

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee
Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, CT
Thursday, June 9, 2022 – Meeting Summary



Welcome

- **Nancy Seligson** (CAC NY co-chair; Former Supervisor to Town of Mamaroneck) and **Holly Drinkuth** (CAC CT co-chair; The Nature Conservancy) called meeting to order at 9:40 AM with attendees either in person or on the phone, including 21 CAC members and alternates. CAC members and meeting attendees introduced themselves.
- **Dave Miller** (NYLCVEF) moved to approve the March 2022 CAC meeting minutes and **Marty Garrell** (CAC Secretary; Adelphi University) seconded; the motion carried.
- Nancy Seligson went over the meeting goals and welcomed the new representatives and staff to the CAC. **Mark Tedesco** (LIS EPA Office) noted that there will be three new hires at the EPA: two working in Region 2 (Melissa Duvall and Kristen Laccetti) and one new staff in Region 1 (Ashley Desrosiers). The new staff will be working with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) projects and funding opportunities.
- **LISS WG and Committee Updates** Nancy Seligson and Holly Drinkuth (Management Committee April 21, 2022): Budget discussion was led by Mark Tedesco. CAC priority letter discussion was led by CAC co-chairs. Management Committee meeting members commended the CAC on their continual on-going work to identify and communicate priorities. Casey Abel (EPA) introduced a governance document for the LISS Management Committee. The biennial report to Congress draft will be finished by October 2022 and submitted to Congress after review. Cayla Sullivan (LIS EPA) demonstrated the Power BI Tool and its applications. Holly and Nancy had subsequent positive conversations with Cayla about the using the Tool.
- **Vicky O’Neill** (Habitat Restoration and Stewardship WG): The May 9, 2022 meeting included several presentations: Juliana Barrett gave an update on a LISSFF project at the Hoffman Evergreen Preserve’s coastal forest; Ralph Lewis continued to discuss the implications of LIS geology on coastal resiliency projects; Nancy Balcom discussed the Marine Debris Action Plan; and Tessa Getchis gave an update on shellfish habitat restoration efforts in CT. Vicky O’Neill indicated that the HRSWG will be planning field trips with Ralph Lewis to explore geologically significant land areas and CAC members are welcome to join.
- **Mary Arnold** (Watersheds and Embayments Work Group): The May 11, 2022, meeting featured an update from Peter Linderoth on the Unified Water Study and a presentation from Carol DiPaolo from the Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor on the potential to collaborate on water quality monitoring around the Sound. **Michelle Lapinel McAllister** (Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor) further explained how the group investigated a water quality problem to discover the precise location of a sewer main break.

- **Michelle Lapinel McAllister** (Water Quality Work Group): The June 1, 2022, meeting featured a presentation from the Environmental Justice Work Group and discussed potential avenues to increase representation in their work.
- **Jim Ammerman** (LISS Science Coordinator) provided a summary of several recent events he has attended: the LISS Research Conference, NEIWPC's Bioextraction Symposium both held on May 18, 2022, the Joint Aquatic Sciences Meeting (May 14-20, 2022), and the CT NERR designation event on May 21, 2022. Nancy Seligson encouraged all CAC members to attend future LIS Research Conferences.

Welcoming New EPA Regional Administrators

Nancy Seligson and Holly Drinkuth welcomed the newly appointed Regional Administrators (RAs) **David Cash** (EPA Regional Administrator, Region 1) and **Lisa Garcia** (EPA Regional Administrator, Region 2) and invited them to share remarks.

- **Regional Administrator Lisa Garcia** thanked the co-chairs and the CAC for their leadership, along with all LISS partners working to improve LIS. She indicated that the priorities of the Biden Administration are climate change, environmental justice, and restoring science. She referenced BIL funding directed to the Sound, noted she is very excited about the LISS environmental justice (EJ) efforts and thanked the EJ WG for their work. She also noted EPA's commitment to work with NY State to get increased geographic program funding and Clean Water Revolving Fund to projects that upgrade facilities and protect water quality.
- **Regional Administrator David Cash** thanked the co-chairs, CAC membership, and broad partnership and community of individuals and organizations who are working to protect Long Island Sound. RA Cash noted that the CAC is like the "superglue", providing ongoing advice to federal, state, and local leaders to improve the health of LIS. He said he was very impressed with the CAC recommendations provided in the April 14, FY 2022 CCMP Priority letter to the Management Committee and indicated that the BIL funding is a transformational moment, providing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to right past wrongs. He noted the EPA hopes to meet and exceed the Biden Administration's Justice40 goal.

