

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee

ZOOM Online Meeting

Thursday, December 9, 2021 – Meeting Summary



Welcome

- Holly Drinkuth (CAC CT co-chair; TNC) called the meeting to order at 9:05 with 50 people in attendance (24 CAC members and alternates; 26 LISS staff and guests)
- Nancy Seligson (CAC NY co-chair; Town of Mamaroneck) noted correction to the September 21, 2021 meeting summary: correct name of the September 1, 2021 hurricane was Ida. David Miller (NY League Conservation Voters) made a motion to approve the meeting summary, as amended; seconded by Carl Harvey (Menunkatuck Audubon).

Decision: motion carried; meeting summary approved.

- There were no proposed changes to the agenda; Roll call accomplished through the Zoom chat function.
- Nominating Committee Report: David Miller introduced the slate for CAC NY Co-Chair and CAC Secretary positions, each for three-year terms. Nominees: Nancy Seligson, (NY Co-Chair) and Marty Garrell (Secretary). Nominations were solicited from the floor. Hearing none, Carol DiPaolo (Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor) made a motion in favor, seconded by Denise Savageau (CT Association of Conservation Districts).

Decision: Motion carried unanimously; Nancy Seligson and Marty Garrell to serve as officers through December 2024.

- Nancy noted that after ten years she is leaving her Mamaroneck Town Supervisor position but will still be representing the municipal perspective on the CAC. Congratulations were shared.
- Eric Swenson announced his retirement from the Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee, but he will remain on the CAC.

Updates

- Meeting guests were introduced: Trayvonn Diaz, Sr. Outreach Assistant, U.S. Senator Chris Murphy's office; New CAC member Jean Pillo who is replacing Judy Rondeau from the Eastern CT Conservation District; Faith Barclay, Green Infrastructure Design & Construction Bureau of Environmental Planning & Analysis, NYC Environmental Protection, former student of Marty Garrell; Derek Faulkner, working with Carl Harvey on East River Marsh Migration Monitoring Program.
- Nancy Seligson introduced Paige Meyer (pmeyer@esf.edu) the new CAC Membership Coordinator who will be assisting with CAC membership engagement and providing administrative support to the CAC Policy Committee. Her position is administered through Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE).
- Mark Tedesco (EPA LIS Office) introduced new staff for the LISS Sustainable and Resilient Communities work group:

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- Elizabeth Hornstein, NY Sustainable & Resilient Communities Extension Educator, eeh78@cornell.edu, Suffolk County, NY
- Sarah Schaefer-Brown, NY Sustainable & Resilient Communities Extension Educator, scs292@cornell.edu, Nassau County, NY
- Sara Powell, NY Sustainable & Resilient Communities Extension Educator, slp285@cornell.edu, Westchester County, NY
- Alicia Tyson, CT Sustainable & Resilient Communities Extension Educator, Alicia.f.tyson@uconn.edu, Eastern CT
- Deborah Abibou, CT Sustainable & Resilient Communities Extension Educator, deb.abibou@uconn.edu, Western CT
- Lillit Genovesi, NY WLIS Outreach Coordinator, lg543@cornell.edu, NYC and Westchester, NY (part of LISS outreach team)

Action: Judy Preston will share an updated list of LISS Core Program staff.

LISS FY22 Budget and Management Committee timeline

Mark Tedesco, EPA LIS Office

- Mark presented the LISS FY 2022 Work Plan and Budget, highlighting proposed funding, match considerations, estimated base funding, budget scenarios, the anticipated schedule and an outline of next steps. He noted the option to increase the LIS Futures Fund budget and cited the FY2022 LIS Research program will likely be the largest in the LISS's program history.
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) passed and includes \$106 million over five years to the LISS
- In fiscal year 2022 LISS will transition from using Enhancement Grant proposals to developing annual work group plans to identify and prioritize key needs and outcomes for the Long Island Sound Study to invest in, rather than who will do the work.

