



NOTES FROM LISS CAC MEETING

September 14, 2017

Harbor Island Park, Mamaroneck Village, NY

Welcome – Nancy Seligson LISS CAC Co-Chair, NY

Nancy opened the meeting and welcomed the CAC to Mamaroneck. Nancy gave an overview of the area. Harbor Island Park is part of the Village of Mamaroneck. Mamaroneck Town and Village share services. The harbor has quite a bit of maritime industry and a large sewage treatment plant in the park (owned by Westchester County) that was upgraded recently. Sound shore communities are working to upgrade lateral lines. The park was originally a dump, landfilled over years, until made in to a park.

CAC Updates

- Jennifer Wilson-Pines and Eric Swenson agreed to take notes for Judy Preston today.
- EPA has hired a replacement for Amy Mandelbaum (Anna Weshner-Dunning)
- Nancy suggested forming a nominating committee needed to find a CT Co-Chair and that it be comprised to two people from CT and one from NY. If anyone has interest in serving as the Chair, please let Nancy know. Tracy Brown, Mickey Weiss, and Dan Natchez volunteered to serve on the committee. Carol reminded us that there are time limits for the process in the bylaws. Nancy believes nominations have to be announced 30 days before the meeting.

Sound Summer Observations

- Nancy asked that people share their observations about the Sound and their embayments this summer.
 - Carol DiPaolo stated that there is a large bunker population right now in Hempstead Harbor and that fishermen are reporting a lot of sea robins and sand sharks (aka dogfish). Also there is a large bird population and this season black skimmers, which she has not seen before. Blue claw crabs are back for the first time in a couple years.
 - Dan Natchez noted that kayaking and paddle boarding has increased and boating has declined. He also reported seeing a bald eagle.
 - Captain's Cove is also experiencing a large menhaden population. A lot of discussion about water quality in the New Haven area. UCONN is working on the new national breeding bird atlas, with an additional interest in changing bird populations.
 - Nancy said that there are plenty of bunker in Mamaroneck Harbor and they arrived a little later than usual. The water has been is warmer than usual for a while. There are always many shorebirds.
 - Horseshoe crab populations are really down.
 - Greenwich Point saw nighttime predation by 10-15 raccoons taking all of the horseshoe crab eggs. There are a lot of oyster sets along the shoreline – it is really recovering since the damage of storms Irma and Sandy.
 - Sea bass are very plentiful in the New Haven area. Thrasher sharks are being caught close to Montauk (250-350 pounds). They have not been that close in many years.

- Carl Harvey observed that there appears to be a strong correlation between winter warm temperature and catches of blue crabs. The waters have been getting warmer in the winters and the catches are increasing.
- Diamondback terrapins photographed hatching in Setauket Harbor.
- A lot of menhaden on the south shore of Long Island. Humpback whales have been seen feeding on them.
- Seal populations are increasing and working their way into the western Sound. Some are summering off Montauk instead of heading north.
- There may be a problem with male horseshoe crabs finding female crabs. Jennifer Mattei, Sacred Heart Universtiy, should be invited to speak on this at a future meeting.
- With the increase of bunker, a decrease in comb jellies has been seen in Hempstead Harbor and Mamaroneck, possibly due to consumption of larval jellies by bunker. They are also finding that in Guilford. IEC is found a lot of comb jellies in their sampling in June in open water and Manhasset Bay before the bunker came in. They could just be in different areas.

Summary of Water Quality Monitoring Report – Evelyn Powers (IEC)

