



Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee
Cedarmere, Roslyn Harbor, NY
Thursday, September 12, 2019 - Meeting Summary

Welcome and Roll Call

- Nancy Seligson, CAC NY Co-chair, Town of Mamaroneck, called the meeting to order at 9:40 am with a quorum of 21 members present. Nancy acknowledged and thanked the efforts of Eric Swenson, Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee, and other local CAC partners for hosting and arranging the meeting location.
- Nancy introduced and welcomed, Jimena Perez-Viscasillas, the newly hired LISS NY Outreach Coordinator with NYSG.
- The agenda was modified to forego the CAC Bylaws and Policy Guidelines discussion in favor of continuing the CAC Funding and Priorities discussion.

Summer on the Sound

Nancy initiated the conversation about this summer's observations by CAC members of Long Island Sound. These included:

- No sea lettuce, but sea lice (for the first time).
- After sailing around multiple islands, coves and harbors over the summer, Bill Cavers noted "*How absolutely beautiful Long Island Sound is.*"
- Various observations of stripers (strong all season, but small), crabbing (late but strong), menhaden (late and not as numerous), silversides (half the usual size).
- Whales in regional waters – best year yet; Nancy observed one breach just off the beach in East Hampton.
- The congregation of migratory swallows in the CT River estuary has moved for the first time in memory, further south; the phenomenon is still a spectacle.

Nassau County LIS Embayment Highlights

Carol DiPaolo, Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor, Heather Johnson, Friends of the Bay (Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor) and Sarah Deonarine, Manhasset Bay Protection Committee, provided the following summer highlights of local embayments:

- Monitoring continues in Hempstead Harbor, in addition to twice weekly monitoring from May to October as part of the Unified Water Study.
- Hypoxic events occurred ; not as bad as could have been (in July, 30 dead bunker/Hempstead Harbor); Heather reported a parking lot oil spill that also killed bunker.
- An unusual concentration of porgies (6,542) was netted during routine monitoring in Hempstead Harbor; 23 species of marine life were caught in seines over the summer, in addition many birds were observed including 56 swans, and an abundance of herons, egrets, and osprey.

- There is a nesting pair of bald eagles in Hempstead Harbor that produced 3 juveniles this year.
- Sarah provided an entertaining overview of the hopes and expectations surrounding the procurement of a Sea Bin – a submerged device to collect aquatic floating debris – for Manhasset Bay: <http://SeabinProject.com>. Despite the challenges, she remains optimistic, and was positive about the number of partners interested and participating in the project.

Water Quality Update

Jim Ammerman, NEIWPC, LIS Office, provided a [PowerPoint](#) summarizing LIS water quality highlights from the past year, with context through graphics showing the history of water quality in the Sound from 1987 to 2019.

Discussion:

- Jim noted that in 2012, 2016 and 2019 there were intense hypoxic events which were warm years that translated into higher hypoxia, and that has implications for climate change impacts. 2019 had 55 days of documented hypoxia and the area extended to 89 square miles.
- When asked if these periodic episodes should be a big concern, Jim noted that it's the volume and time period that affect biota the most.
- Denise Savageau, CT Association of Conservation Districts, cautioned about the buildup of plastics on the bottom of western LIS, which is an issue for shell fishing, and that restoration of the benthic layer is needed. Reference was made to [2018 UConn research funded by LISFF that studied plastics and subaqueous soils in three embayments](#).
- David Miller, NY League of Conservation Voters Environment Fund, reminded everyone of the importance of maintaining the investments and public education that have gotten us this far regarding hypoxia, to which was added the importance of factoring in the effects of climate change.
- Jim cited NOAA data showing the greatest increases in precipitation are in the northeast; there is a "significant relationship" between hypoxia and nitrogen inputs.
- Nancy Seligson noted the importance of making this information "knowable" to the public.
- Jim referenced the Chris Gobler map of harmful algal blooms (HABS) in Long Island, noting the fact that HAB's love warm weather.
- Nancy asked for people's thoughts about water clarity this year in LIS, suggesting that it was worse, and referenced a 2"/25 minute rain event in Mamaroneck, NY this year that generated catastrophic flooding and overwhelmed storm water infrastructure. .

Future CAC Meeting Topics and Actions:

- Report on UConn plastics study
- Tracy Brown, STS, report on water clarity through the Unified Water Monitoring program

CAC Funding and Priorities: 2020 and Beyond

CAC Co-Chairs Holly Drinkuth (TNC) and Nancy Seligson initiated a discussion about the topic of CAC funding and priorities through a [presentation](#) that combined and referenced a number of sources: [CAC feedback to the 9/12/19 LISS Science research and monitoring needs](#) questionnaire, the [CAC Restoration and Stewardship Budget Needs](#) 2-page fact sheet, the one page draft CAC [FY20 and CCMP Review](#): Gaps, Needs and Priority Actions document, and the Horsley Witten Group presentation to the LISS I-Team (9/4/19) on addressing [GAO recommendations](#) (Government Accounting Office).