Discussion:

- It was noted that Mark's presentation showed only 3% of the LISS base budget was allocated to Public Education and Outreach which seems low. Mark said that number represents LISO staff and costs, but additional investments for public information and education are allocated through grants to partner organizations and LISFF.
- As tracking and reporting continue to improve, it will be possible to represent federal investments more accurately in communication, outreach and engagement efforts conducted by LISS, as well as other state and local partner programs that contribute to increasing awareness about and involvement in the CCMP. EPA's recent tracking and reporting efforts and Power BI visualization tool will enable LISS to demonstrate more accurately what is getting accomplished on the ground, measure progress, reduce duplication, and adjust for improvement.

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- The burden of funding required match as the budget continues to grow was discussed. CAC members acknowledged it is especially difficult for distressed communities. They support efforts to ensure the EPA administrator waives match for the IIJA funds to LISS, as well working to reduce match requirements in the 2023 federal reauthorization for LIS.

Action: Continue to share priorities and concerns related to both annual funding and allocation of IIJA funds with the CAC co-chairs so they can share them with the Management Committee.

Progress on the Strategic Communications Plan

Robert Burg (NEIW PCC)

- Robert outlined the Plan's key elements (vision statement, prioritizing media platforms, increased community engagement, messaging, needed resources, progress metrics to provide measurable outcomes).
- Notable observations and perceptions from Marstel-Day interviews:
 - Perception that messaging is critically important, but not as coordinated as it needs to be.
 - National estuarine science far outpaces communication program capacity to report on it.

Discussion:

- The challenge of communications/outreach was acknowledged, but also the great opportunity to show the results of collective efforts that can be demonstrated not just to LISS partners but to a national audience.
- It will be a collective responsibility to implement. It was noted how communications vehicles have changed in the 2000's, from the wide newspaper distribution of Sound Health to the shift online and through social media.
- CAC members noted the role that they can play both generating and sharing information, especially at the local level.
- Towns have the statutory authority to implement many of the changes that are needed. The new Extension professionals and NYC outreach coordinator will focus on supporting implementation at the municipal level.
- At the LISS STAC meeting the communications consultants asked pointed questions about what scientists are doing to get their information out to the public; CAC members indicated more is needed in this area.
- CAC members encouraged more targeted messaging to reach elected officials. Adrienne Esposito, CCE, volunteered to assist SRC extension professionals with building a

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municipal listserv), and members suggested the CAC return to hosting a municipal government conference once a year.

Action: Share suggestions/ideas for the Strategic Communications Plan with Robert: rburg@longislandsoundstudy.net Follow up with SRC extension professionals on municipal engagement and list development.

2021 Hypoxia Monitoring Report

Jim Ammerman (NEIWPCC)

- The recent sighting of a North Atlantic Right Whale near the Throgs Neck bridge in NY is perhaps the best evidence of improved water quality in the Sound.
- Jim provided an overview of the water quality monitoring work group mission and background, CT DEEP and the Long Island Sound Integrated Coastal Observing System (LISICOS) 2021 results.
- The presentation also included recent synthesis papers and reports as well as press coverage, citing specifically the Whitney/Vlahos paper (*Reducing Hypoxia in an Urban Estuary Despite Climate Change*) and Newsday coverage.
- In summary, Jim noted that although the hypoxic area in the Sound increased in 2021, the 5-year running average continues to decline; there was a coupled reduction of nitrogen loading and hypoxic area, and the hypoxic declining trend continues.

STAC meeting review

Mickey Weiss (Project Oceanology) and Sarah Crosby (Harbor Watch)

- November 19th Science and Technology Advisory Committee meeting had short presentations on recently funded projects in LIS (Respire Project, Water Column Respiration, Remote Sensing, Residential Lawn and Landscape Practices, Environmental Justice Mapping).
- Mickey noted how research and particularly technology is making instantaneous the collection of data that used to take much longer.
- Sarah suggested that the CAC should request the presentation on Residential Lawns (Newborn/Johnston); the implications of that research have direct bearing on the ground in communities.

