



Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee
Thursday, December 13, 2018
Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, CT
Meeting Summary

Welcome, Housekeeping & Logistics

The meeting started at 9:50 a.m. A quorum of 19 members attended.

CAC Celebrations and Updates

Holly Drinkuth, CAC CT Co-chair, The Nature Conservancy, and Nancy Seligson, CAC NY Co-chair, Town of Mamaroneck, began the meeting with news and celebration of the reauthorization of the LIS Stewardship and Restoration Act (LISSRA). Nancy acknowledged that Dave Miller was instrumental in getting the original authorization twenty years ago.

The acknowledgement of the Green Legacy Award for Tracy Brown, Save the Sound, was postponed, as Tracy was unable to attend the CAC meeting.

November 19th CAC trip to Washington

Holly gave a synopsis of the trip to DC. Nineteen people participated, including a rep from REI who provided statistics about recreational use of Long Island Sound. Ten representative offices were visited, and \$20 million was requested for the LISS. The trip was exciting and fruitful; great conversations and engagement.

Holly acknowledged and thanked Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, and her team for the trip coordination, and Tracy Brown, Save the Sound, and Lynn Dwyer, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, for putting together a map of funded projects to share with the delegates. Holly noted that the participants were a “well-oiled machine” and the representatives took notice. November 2018 LIS Advocacy Day Handouts including the LISFF project map, grant allocations and Clean Water Job brochure are available to view or download here:

<https://tnc.box.com/s/627van2ipc2qh5lvwt28p54k1ef6uhbo>

The CAC discussed the suggestion of Representative Zeldin to ask for the full \$65 million authorization amount of the LISSRA. Suggestions for how to use the funds included:

- Purchase and restoration of Plum Island
- LISS operation fees, tied to the CCMP goals and implementation actions
- NY and CT LISS offices with government liaisons
- Supplemental grants to municipalities
- Innovative and alternative septic systems
- Resiliency planning support and increased collaboration at the municipal level
- NYC modeling results implementation
- Harmful Algal Bloom study and mitigation
- Climate Change adaptation and mitigation

A phased approach would provide time to build the internal infrastructure needed to accommodate \$65 million. This possibility underscores why the CAC needs a plan for that money. It was suggested that a \$65 million budget be generated to show how it could be spent.

Nancy and Holly agreed to put together the ideas shared in the discussion for the Management Committee, emphasizing the need to scale this to other huge demands for funds in the region. Holly also suggested that the CAC should consider including suggestions that came from the GAO report.

Holly provided a brief recap of the 9th Restore America's Estuaries Summit that she recently attended in Long Beach California. The meeting theme: Investing in Our Coasts: Environment, Economy, Culture reiterated how important estuaries are to human populations, and that there is a need to be more inclusive of all people to solve problems facing our estuaries and coasts. Like LIS, the California estuaries are heavily used, well-loved and facing many restoration challenges. 2018 program information is available at: <https://www.estuaries.org/2018-program>

LISS Office Updates

Futures Fund Announcement. Mark Tedesco, EPA LIS Office, provided an overview of the LIS Futures Fund (LISFF) award announcement event held in Port Jefferson, Long Island. There were a good variety of projects and the event was well attended. \$2.5 million was distributed in grants to thirty-six recipients throughout the watershed. Mark noted that this represents a big increase and is “probably at the right level right now; we can fund most of the applicants that we’re getting.” It was suggested that resiliency planning be added to the request for proposals for next year.

Nitrogen Strategy. EPA provided a webinar: http://longislandsoundstudy.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/N-Strategy-Public-Webinar-11.29.18_Final.pdf on the Nitrogen Strategy on November 29. Phase 1 – nitrogen (N) endpoints for different embayments in LIS, has been completed. Phase 2 includes a review and evaluation of existing data to support the N endpoints, identify where gaps in data exist, and to guide where monitoring programs need to be strengthened. Phase 2 is due in early January 2019. The public comment period ends on Dec 14th; all comments will be reviewed and responded to. In CT, EPA is working with the state in the Niantic and Pawcatuck (CT/RI) watersheds to ensure compatibility. In NY, EPA is working with the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP). The strategy is designed to enhance localized efforts to reduce nitrogen. The FY 19 budget includes the request to continue working with the consultant Tetra Tech and others. The goal is to get all the pieces to fit together and enhance one another.