The top CAC priorities were :

1. Tracking Nitrogen progress
2. LISS Tracking
3. Focusing on cross cutting issues of climate change, environmental justice and sustainability.

Discussion:

- Nancy noted that the 20 ecosystem targets examined in the GAO report can be modified and “we should feel free to do this if needed.”
- Make sure tracking includes whether something is being *implemented* not just that it is a goal. and whether we are tracking. Follow examples of other estuary programs.
- Increase the visibility of cross-cutting themes which are a critical role of the CAC: climate change, environmental justice and sustainability.
- Many environmental organizations track audience engagement on social media. Do we want to know the specifics of who we are influencing? It’s hard to distinguish between LISS and other organizations.
- Everything we do should answer : how does this restore LIS? How does this help the Sound moving forward?
- Sustainable and Resilient Communities gaps: increase municipal/local government engagement and establish method to assess public access and barriers to LIS resources; Push for behavior-change campaigns; Invest in the Citizen’s Summit -- it highlights efforts and brings visibility. ,.
- Environmental justice and sustainability are key. Christianne Marguerite (TNC) provided a definition of Environmental Justice as *equitable access for marginalized communities to resources and decision-making and involvement in implementation and policy matters.*

Policy Subcommittee Update

Tracy Brown, STS, gave a brief update:

- There is agreement on the \$21 million ask for LISS, with verbal commitments from representatives.
- There will probably be a continuing resolution to keep the government open on October 1 while budget negotiations continue; expecting to pass new budgets in November; continuing resolution still necessary with a September 30 fiscal year end.
- There will be an Army Corps **October 24 public meeting** in Great Neck, LI regarding the Throgs Neck sea gate issue. Jim O'Donnell (UConn) is doing modeling re: tidal amplitude changes and hypoxia for this issue.
- Suffolk County's sub-watershed plan is out for public comment right now. Please submit letters of support. **Oct 16** is the deadline. Don't take for granted that this will be adopted; there is some organized resistance (relating to tax increase concerns.)

Action: Policy subcommittee chairs and CAC co-chairs draft letter to legislators re: budget in November. Schedule trip to DC in spring.

Continued Discussion

CAC Funding and Priorities: 2020 and Beyond

Sarah Crosby (EarthPlace/Harbor Watch) reported on the CAC [survey on Ecosystem Targets](#).

Most studied: hypoxia

Least studied: public knowledge

Most urgent: climate change, public knowledge, algal blooms

Response to what would *you* fund: Climate change, algal blooms, coastal resiliency, public knowledge

Climate change (CC) overlaps with public knowledge. "How does climate change impose itself on the targets of LIS?" under different scenarios. We need an overlay of CC with implementation actions and identify areas of the plan that are vulnerable to climate change. Identify where action, such as wetland restoration, or acquisition of open space upland of coastal marsh, would have a significant impact. Must take into account that some of these actions could literally take years. Comments included: "I'm worried about individual people not feeling like it's their problem". We have to figure out how to make people take ownership and responsibility. Definitions need to be constructed for this area of "public knowledge" for the CCMP.

Coastal resiliency implementation actions don't mean communities are going to figure out what to do and then implement it; we have to be mindful that it's a combination of actions by towns and LISS. David Miller suggested that communication needs to increase. Two other positions are needed in the LISS office: 1) someone who works solely on tracking, monitoring and moving, and 2) a local government liaison (showing towns what the LISS can do for them and getting them engaged, providing model regulations). "There is a total disconnect with what is happening in the local environment." A focus group might be good to discuss adaptations and

assess CCMP goals. The [LISS climate change vulnerability assessment](#) might be a good tool for the CAC to incorporate into our planning.

Nancy and Holly need to provide CAC input for the 2-day Management Committee meeting before October 1st. All comments should be sent to Holly and Nancy. CAC members were asked to consult the [GAO response](#) and remember that new targets are also welcomed (they might be incorporated into revisions of current ones;). When providing feedback, consider:

- What are funding priorities? Identify existing commitments that we need to maintain or expand. What new directions? How to accomplish these activities?
- What are the key actions that are missing in the current plan that need to be added, or tweaked?
- Characterizing progress to date. Do we have a common understanding of (what it means to do well and) whether we are doing well?

The goal is for the CAC to unify missions through a single lens of restoring the LIS.

Action: CAC members share comments and feedback through survey and emails to Nancy and Holly. Final draft due to LISS Office by Oct 1.

Cedarmere Tour

Eric Swenson, arranged for a tour of the house and grounds at Cedarmere, led by Tom Powell, Friends of Cedarmere and Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee member.

Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. The next regularly scheduled CAC meeting will be held in Connecticut at the Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport on December 12, 2019.

For additional information on the CAC, visit:

<http://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/committees/citizens-advisory-committee/>