

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
Thursday, September 8, 2022 – Meeting Summary



Welcome

- **Nancy Seligson** (CAC NY co-chair; Former Supervisor to Town of Mamaroneck) and **Holly Drinkuth** (CAC CT co-chair) prefaced the meeting by asking attendees about their observations around LIS this summer. Observations included: fish kills in Hempstead Harbor, Oyster Bay, and Manhasset Bay, NY warmest August yet, and warm water temperatures. **Heather Johnson** (Friends of the Bay) mentioned her group had reached out to Dr. Chris Gobbler about the observed fish kills, and he suspects the temperature and nitrogen could be to blame for fish kills.
- The meeting kicked off with **23** CAC member groups represented and a total of **42 participants**.
- **Dave Miller** (NY League of Conservation Voters Environment Fund) moved to approve the minutes of the June 2022 CAC meeting, seconded by **Denise Savageau** (CT Association of Conservation Districts).

Summer Water Quality Update

Jim Ammerman, LISS Science Coordinator

- Jim presented some very preliminary open water monitoring results. *"If you thought it was warm and dry, you're right"*: June-Aug temperatures were high (higher-than-usual temperatures were recorded across the northeast) and precipitation was low.
- The preliminary peak hypoxic area recorded was of 87 square miles (per CTDEEP data) Aug 1-3 in the Western sound. This was less hypoxic area than last year, but more than 2020; the 5-year average remains flat.
- LISICOS Buoys at Execution Rocks (Western Sound) recorded dissolved oxygen (DO) levels close to zero at bottom and middle depths in early August then again in later August. Jim noted this 'double dip' is pretty common.
- New to LIS: UConn has deployed a new glider! Powered a battery and by changes in buoyancy, the gliders go up and down in the water column logging water profiles (DO, salinity, etc). UConn's new glider is named Bill.
- **Mickey Weiss** (Project Oceanology) reflected on Jim's presentation: tech used for all of this was built on the shoulders of a woman called Barbara Welsh at UConn, the first to really look at the N cycle and its role in hypoxia in the Sound. Her work was the basis of the management put in place back in the 80's. She passed earlier this year. *In Memoriam: Barbara Welsh*
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/theday/name/barbara-welsh-obituary?id=32774503>

Preliminary Fisheries Conditions Update

Bill Lucey, Save the Sound

- Bill presented updates and observations about the conditions of local fisheries. A record-sized cobia, a fish not usually found farther north than Virginia waters, was caught in LIS this summer (over 50 lbs - huge fish)! We're seeing fish coming in from southern areas, which Bill thinks we

should expect more of in the future as water temperatures rise due to climate change. **Vicky O'Neill** (NYSDEC) also shared in the chat that Dr. Jim Carlton found a large population of *Aiptasiogeton eruptaurantia*, commonly referred to as the Pink-spotted Sea anemone or Red spot, in the Mystic River Estuary (CT). This species typically has a northern limit of Virginia, but due to climate change appears to be moving northward. The species is potentially more widespread in our area than realized and perhaps is overwintering. If you think you've spotted one in NY, please contact meaghan.mccormack@dec.ny.gov. NYSDEC is interested in tracking their current range. More information about this ecosystem target indicator can be found in the LISS website: <https://longislandsoundstudy.net/ecosystem-target-indicators/warm-water-cold-water-fish-index/>

- Lobster population has stabilized at a lower level.
- Abundance of silversides and porgies observed, but not as many bunker around this year as usual. Menhaden abundance has gone up ever since fishing cap was introduced. Despite it being abundant in LIS, sea bass is regulated by size in federal waters. On the flip side, Fluke populations in LIS have been getting worse, but regulations concerning their catch have gotten less restrictive because it also federally regulated.
- Lots of foraging going on in LIS, which is not being tracked.
- Bill has seen more horseshoe crabs this summer too.
- Vicky shared in chat that the DEC received a report a week ago of many non-native Chinese Mitten Crabs in the Mamaroneck River. Chinese Mitten crabs are a NYS Part 575 Prohibited Species. Therefore, if they are observed, in addition to creating an iMapInvasives entry, please send an email to isinfo@dec.ny.gov with the date, location, and a photograph. If caught, the crabs should not be returned to the water in a free-living state. When possible, the crabs should be frozen for genetic analyses at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. If you have questions, email meaghan.mccormack@dec.ny.gov

Action item: Consider annual fisheries and shellfisheries status reports following seasonal data collection.

