

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee

ZOOM Online Meeting

Thursday, September 21, 2021 – Meeting Summary



Welcome

- **Nancy Seligson** (CAC NY co-chair; Town of Mamaroneck) called the meeting to order at 9:05AM with 30 people in attendance (27 CAC members and alternates were ultimately in attendance).
- **Adrienne Esposito** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the June 10, 2020 CAC meeting. **David Miller** (NYLCVEF) seconded; the motion carried.
- Meeting kicked off with members sharing observations of what they had seen around the Sound during the summer including flooding and damage caused by Tropical Storms Isaias and Henri and frequent precipitation events. Among the reports were enormous schools of snapper and menhaden (bunker), some fish die offs likely related to hypoxia, onsite septic system impacts caused by flooding in Connecticut, and lots of mosquitos. *Action: Jim Ammerman to report on 2021 hypoxia monitoring season data.*
- **Vicky O'Neill** (NEIWPC/NYSDEC) reported the invasive Chinese mitten crab has been spotted in the Nissequogue River; this is the farthest east we've seen them. *Action: Please report sightings of this species by sending an email NYSDEC, including the date, location (with coordinates), and photos highlighting key characteristics to isinfo@dec.ny.gov*

LISS Funding and Upcoming Process

Mark Tedesco, LISS Director, EPA Long Island Sound Office

- The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) has received significant increases in annual funding over the past 6 years, from \$4.6 million in FY16 to \$31.2 million in FY21. Currently proposals set the FY2022 funding cycle at \$41 million. In addition, the infrastructure bill proposes funding to geographic programs over a 5-year period with the possibility to waive match. The proposed allocation to LISS is \$106 million bringing potential funding for FY22 closer to \$60 million.
- FY2021 was the first year of implementing updated IAs and there was a big increase in enhancement grant proposals (42 reviewed!), which was difficult to manage. The program is currently evaluating FY22 funding priorities and, as funding levels become clear, establishing a process to address identified needs and priorities.
- Base Budget: Ongoing base budget (\$15 million in FY21), LISFF administered by NFWF (\$6.8 million), Research Program – administered by Sea Grant (\$3 million), proposed EJ RFA (\$1.5 million), Sustainable and Resilient Communities (SRC) Working Group – administered by Sea Grant (\$900,000)
- Potential new investments: staffing needs, state infrastructure projects (looking at options to supplement existing funding vehicles for core clean water programs). A federal partners coordinating group – including EPA, NOAA, USGS, USFWS, ACOE, NRCS - has been meeting to

identify some core outcomes, key LIS geographies, and potential federal agency leads to advance shared LISS Working Group priorities.

- **Tracy Brown** (Save the Sound) brought up a New York City proposal to build a wastewater treatment plant on Rikers Island, intended to incarceration injustice as well as helping to improve water quality in western LIS. Tracy suggested, along with several in agreement, that the CAC should consider voicing support for project to receive federal infrastructure funding: <https://www.renewablerikers.org/> *Action: Policy Subcommittee to track project progress.*

Policy Subcommittee Update

Tracy Brown (Save the Sound) and Adrienne Esposito (Citizens Campaign for the Environment)

- There are three major legislative issues right now related to LISS funding: (1) the infrastructure package includes \$106 million directed to LISS, (2) the annual FY22 Spending Bill budget negotiation, and (3) the proposed \$3.5 trillion-dollar Reconciliation Bill. While the Senate has passed the infrastructure bill, the House has not, and Congress has a long way to go to finalize deals before the end October. It is possible we will see a Continuing Resolution for FY22 Spending at the current level of \$31.2 million. The current Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act expires in 2023. The policy subcommittee will hold a group discussion to determine recommendations for reauthorization, including increasing the funding limit and decreasing non federal match requirements in line with the Chesapeake Bay 25% nonfederal match. *Action: Policy subcommittee will review and make recommendations for the CAC to propose for federal reauthorization in calendar year 2022.*
- **State Updates:**
 - **New York** State is voting on the NYS Environmental Bond Act in Nov 2022. Increased funding to this state program will increase the ability to match federal funding.
 - The Policy Subcommittee will request a meeting with **New York** Governor Hochul to make her aware of LIS and priorities for restoration and management. With the change in administration, some of the previous staff have stayed, but there are also new folks.
 - **New York** Representative Suozzi's office continues to pursue options to rectify the taxation on septic system replacement grants.
 - The proposed **Connecticut** National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) Environmental Impact Study and Draft Management Plan have been released. The CAC will provide comments to NOAA by the deadline of Oct 18th.
- The CAC co-chairs are drafting a letter to the **LIS Congressional Caucus** co-chairs (Rosa DeLauro, Tom Suozzi and Lee Zeldin, requesting they invite all NY and CT district representatives in the Long Island Sound watershed to join the Caucus.
- **EPA Regions 1 and 2** are still lacking regional administrator appointments. Nancy Seligson encouraged CAC members to raise this concern with their congressional leaders, highlighting the importance of regional administrators for accomplishing LISS work, and asking them to expedite the process.