- Monitoring just completed on Monday. – 12 weekly surveys in the western Sound
- 22 stations from the Whitestone Bridge past Hempstead Harbor Sampled for oxygen, pH, secchi depth, salinity, water temp at all stations and nutrients, TSS, chlorophyll A at some stations.
- They start at 6:00 am and are done by around 10:30 and leave from Manhasset Bay. They are usually back at the dock by 11:00. First station is A4 at the back of Manhasset Bay then on to Little Neck and clockwise back to Manhasset Bay. IEC charter fishing boat used for the runs.
- Some stations overlap with CT DEEP stations to the east and NYC DEP to the west.
- First run was June 27th and the last on this past Monday.
- In June, most stations had adequate DO (mean averages) at the bottom. Execution Rocks (A4) in open water, was extremely low. There may be some kind of current driven dead zone there. Some marginal areas in Hempstead Harbor also.
- In July with 4 surveys, most areas had adequate DO. Some hypoxia at Hempstead Harbor. DEEP went out on the 18th - 20th, most areas were good but started to see problems in the far western Sound.
- In August surveys, the inner station in Manhasset Bay had hypoxia. It is the first station in very shallow, poorly circulating water, so that may be a factor. Marginal results of DO in Hempstead Harbor. Some fish kills observed (about a dozen floaters) in the western Sound. CTDEEP (14th to 16th) found moderately severe hypoxia in far West, moderate hypoxia east of there to Oyster Bay.
- September – most stations were very good. Inner Manhasset Bay again was severe (below 1 mg/l) CT DEEP (8/28 – 9/1) most areas recovered nicely with some moderate hypoxia in Western Sound.
- Overall hypoxia improved over last year. The biggest difference was in the early summer where we did not have the high levels like last year. The rest of the summer was pretty similar.
- IEC and DEEP's data will be combined into one report.
- The middle of Hempstead Harbor had 5 incidents (out of 11) of hypoxia. The worst area was the back of Manhasset Bay.
- Marty Garrell asked if it is possible to pick a couple days over the summer and monitor every hour over 24 hours at Manhasset Bay. It could be expensive. Peter Linderoth said that there are data loggers that could be used.
- Run 12 on 9/11/17 – no hypoxia.
- Now is the time to plan for 2018. Any ideas – get them to Jim Ammerman or Evelyn Powers.

Unified Water Study and Report Card – Tracy Brown, Peter Linderoth, Bill Lucy (Save the Sound / LI Soundkeeper)

- Save the Sound merged with and the Long Island Soundkeeper recently. Bill Lucy has been hired as the new LI Soundkeeper. He mostly recently worked in Hawaii but has worked in other areas around the world including Alaska. He is a wildlife advocate, scientist and activist. He was also a commercial fisherman. He worked with marine mammals (beluga whales). He is based in the CT CFE office. He would like to see acoustic loggers all around the Sound to help track whales. There are 600 miles of shoreline on the Sound.

- Tracy stated that they are asking the LISS for an enhancement grant to continue to expand the United Water Study.

The Unified Water Study (UWS)

- Peter Linderoth explained that the UWS is focused on nutrient data. It is aimed at assessing the environmental health of the 100+ bays and harbors around the Sound. This was the inaugural season.
- The sampling season ends in October.
- 11 groups from the Sound and one from the south shore of Long Island participated this year.
- Tier 1 monitoring included DO, Chlorophyll-a, temperature, salinity, macrophytes (seaweed), and clarity.
- Tier 2 monitoring included continuous DO, nutrients, and an advanced macrophyte survey.
- Monitoring season was May through October with biweekly sampling events and 3 macrophyte surveys midsummer.
- The objective is to have comparable data all around the Sound.
- DO time criteria – within 3 hours of sunrise. There are large daily swings in DO due to circadian photosynthesis patterns, which appears to be a natural condition.
- All procedures are on the website.
- QAPPs are important and difficult to put together. They used a QAPP template for this year. Each group used the template and added their information. They are working on streamlining the template.
- Funding was initially provided by the LIS Funders Collaborative. They have continued to fund it even though they did not expect to have 12 groups this year. NFWF funded approximately \$25,000 in additional funds. They are working to provide the funding payments to the groups faster.
- Annual field and procedure trainings are held 4 times a year around the Sound. The trainings are mandatory for participation in the UWS participation.
- The stations are selected through hexagonal grids established for each harbor or bay. Stations are thus spread out rather than just sampling where problems exist. It is a collaborative process to decide the station maps.
- Sampling schedules are worked out.
- There is an equipment loan program:
 - Equipment, supplies and expendables
 - Lowers study expenses
 - Eases group entry
 - Enhances data compatibility
- Equipment cost about \$150,000 this year.
- Lab analysis is provided (IEC provides chlorophyll-a analysis in Staten Island).
- Standard data entry templates were developed (Excel spreadsheet).
- Twelve additional groups have expressed interest in joining next year.
- Tier 2 process is in development for a pilot program. SOPs developed and QAPP approved by EPA. Little Neck Bay and Mamaroneck Harbor will be pilot areas. Tier 2 Parameters:
 - continuous dissolved oxygen logging
 - ammonia,
 - nitrate
 - nitrite
 - orthophosphate
 - Total Nitrogen
 - Total Phosphorous
 - video macrophyte surveys
- Continuous loggers are cleaned every 7 to 10 days and also recalibrated.
- For 2018 HarborWatch wants to buy 10 more instruments for new groups. Save the Sound will administer.
- Work continues to fund existing 2017 groups.
- There is a proposal to fund the UWS with FY2018 LISS funds. in the FY2018 budget
 - Fund Tier 1 and 2 monitoring