Discussion:

- David Miller asked the RAs to convene a LISS Policy Committee meeting with NY and CT state environmental agency commissioners. **Adrienne Esposito** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) requested that the RAs meet with the CAC Policy subcommittee as well. The RAs expressed willingness to support the CAC requests.
- **Denise Savageau** (CT Association of Conservation Districts) asked the RAs to comment on the *One Water* concept and using federal funds to advance shared water goals. RA Cash replied that the agency considers connectivity across waterbodies and share the as an example the recently EPA permitted wastewater treatment plant upgrade in Chicopee, MA which considered upper watershed impacts on LIS health.

- Marty Garrell asked about impending Supreme Court decisions and their potential impact to EPA's permitting processes. RA Garcia replied that this is a concern, and that EPA staff work with the Department of Justice to prepare legal arguments that address the agency's role, mission, and permitting authority. She said EPA recognizes states in Regions 1 and 2 are good partners working to administer the Clean Water Act. RA Cash indicated that court decisions frequently impact permitting and throughout its history EPA has and will continue to work within statutory bounds to innovatively respond to challenges.
- **Adriene Esposito** requested the RAs share their "wish list" of topics they would like the CAC to support with members of Congress. In 2023, the CAC would like to promote the reauthorization of the LIS Stewardship and Restoration Act, along with requesting an increased funding cap and reduced match requirement for the LISS. RA Cash indicated that there is a greater and greater focus on environmental justice and that would be his priority. RA Garcia noted that there is a legacy pollution and past decisions that have led to the creation of negative impacts including waterfront or beach public access.
- Holly Drinkuth noted that increasing access to the Sound is a LIS CCMP ecosystem target. She asked the RAs for successful examples of projects from other estuary programs. RA Garcia replied that she has seen that most successful programs have a commitment to partner with schools and summer programs that get youth excited about experiences in and on the water – and then share it with their families. RA Cash agreed and discussed an example from the redevelopment of Boston Harbor Islands. The project established a goal to ensure every Boston Public School student visits the islands at least once during their school career to build the foundation of understanding access, become ambassadors to their families, and explore career opportunities and growth through education and internships.
- **Helena Souvant** (Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, intern) asked how EPA Regions 1 and 2 are working with indigenous and underserved communities? RA Garcia noted that EPA is a federal agency that works with federally recognized tribal entities (government to government relationship). They also understand that there are indigenous groups that are not federally recognized, and they are trying to utilize the federal EJ commitment to work with all communities, including these entities. RA Cash mentioned they are working closely with non-federally recognized tribal entities to better understand their priorities and goals, and how they might support these priorities and goals through various EPA programs.

The co-chairs thanked the RAs for attending. Both RAs thanked the CAC for their wonderful work and said they look forward to continuing to work together. After the RAs left the meeting, Mark mentioned several ongoing LISS projects that related to the discussion, such as public access, and noted that LISS would like to have a Policy Committee meeting this fall to present the governance proposal as well as several other items.

Action: Nancy and Holly to connect with Mark Tedesco for updates on LISS Policy Committee meetings and to determine next steps for inviting the Regional Administrators to meet with the CAC Policy Subcommittee.

Environmental Justice Work Group Update

Jimena Perez-Viscasillas (NYSG/LISS) walked through a logic model that summarized the goals and a five-year workplan for the EJ Work Group. She share updates on development of a document identifying public resources available through LISS, and the status of a Request for Applications (RFA) to identify an entity to administer a new EJ grant program called the LIS Community Impact Fund. She also shared that EJ WG Core Staff have been meeting with LISS work groups and committees to help integrate EJ across the LISS. **Maureen Dolan Murphy** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) suggested the meet with the CAC Policy Subcommittee before the group's planned advocacy trip to Washington D.C. scheduled for mid-July.