Strategic Communications Plan

Holly Drinkuth (TNC), Jessica Aiello, (M-D), Rebecca Rubin (M-D), Lee Halterman (M-D), Rich Engel (M-D)

- Holly introduced consultants from the environmental consulting group Marstel-Day (M-D) working on the LISS Strategic Communications, Outreach and Engagement (COE) Plan and shared results of a recent CAC member communications survey. While most participants indicated their organization's work falls in the Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds CCMP theme, Holly noted an increase from previous surveys in work under the Sustainable and Resilient Communities theme. She also noted the CAC and LISS have changed the way we talk about work in that theme.
- After this, attendees broke into four facilitated groups to discuss: 1) what kind of outreach work their organizations do, 2) their organization's experience reaching out to underrepresented groups, and 3) how their organizations motivate stakeholders. Consultants from M-D shared high-level reports and suggestions from each group including: listening sessions; identifying cross-over issues with other groups, identifying overlaps, and taking it upon ourselves to connect it to the Sound; using multiple communication channels for the same message; producing 'ready-made' messages for partners to share and use; focusing on youth organizations and interfaith communities to meet their needs; going to groups in their spaces and meetings instead of 'having them come to us'; reaching out to people not directly by the coast; engaging indigenous tribes; distinguishing multilingual issues; and tracking social media activity to determine what people are interested in.
- The full group then answered the question: *If you were to communicate one piece of information / guidance about how individuals and organizations can help protect the LIS and its natural resources (i.e., supporting clean waters, thriving habitats, resilient communities, and/or inclusive governance), what would it be and why?* Answers included bringing back the messaging "if it goes on the ground, it goes in the Sound", and messaging to encourage ownership and love for the Sound.
- M-D consultants and the Ad-Hoc planning group will continue conducting research and collecting stakeholder input through December 2021. Development of a draft LISS Strategic COE Plan will begin early next year and is anticipated to be finalized by July 2022.

LISS Updates and Wrap-Up

- Mark Tedesco said New York Sea Grant will make new personnel announcements soon, Connecticut Sea Grant hiring for the SRC Work Plan is underway and a new LISS water modeling position was recently closed.
- Holly Drinkuth announced Citizens Campaign for the Environment and the CAC co-chairs are conducting interviews for a new CAC member coordinator – announcement coming soon.
- **Nikki Tachiki** shared that LISS Working Group workplans for FY2022, are in the works.
- **Cayla Sullivan** (EPA) presented an overview of the LISS Tracking and Power BI Reporting Tool, which can be used to track and visualize progress toward CCMP implementation actions and goals. The tool will be presented to GAO for approval and feedback.
- **Jimena B. Perez-Viscasillas** (NYSG) provided an update of the Environmental Justice Work Group's current work, including upcoming Management Committee asks to 1) support the eventual formation of an EJ Committee with elected representation to the Management

Committee, and 2) encourage communication and collaboration between the EJWG and other LISS working groups.

- The CAC Co-chairs discussed the process of deciding when to meet in person again. There were mixed feelings towards it; while some would love to meet in person, several still have restrictions and safety concerns, for which most prefer Zoom. The group agreed to wait and discuss guardrails for safely meeting in-person and protocols to maintain a remote option, e.g., offering optional outdoor field trips between meetings. *Action: establish criteria and a process for safely meeting in person while maintaining remote access prior to March 2022.*
- Nancy Seligson's three-year term as CAC NY Co-chair and Marty Garell's three-year term as CAC Secretary ends in December 2021. David Miller and Mickey Weiss volunteered for the nominating committee. Marty Garrell also volunteered, but a review of the By-Laws determined currently elected officials are ineligible to serve on the nominating committee. *Action: The nominating committee will solicit nominations for NY Co-chair and Secretary and present a slate of candidates to the full CAC no later than November 9 to be voted on during the December 9, 2021 meeting.*

Announcement

- **Vicky O'Neill** announced the LISS Habitat Restoration & Stewardship Work Group will be hosting a webinar on Wednesday, October 27, 2021, 1:00-2:30pm titled: *Funding Basics for Long Island Sound Communities: Crafting Competitive Proposals for the National Coastal Resilience Fund and Beyond*. Experts from Throve Environmental will provide attendees with tips on writing grants (steps to take before you even start writing, including how to identify priority projects, determine suitable funding sources, and avoid common pitfalls) and then focusing on National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF). NCRF invests in projects that will create, expand, and restore natural systems in areas that will (1) increase protection for communities from coastal storms, sea- and lake-level changes, inundation, and coastal erosion and (2) improve valuable habitats for fish and wildlife species. Find the recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xm4RdLyQyJg>

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:40pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the CAC will be held remotely by Zoom on December 9, 2021.