LISS FY 19 Budget. The FY19 budget has not been passed yet. A Continuing Resolution (CR) is likely. Planning has started for the next budget cycle, using \$8 million as the base budget, although this figure can change (would like to see the base at \$12.5 million). Enhancement proposals were also submitted and are under review. There are a number of options depending on the size of the budget that is approved

National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) update

Kevin Obrien, CT DEEP Water Resource Division, called into the meeting and Mark Parker, CT DEEP, presented a Power Point. Connecticut is one of only two states without a Reserve. A National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) is a state and federal partnership: there is a national system of reserves that are locally relevant and nationally significant, and where local communities can benefit from access to a national network. Activities within NERR's include monitoring programs, coastal training, k-12 education, and science collaboration that includes an intra-NERR competitive grants program. Kevin reviewed the designation process (through NOAA), that was initiated in 2016. Site selection is based on both land and water, existing preservation, and there cannot be more than 50% federal lands. There can be multiple locations to a "site". The nomination was submitted to the CT governor's office in the Fall of 2018. Operational management of the reserve, if selected, has yet to be determined. Comments from the public meetings included questions about multiple uses and especially existing uses, such as hunting and fishing. For further questions, contact Kevin Obrien: Kevin.obrien@ct.gov.

Officer Elections

A volunteer CAC sub-committee consisting of David Miller, NY League of Conservation Voters, Carol DiPaolo, Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor, and Phil Brencher, The Sound School Regional Vocational Aquaculture Center, has been established to address the election of CAC officers. The positions under consideration are CAC NY co-chair Nancy Seligson, and CAC secretary, Marty Garrell. There was a brief discussion about allowing for "people in training", as a form of succession planning. The sub-committee is going to look at the CAC bylaws and make suggestions at the March meeting. Holly offered that there is a steep learning curve for officers and a vice-chair would be useful; this person could also fill in if one of the co-chairs could not make a meeting (and could attend other meetings, as well).

Policy Subcommittee Update

Washington, D.C. trip follow up. Adrienne Esposito reported that on the D.C. visit a congressional hearing was suggested as a means to resolve the budget for Plum Island within the next year. Additional requests included:

- Double the states revolving fund to \$5 billion
- Funding for sewage treatment and drinking water upgrades

- Request for any infrastructure package to include an emphasis on water infrastructure. All legislators agreed with this and said if they believed it would come to fruition. David Miller suggested that by the next CAC meeting in March there should be an infrastructure bill on the house floor.

NY/NJ Sea Barrier. Bill Lucey, Save the Sound, provided an update on the proposed NY/NJ sea barrier. The Hudson River Foundation has already done modeling and shown that this proposal would have significant impacts on the estuarine ecosystem. The funding proposed for this project increased from \$6 million to \$19.4 million. The original timeline was to have a preliminary plan by 2019. After several public meetings and voicing public concerns that has been changed to 2022. The NYDEC will respond to the preliminary proposal. Nancy Seligson suggested that the CAC can help get the word out. A scientist from Stony Brook University has been advocating for sea gates for many years. The proposal is not taking into account sea level rise. Adrienne Esposito suggested that the CAC could host an informational session for local communities. Others added that municipal planners and engineers, members of the American Planning Association, Shellfish and Conservation Commissions, and Land Trusts would also be interested.

Holly will send out a request for a short-term group within the CAC to work on public outreach about this issue.

Denise Savageau, CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation, provided a brief update about the latest Farm Bill.