- Budgeting tool in place for cost projections of different combinations
- LINAP has been very supportive

Long Island Sound Report Card

- There is overall effort to incorporate all the UWS data in the report cards
 - 2016 report card completed
 - east to west deteriorating quality
 - embayments were not included – it was just on open waters
 - parameters and thresholds are being revisited
- If Total N was the only nutrient pollutant reported, all of the Sound would be in good shape and colored green in the report. That doesn't tell the entire or real LIS situation and would make it difficult to seek federal funding. Phosphorous data was added to give a more complete picture.
- 2018 report card in progress:
 - Reviewing nutrient indicators and thresholds
 - Survey August
 - Workgroup – August to November
 - Review drafts – September to November
 - Feedback and comments – September to December
 - Produce report card
 - 2017 data with updated indicators and thresholds.
 - 2007 – 2017 data with updated indicators and thresholds. A survey ranked the parameters that people wanted to see. This will help show improvements over time. Some agencies and wastewater plants felt that the last report was not representative.
 - Report Card Release in late Spring / Early Summer 2018.
 - There will be print and online versions. The web-based version will have more data and links.
 - Each parameter is scored individually in each area and then combined in a weighted manner to give an overall grade to each area.
- Mark Tedesco stated that EPA is reassessing how nutrients are reported nationally in coastal waters as well.
- Phosphorous is coming in from the Atlantic.
- There are portions of embayments where currents are such that water doesn't circulate and can give skewed results.
- It is important to make it clear in the report card that the grade for the open water doesn't look like the grade for the adjacent embayment.
- The public interprets the grades as indicating swimmability and fishability when it isn't meant to show that.
- STS has proposed to the LIS Funders Collaborative to issue a report on beach data results in alternate years. NRDC is no longer doing beach reports. Will the beach reports be based on pre-emptive closings or actual data?
- There should be equal weight to all that has been positive so as not to create an unrealistic impression that the problem areas are the norm. The story needs to be balanced.
- There should be press releases to help give the larger picture.
- People need to be reminded of what conditions were 20 or 30 years ago. Put it all in proper perspective.
- Calling it a Long Island Sound report card is a misnomer – it only really deals with nutrients, and should be labeled "The LIS Nutrient Report Card". It does not deal with many important issues (new contaminants that wastewater plants are not removing; wildlife; bacteria levels; temperature changes; etc.). The public thinks it represents the overall health.

2018 LISS Funding Pre-Proposals - Mark Tedesco, USEPA

- Mark stated that ideas for possible FY2018 funding were requested. It was an informal request and process with no deadline. LISS has received a number of proposals including for additional monitoring efforts. The LISS wants to bring in outside groups (so it is not the people who want funding deciding what to fund). There have been no decisions made yet. It will be presented to the management committee in October so that a decision can be made at the January meeting.

CAC Resolution of Support for Embayment Funding- Nancy Seligson

- Nancy noted that the Funders Collaborative has asked the LISS CAC for a recommendation for funding a new program. She suggested that the CAC recommend funding the Unified Water Study. An enhancement grant application has been submitted to the management committee as part of the FY2018 budget process (to fund sampling in 2019). No other alternative would be as effective in helping to fund community-based embayment monitoring. She suggested it be funded by both by the Funders Collaborative and by the enhancement grant. She would like to see this lead to base funding for embayments. Carol expressed concern that this will relegate embayments to continue to have to seek funding through the LISFF. The UWS now costs about \$500,000. Save the Sound would continue to administer it.
- Issues were raised regarding funding to embayment groups. There would be sub-awards by Save the Sound to participating groups to cover costs of monitoring, but what about the costs of other issues such as - bacteria, flooding, etc. that groups are spending money and staff time to dealing with? There is also the problem that STAC members tend to underappreciate data from embayment monitoring. Would UWS build credibility? There is the need to support both local and UWS.
- NY Senate killed EPF funding for local monitoring. No one wants to do long term funding. The LISFF should change the the 3 year cut off on monitoring grants. HH last project with LISFF would not fund several aspects of the program, leaving them to scramble to fund those portions of the program. The benchmark for groups is simply whether they have a QAPP? Agency program data is considered valuable and funded, and embayment data, even with QAPP, is not.
- Sustainability for the community-based monitoring groups is an issue. CAC needs to support both UWS and QAPP- approved groups. Adrienne expressed frustration that the people lobbying for the funding (CAC) are the ones that are not getting the funding when advocacy and science should be equally valued. Eric noted that the CCMP goals do not seem to have translated into LISFF and NFWF funding.