LISS Updates

Mark Tedesco; EPA LIS Office Director

- Mark provided an overview of the agenda for the upcoming 2-day Management Committee Meeting, happening in Port Jefferson on October 19-20. The 2019 meeting was critical to help finalize the CCMP update done in 2020 and discussions there led to the formation of the SRC work group.
- The main goal of the meeting is to review recommendations from work groups, identify priorities moving forward, and try to walk out of the meeting with a clear sense of where investments should be made. It will also be a chance to review how LISS been functioning as program and where changes would be useful. There will be professional facilitators at the meeting.
- Agenda overview: Topic 1: Work Group priorities and needs, Topic 2: Data Management (access, maintenance, analysis, visualization, of historic/current datasets), Topic 3: Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan (recommendations, LISS name rebranding, etc.), Topic 4: Environmental Justice (current EJ initiatives, next steps, Justice40 assessment and reporting), Topic 5: Sustainable and Resilient Communities, Topic 6: LISS Governance.

- David Miller asked - *We've been pretty reactive historically speaking. How could we use BIL and State SRF in a more proactive way?* Mark said he believes the burden is on LISS to make sure that the existing programs and partnership are functioning well enough so that they have a backlog of clear investments that the BIL funds can go directly towards. He provided the example of the Chicopee water treatment plant: for many years, LISS's goal was to extend upgrades of water treatment plants up into upper watershed states. Chicopee, working with the state of MA, already had upgrade plans for their facility and were ready and just needed funds, so LISS was able to provide grant assistance through the state.
- David then asked how the Sound program help people be 'shovel ready' like the Chicopee were? Denise Savageau seconded this. David suggested perhaps 2% of BIL funding could be used for technical funding. Nancy Seligson suggested this is a bigger issue warranting further discussion.

Action item: Continue discussion about what LISS can do to identify and support 'shovel ready' projects to receive BIL funds.

Break Out Groups

Nancy and Holly introduced this section with an overview of how LISS work groups work. **Elizabeth Hornstein** (NYSG/LISS) spoke on SRC work, including grant-writing funds. Liaisons from other WGs provided updates.

Ahead of the meeting, CAC members and attendees were sent the draft work plans prepared by LISS work groups, which included their draft priorities for FY23. After work group updates, meeting attendees split into break out groups to discuss the following questions in preparation for the Management Committee Meeting:

- *Of the LISS work group work plans you reviewed ahead of the meeting, what works well? What could be improved?*
- *Do you have specific suggestions for the coming year that you think the LISS Management Committee should consider?*

Some key takeaways from each of their conversations included:

- Group 1: Lots of discussion on communications and providing more funding for communications work. Renaming idea caught people's attention too – will have pros and cons. Need to include entire watershed in education and communication efforts.
- Group 2: What works well includes advocacy and how having a collective voice and the diversity of scientific backgrounds. What could be improved included communications, the WGs being a bit confusing in terms of which ones to join and overlaps. Suggestions to MC included: more general-public-friendly reports, connecting the watershed to the Sound consistently, better coordination among technical groups, more local signage at harbors and marinas with explanation of what LISS does.
- Group 3: Focused on communication. Communications on a continuum of timeframe; short-term: have a hotline where people who spot concerning things in the watershed can communicate with each other; long-term: improve communications from WGs to everyone. Communication to the CAC is good though. The group also liked idea of changing name to

something that implies action as opposed to just 'study' and focusing on the current state of LISS ecosystem targets.