Actions: Distribute the EJWG work plan diagram to the CAC membership. EJ WG staff coordinate with LISS CAC Policy Subcommittee to meet before July 14, 2022.

Policy Subcommittee Update, Adrienne Esposito, CCE.

- The subcommittee is working with federal legislators to address the IRS tax on grants to replace septic systems and will prepare a letter of support for the CAC's review.
- A LISS CAC visit to DC on July 14 is being planned. Nine meeting attendees expressed an interest in going during the meeting. *Action: People interested in attending should contact Adrienne ASAP as she works toward a headcount.*
- David Miller encouraged people to ask their congress members to join the LIS Caucus.
- **Dave Anderson** (Save the Sound) provided an update on the project to Preserve Plum Island, which has a donor willing to donate a significant amount to the effort. The Friends of Plum Island coalition is continuing to work on how to manage those funds and guide efforts working on p decide how to spend those funds. There is also an effort to make Plum Island a National Monument for which there is a push for letters of support from as many groups as possible. *Action: Draft CAC support letter in support of making Plum Island a National monument.*

Marine Debris Action Plan Update, Nancy Balcom (CTSG)

The Marine Debris Action Plan for Long Island Sound, which was finalized in spring. NY and CT Sea Grants led the effort with funding from NOAA's Marine Debris program. Various entities have volunteered to complete the actions within the plan, and Nancy noted that anyone interested in volunteering to complete action items is welcome. This is a five-year plan with annual progress reports. All questions can be directed to Nancy Balcom at nancy.balcom@uconn.edu. The Plan can be found here: <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/regional-action-plan/long-island-sound-marine-debris-action-plan>

Communications, Outreach, and Engagement (COE) Plan Update, Holly Drinkuth

The COE plan drafting process is nearing completion, and the team is currently incorporating feedback from various LISS groups, including the CAC. There will be one additional opportunity to edit the draft leading up to a June 28, 2022, COE Steering Committee meeting. CAC members are welcome to join the meeting on the 28th. During this time, Marstel-Day will present the final

COE plan. The final plan and next steps will be discussed at the LISS Management Committee July 21, 2022, meeting. CAC members are welcome to attend this meeting as well.

Sustainable and Resilient Communities Update and Discussion, **Elizabeth Hornstein** (NYSG), **Sarah Schaefer-Brown** (NYSG), **Sara Powell** (NYSG), **Deb Abibou** (CTSG), **Alicia Tyson** (CTSG)

The Sustainable and Resilient (SRC) Extension Educators presented an update on their efforts, structured around five different priorities: better coordinated regional response; trained community decision-makers; plan infrastructure improvements; viable government services; and facilitate implementation of sustainability and resilience projects. Overall themes of their work include social-ecological integration and environmental justice.

The SRC extension professionals shared some initial findings from their needs assessment with communities designed to understand the main environmental threats/hazards; current community goals/actions around sustainability and resiliency; barriers to implementing actions/projects; and what support is needed. The assessment will be completed at the end of the summer and will inform the remainder of their workplan tasks.

Each SRC professional gave a brief overview of discussions in their regions with elected officials, municipal staff, nonprofits, civic/community groups, faith-based groups, EJ communities, businesses, and utilities. In general, communities are interested in funding (knowing what is available and then accessing it); there is interest connecting with experts and connecting with communities facing similar issues; there are capacity challenges within smaller towns/villages to secure funding and implement projects; there are interests in updating municipal codes; and communities are interested in providing general education on a range of issues for various audiences.

The SRC extension professionals led discussion on the topic of building or refining an information “clearinghouse” using a series of guiding questions. CAC members and guests provided thoughts, noting the CAC has been requesting this type of support for municipalities for a long time and it’s exciting to see it implemented. The SRC professionals were encouraged to find ways to work with existing organizations, rather than duplicating efforts, and to develop a flow chart or decision tree that guides LIS communities to a “menu” of options for connecting to technical guidance, funding and other resources they need to accomplish their goals. *Action: Send SRC contact information to the CAC to share community contacts and information related to LIS geographic regions.*

Wrap Up

- The next CAC meeting is planned to be held in-person on September 8, 2022, The co-chairs will work to identify a location that provide remote access to view presentations as well as hear discussion.
- Meeting adjourned at 2:24 pm.