Discussion:

- The residential lawn findings were of interest to several CAC members, noting the opportunity to target specific audiences (i.e. wealthy suburban landowners with large lots 1 – 5 ac. use the most nitrogen fertilizer).

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- 40% of survey respondents don't fertilize. In addition to nitrogen, it was pointed out that bacterial and other pollutants are also coming off landscapes, especially in the western LIS.

Action: Invite Robert Johnston and team to share findings on residential lawn research.

Policy Subcommittee Update

Adrienne Esposito (*Citizens Campaign for the Environment*)

Federal Funds and relationships:

- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed with bipartisan support. \$106 million for LIS: (21 million/year); includes money for wastewater infrastructure and habitat resilience.
- The Build Back Better Bill passed the House and theoretically is in the Senate now. \$1.7 trillion dollars, some of which is for wastewater and wastewater infrastructure. This includes a fix for the NY septic system program, relevant to taxation, retroactive to 2019.
- LISS FY22 Federal budget will be \$31 million if passed in February under a continuing resolution.
- Reauthorization of the LIS Stewardship Act is needed in 2023. CAC will need to work hard through 2022 to raise congressional awareness and support for increasing the budget authorization and match requirements.
- LIS Congressional Caucus: Congresswoman DeLauro, Congressman Courtney, Congressman Suozzi and Congressman Zeldin currently serve as LIS Caucus co-chairs; Zeldin and Suozzi are both running for NYS governor.

State and Regional:

- Lisa Garcia was appointed EPA Region 2 Director; CAC will be scheduling to meet with her.
- Nancy Seligson is penning a letter to NY Governor Hochul to introduce her to the CAC.
- Bill Lucey (STS) is temporarily serving as CAC Policy Subcommittee co-chair to replacing Tracy Brown.
- Friends of Plum Island are working on a restoration plan for the Island as the effort toward permanent protection moves forward.
- Joel Rinebold (Joel Rinebold LLC) provided update on Offshore Wind, which does not impact LIS. Adrienne noted Beacon Wind project off Montauk will have cable running 150 miles through LIS to Queens. Public meetings are coming up in December.

Actions:

- Set up a meeting with Congresswoman DeLauro to discuss the Caucus and invite all congressional delegates in the LISS watershed to participate.

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- Continue to track offshore wind projects and public meetings impacting LIS.
- Explore options for a CAC led municipal government conference.
- Connect with Chesapeake Bay program and CAC to learn about and compare progress nitrogen pollution reduction

Wrap-Up

- Nancy requested an ad hoc team from CAC to discuss parameters to meet in person in the coming year. David Miller, Denise Savageau and Marty Garrell (CAC Secretary, Adelphi University) volunteered.

Action: Develop recommendations and guidelines for in-person meeting and alternatives for review at the March 2022 CAC meeting.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:06 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the CAC will be held remotely by Zoom on March 10, 2022 (pending final calendar from LISS).

Chat Resources:

- Denise Savageau (CT Assoc. Conservation Districts): Cape Cod used USDA Watershed Operations funds - \$500 M in infrastructure bill. CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation, Audubon CT and CT DEEP are working with USDA NRCS on proposal for similar project - focus on shellfish and tidal marsh restoration. Watch the short videos: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ma/programs/planning/wo/?cid=nrcs144p2_013968
- Cayla Sullivan (EPA): please visit our Program Implementation and Progress webpage to see all the projects we fund (including LISFF) that are related to Public Education and Outreach - <https://longislandsoundstudy.net/program-implementation-and-progress/>
- Elizabeth Hornstein (S&RC work group): here is a link to the LISS Sustainable and Resilient Communities Workplan <https://longislandsoundstudy.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Final-integrated-work-plan-LISS.pdf>
- Bridget Cervero (Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk): new position at The Maritime Aquarium, please share in your networks! Hiring for a Director of Conservation and Policy. <https://www.maritimeaquarium.org/director-of-conservation-and-policy>