Dave Miller suggested, that we work to fund programs for groups with QAPP's in addition to the UWS. Mark was asked what the best approach would be. Ideally there would not be a competitive grant process and there would be a dedicated fund. The question is who would be in that group?

Dave Miller made a motion for the CAC to write a letter to the Management Committee urging them to fund both the Unified Water Study and also ongoing monitoring for community-based groups that have EPA-approved QAPPs. It was passed unanimously. Nancy will draft a letter and circulate it for comments. IEC has funds for pathogen monitoring - speak to Evelyn Powers.

Niantic River Workgroup Update – Kelly Streich via phone, CT DEEP

- In 2000, the Niantic River Watershed Plan was prepared and will probably be updated next year. Around 2010, a nitrogen work group was formed with federal and state officials, researchers, and environmental groups. They provide guidance and support for sampling and share information. The estuary is in southeastern CT (Lyme area). In early 2016, the workgroup began to look at the data working with Jamie Vaudrey.
- The project has a lot of information available. A synthesis is underway to better see the big picture. Models are being developed to determine how nutrients are transferred within the system. There is an effort to develop target nitrogen loads that will support eel grass stands. What is impacting eel grass? Jamie Vaudrey's model will be used and explored for its transferability to other watersheds in the area that can use eel grass as an indicator species (eastern Sound only).
- Last meeting was in June. Next meeting is in October. The meetings are open to all.

Policy Committee Update – Adrienne Esposito (CCE), Curt Johnson (STS)

- Washington DC Trip - Adrienne Esposito stated that the Washington DC lobby day is set for September 26th. At present 22 people are signed up for the bus + 6 more going down on their own. Members of Save Plum Island are planning to participate. The 5 main topics of the trip are LIS funding, preserving Plum Island, increasing State Revolving Funds, reauthorizing the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act, and full funding of EPA budget. There is still room on the bus for others to join. CCE received a grant to pay for the bus. The only cost for riders will be a \$10 tip for the drivers. The meeting schedule for the day is not as busy as the last trip because six Congressional members have agreed to meet together at noon. The first meeting is at 10:30 with Congressman Murphy, then 11:30 with Senator Schumer (for photo) and staff. The last meeting is at 4:30 with Senator Blumenthal and staff. Eric will make reservations at the diner. 23 people. 6:00 pm. Nancy met Engle and Schumer last week and pushed LI Sound and infrastructure needs.
- **Long Island Sound Event** – A week ago Rep. Suozzi’s office advised Adrienne that a Long Island Sound event has been organized for **Friday, October 20th from 9:00 to 1:00 at the Merchant Marine Academy**. Congressman Suozzi’s staff prepared the agenda and invitation list. The first part of the event will focus on past accomplishments. They would like one success story in each category. Then the meeting will address new challenges such as climate change, phosphorous, sea level rise, etc. They will invite the Governors and both Commissioners and Department of State and state legislators. No Town officials or other local governments. They will serve lunch. There may be a re-signing ceremony with the two governors. They would like to invite Al Gore as a keynote speaker. There should be a short talk about the role of the CAC. Carol noted that they are looking to model the event after the one 20 years ago. Joel Ziev suggested that possibly the Coast Guard could transport the CT people to the event. Adrienne will ask Suozzi if he can look into that.
- **LINAP and EPA Nitrogen Strategy Update** – Cassie Bauer, NYSDEC, and Mark Tedesco provided updates on the state and federal nitrogen management efforts. Information on both programs is available online, including current reports and events.

NEXT MEETING: December 14th at Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport