the state of CT for their next meeting.
 - The Governors' Council on Climate Change has established two subcommittees – Mitigation and Adaptation/Resiliency as well as several working groups to work collaboratively with DEEP: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Climate-Change/GC3/Governors-Council-on-Climate-Change>
- Holly announced that she submitted testimony to the Connecticut legislature on behalf of the CAC supporting resolution HJ 1 adoption of the Blue Plan. The resolution was approved by the Joint Environment Committee in February and has moved on to the General Assembly for a vote. **(CT State Capitol Complex will remain closed until at least April 13.)**
- Denise announced that the [Working Lands Alliance](#) is exploring climate adaptation strategies including restoration for coastal and inland wetlands. Climate resilience and carbon sequestration are factors being considered in the evaluation process for potential areas to protect farmland.

Other Announcements: Workshops, Letterhead, and Delays

- Eric Swenson (Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee) pointed out that the CAC's current letterhead does not identify LISS as a partnership between EPA, New York and Connecticut. The CAC discussed suggestions on how to improve the letter format to include this information, and perhaps include the CAC's membership list. Judy Preston (CTSG/LISS) and Jimena Perez-Viscasillas (NYSG/LISS) will take the lead on editing the letterhead format.
- Robert Burg (NEIWPCC/LISS) had a couple of announcements and reminders:
 - There is an [upcoming workshop](#) on designing behavior change campaigns, set to take place on April 28-29 at the Bridgeport Zoo, pending COVID-19 precautionary measures. **(Note: The event has since been postponed until further notice).**
 - Earth Day is coming up on April 22 and Robert requested CAC partners to forward their planned activities to him so that the LISS can help promote them.
 - The Long Island Sound Study's 35th Anniversary is coming up this year!
 - The LISS's new website is set to go live sometime in the next two weeks. It will include updated data visualizations for the CCMP's ecosystem targets, personal blog posts, newly designed info-sharing graphics called Sound Facts which were designed by artist Lucy Reading-Ikkanda, etc.

- Given recent precautionary measures for the COVID-19 outbreak, several Earth Day events are being cancelled or postponed. Molly Jacobs said that Project Oceanology is considering the idea of an “Earth Day in June” and members discussed the possibility of having their activities happen together at one big event, once things are back to normal.
- Maureen Dolan-Murphy discussed the plastic bag ban in New York, which has been delayed and will now be implemented on April 1. Nancy reported the switch to avoiding plastic bags seems to have gone smoothly in Westchester. NYC also saw a reasonably easy switch, but some small businesses have reported providing plastic bag alternatives has been a challenge.
- George Hoffman (Setauket Harbor Task Force) announced an Environmental Impact Statement will be adopted on Tuesday, which will enable the Suffolk program to move forward on its Subwatershed Plan to address nitrogen pollution.
- Restore America’s Estuaries [National Coastal and Estuarine 2020 Summit](#) is coming up in Rhode Island on October 4 – 8; CAC members are welcome to participate and present.
- Nancy announced that, if needed, the CAC could have more online meetings between now and the next scheduled meeting in June.

Adjourned

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the CAC will be held in Connecticut (location to be determined) or online through Zoom on June 11, 2020.