- Group 4: Elements that work well included EJ and COE discussions in the agenda and giving a platform for SRC findings. Things that need work included enhanced coordination among WGs and communication about what they are doing to external partners and the public. Also discussed reevaluating some of the indicators for ecosystem targets, providing space for annual updates on each of the WG's progress, importance of having a communications person involved in all WGs in order to create messages to the public, and policies for communication among LISS WGs.
- Group 5: Elements that worked well included having plans for the EJWG and COE to grow over time. Tangible actions and funding support to meet those priorities. Also discussed integrating our infrastructure projects as an Infrastructure Plan and linking it to water quality data so we can show results of our work and not operate in silos.

Policy Subcommittee Update

Adrienne Esposito, Citizen's Campaign for the Environment; Bill Lucey, Save the Sound

- *CAC DC Visit!* Really great. Lots of new members and staff in Congress, so it was great for them to learn about LIS. Talked to them about Plum Island, fixing the septic tank program taxing, funding, etc. Told quick and insightful stories of what the recovery meant to people, such as catching clams in the harbor and being able to eat them, catching striped bass, and the increase in jobs in shellfishing industry. The stories seemed to really connect with Congress staff!

New York Updates

- In NY, there is an Environmental Bond Act coming up in the ballot. It includes \$4.2 billion, some of which will go to land preservation, water, climate change, and coastal resiliency. If this passes, it could be another way for municipalities to capture funding and then use LISS funding. Adrienne asks that if anyone is tabling and would like informational materials about this bond act to distribute, please reach out to her!
- Dave Miller asked about whether there is a Policy Committee meeting coming as discussed at the last meeting with the RAs? Mark Tedesco said it's in the works with tentative timeframe of late fall or early winter. The Executive Steering Committee might meet too before that.

Connecticut Updates

- Ongoing discussion continue about what options exist for Plum Island. The option of making it a National Monument is floating to the top. The National Monument status would allow flexibility on how to use the land for conservation, commercial fishing, etc. National Monuments are designated by the President and have customized rules to protect them. Senator Chris Murphy was supposed to visit the island last week (although Bill was not sure if it happened); Senator Blumenthal went and wrote a letter to Biden about it. The *Visioning of Plum Island* document really helped move this effort forward. Bill noted that CAC members can help by writing letters to the president about Plum Island. Nancy and Holly wrote to Biden on behalf of the CAC, but letters from individuals would also be powerful. Bill offered to provide examples.
- Many changes to the CT legislature coming up; there will be 30 new people. CAC must educate them on priorities. Senator Collins started a CT Long Island Sound Caucus; Bill brought up to the

group the idea of the CAC hosting a meeting with them and NY's caucus. **Action item: Co-chairs to continue conversation on this potential meeting with Policy Subcommittee.**

- Small group in CT looking at riparian corridor protections in headwater streams – it is a big issue.
- Balloon releases, Styrofoam bans, and pesticide regulations are in the works in CT, although those usually do not pass.

CAC Operating Procedures

- Nancy and Holly briefly went over CAC operating procedures concerning support letters. Co-chairs write letters on behalf of CAC and usually give a 24-hrs timeframe for members provide comments. Generally, the CAC does NOT take specific stances on projects, but rather issues and policies. However, some projects related to specific CCMP goals could be considered.
- If the co-chairs write a letter on anything that could be even remotely controversial or 'out of the box', they will absolutely share that letter with the CAC before sending. Otherwise, if it is necessary to make a deadline and it is very clearly aligned with the CCMP, they might not share it.

Action item: Nancy and Holly to review and synthesize today's break out discussion and bring to the Management Committee.

The Meeting adjourned at 12:14pm.

The next CAC meeting is scheduled to be held remotely **December 8, 2022.**