LIS Turf Fertilizer Management

Turf and Nitrogen Pollution: <https://tinyurl.com/TMorrisPowerPT>

Tom Morris, UConn, presented the issues that influence nitrogen pollution to Long Island Sound from turf fertilizer. He covered misconceptions underlying existing beliefs, and provided the following guidelines/information:

- Both nitrate and phosphorus need to be managed carefully to address water quality
- While compost provides better growth for plants than any other material that can be applied to soil, soil testing for phosphorus needs to be used to monitor the amounts of compost to apply
- Most nitrogen is lost from lawns as nitrate in fall and over the winter, in percolate leachate
- Target fall fertilization habits; educate homeowners about why they need to apply fall N by October 15th

Tom further suggested that working with “a large landscaping company to eliminate late fall nitrogen applications” would be an effective strategy to undertake.

For more information download: *New England Regional Nitrogen and Phosphorus Fertilizer and Associated Management Practice Recommendations for Lawns Based on Water Quality Considerations – Revised 2017*. Karl Guillard and Thomas F. Morris (editors), University of Connecticut. <https://tinyurl.com/y8n2qsh3>

Niantic River Fertilizer Behavior Change Pilot Project

Robert Burg, NEIWPC, presented an update on the Niantic River watershed behavior change pilot project that was implemented over the summer. The focus was to encourage positive environmental behaviors by asking homeowners to reduce fertilizer use. Three behaviors were selected to target, with small teams of volunteers canvassing coastal neighborhoods in two coastal Niantic watershed communities. Adoption of the request was significant: 71% of respondents agreed to display an informational sticker and adopt at least one requested action. In follow assessments, of nineteen people interviewed who committed to take at least one action, seven improved their behavior and adopted new positive environmental actions. Key takeaways included: face to face contact works – homeowners were willing to listen to their neighbors and participate; while many Niantic residents were already environmentally pro-active, many were willing to do more, if asked. Considerations for next steps include expanding the pilot to the entire Niantic River watershed, and to hold a workshop to teach other LIS embayment communities in CT and NY how to conduct a behavior change campaign. The Healthy Lawns Healthy River brochure outlining recommended lawn care practices for reducing fertilizer is available for download at: <https://tinyurl.com/y7tnxvep>

CAC Discussion CCMP Objectives

1-1a: To reduce contaminant and nutrient loads from point and nonpoint sources
IA WW-8: Improve and enforce pesticide, herbicide, fertilizer regulations and other Best Management Practices for agriculture and urban turf.

Discussion: This topic fits into the sustainability goals of communities and within the CCMP. Sarah Crosby, Earthplace/Harbor Watch, inquired about information that we can share out of nature centers and to distribute to the public on this topic; the information has to be short, and it needs to be simple. Judy Preston, LISS/CTSG, offered the *Best Management Practices for Healthy Lawns that Protect LIS*:

<https://tinyurl.com/HealthyLawnsCAC>

information piece that is one page, front and back. Ideally information about this topic would connect to MS4 guidelines. The CAC needs to be able to engage multiple partners in a town. Denise Savageau suggested that the CAC should work with Conservation Commissions because they're looking for ways to do things locally that connect to larger issues.

Robert Burg offered that he has submitted an enhancement grant within the FY19 LISS budget to bring Doug McKenzie Moore, a community-based social marketing specialist from Canada, for one or two workshops next year. Ideally, this would make information available to other communities about how to do a community-based social marketing campaign, and also make money available through the LIS Futures Fund.

Questions and discussion arose about how to change peoples' ideas about what looks good, when it comes to lawns and landscaping. People along waterways and the Sound seem to understand better about the connection of lawns and fertilizer and LIS. Holly Drinkuth noted that, from her survey and implementation experience, people were willing to reduce fertilizer use as long as the lawn still looks good; it doesn't need to be perfect, unless you're in certain communities. Kids and pets are a priority when it comes to lawns. Bill Lucey commented that marinas also have a lot of bright green lawns going down to the water and asked about golf courses.

It was agreed to put this topic on the next agenda to explore how the CAC could work on this.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m. The next regularly scheduled CAC meeting will be held in NY on March 14, 2019.