

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee

ZOOM Online Meeting  
Thursday, March 14, 2024



**Meeting Summary with Video Timestamps**

[Link to meeting recording](#)

**Welcome**

- Final attendance: 19 CAC members, 58 total attendees.
- **Nancy Seligson** (NY CAC co-chair, Town of Mamaroneck) called the meeting to order and requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the December 14, 2023 meeting; **David Miller** (NY League of Conservation Voters) moved to approved, and **Andrew Ely** (Project Oceanology) seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Mark Tedesco** announced Long Island Sound Study Site Evaluation and site visits will be June 26 – 28. EPA evaluates all 28 National Estuary Programs for progress and effectiveness every 5 years. Mark noted the program might reach out to CAC partners when planning the site visits to invite them to attend, share challenges and priorities, etc. Contact **Evelyn Spencer** for information.
- **Robert Burg** introduced **Anya Grondalski**, NEIWPC's new Science Communicator for the LISS. She will be leading social media coordination, as well as writing website content. She has also recently created a LinkedIn account for LISS, follow it here: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/long-island-sound-study>

**RAE Annual Learning Exchange (Recording 6:26 – 16:25)**

Shahela Begum, Restore America's Estuaries

- The Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund (LISCIF)'s supports local community groups and organizations by providing grant funding for projects and capacity building opportunities.
- In 2024, LISCIF will award up to \$1,500,000 in federal funds (\$500-100,000 range) and host the [Annual Learning Exchange on June 27 at the CUNY Graduate Center](#) for institutions and sub awardees to gather and learn from each other.
- Timeline: LISCIF's letters of intent were requested September 27, 2023, and full proposals were requested by March 15, 2024 to allow groups ample time to prepare, since short turnaround times have been identified as a barrier. Project start dates will be July 1, 2024, and last a year.
- The LISCIF Review Team: 3 experts from NY and 3 from CT, professionals with stewardship experience, and BIPOC representatives of the communities in the region.
- LISCIF stats: 35 applicants requested a total of \$2.5 million, 11 applicants from CT, 24 from NY; 29 were selected to move to the full proposal stage.
- Based on the EJ Needs Assessment findings, RAE created a capacity building training curriculum and held free trainings with tribal groups, organizations, and directors to help fill gaps and support subawardees in managing federal grants. Trainings included topics on project design, building partnerships, fundraising, budgeting, staffing, grant writing assistance, etc. Future topics include procurements, hiring and retention, recordkeeping, etc. The Annual Learning Exchange will also include trainings on grant agreements and invoicing.
- LISCIF is sending questionnaires to participants after each training and held a focus group to help keep topics responsive to what local groups need.

- For more info, reach out to Shahela at [sbegum@estuaries.org](mailto:sbegum@estuaries.org)

## Discussion

- Nancy noted it would be great to have some of these groups join the CAC. Shahela said there is certainly interest, though she noted this is the first time some of these groups are applying for federal funds and they may not be familiar with the CCMP. Shahela invited CAC members to attend the Annual Learning Exchange and connect with these organizations.
- Shahela reported that the LISCF program is the first of its kind in terms of capacity building and removing barriers. There is no match required. RAE is working on providing a working capital advance as opposed to reimbursement based on feedback from the EJ Needs Assessment meeting in Groton. Applicants have included tribal nations and non-profits. Most projects fall under 4 types of work: oyster restoration, green infrastructure such as rain gardens, educational stewardship, and water quality. This round of funding also included lots of programs for youth.
- The premise for the grants is to balance benefits to the estuary and benefits to the local community. Applicants must clearly show direct connection to the CCMP in the full proposal. Holly noted this illustrates why community input into the CCMP revision is needed.
- Nancy encouraged CAC members to attend the Learning Exchange.

## **LISS CCMP Revision Public Engagement (Recording: 31:46 – 44:55)**

- **Cayla Sullivan** (EPA R2) presented CCMP revision progress including the updated vision, mission, and values for the LISS, as well as the agreed on structure which now centers around Goals, Objectives (previously ecosystem targets), and Actions. The new CCMP will have no more than 50 total actions.
- Writing teams for each Goal (formerly Themes) are developing draft Objectives to be presented at the Management Committee Meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The writing teams will develop 3-5 actions per objective from June – August. A final draft will be completed by September 1, presented for a 60-day public comment period and to the CAC, STAC, Management Committee, and LISS WGs. Edits will be incorporated and the final revised CCMP will be submitted by the end of the calendar year 2024.
- EPA contracted ERG to support of the CCMP revision process. They created an email for people to submit public comments throughout the year: [LISoundPlan2025@gmail.com](mailto:LISoundPlan2025@gmail.com) and will create outreach materials for the public engagement sessions for LISS to circulate them with the public.
- CCMP Progress, draft goals and objectives will be presented during public engagement sessions in May. CAC members made suggestions for meeting locations and promotion. (Note: Nine Public Engagement Sessions have since been scheduled. Find their dates and locations in the CCMP Revision webpage here: <https://longislandsoundstudy.net/2024/04/public-asked-to-give-input-on-revised-plan-for-long-island-sound/>)
- **Jimena Perez-Viscasillas** (NYSG/LISS) presented information on CCMP Revision Outreach materials to help partners and interested parties help raise awareness of the CCMP revision and connect people to the process (**Recording 54:46 – 58:51**). The materials include 1-3 PowerPoint slides that can be easily added to presentations, brochures, a webpage, and language that can be used for newsletters and posts. (Materials shared with CAC members in April and May).

### Update on Nitrogen Monitoring in NY and CT (Recording: 1:04:32 – 1:36:18)

- **Mark Tedesco** gave an overview on Long Island Sound Study's nitrogen management work. In 2000, TMDLs were established to limit the amount of nitrogen in the Sound. Over the past three decades LISS has worked to support projects to help reach these daily limits. Advancements have been successful and we're meeting the TMDL; we've seen a decrease in atmospheric deposition, hypoxia, and riverine nitrogen inputs. However, recent studies have shown that warming waters have decreased the effects of such improvements by 27% (Whitney and Vlahos, 2021). Other issues remain including the potential effects of nitrogen on wetland degradation and eelgrass habitat quality, harmful algal blooms, etc.
- LISS's current goals for nitrogen management include expanding efforts to monitor and model the flow of nutrients and their effects on the Sound, designing an integrated model framework to forecast how the Sound responds to change (including climate), improving monitoring coordination, data sharing and visualization tools, and evaluating progress under the 2000 TMDL to set systemwide and subwatershed nitrogen targets.
- Over the next few months, the N modeling oversight group will work to complete a draft calibration water quality model to ensure it matches real data and improve its usefulness in management. LISS is also working with NYSDEC on tools to model water quality in embayments, and with NYSDEC and CTDEEP on projects to help reduce nitrogen in local complexes and bays.
- **Sue Van Patten** (NYSDEC) gave an overview of N work in NY, focusing on LINAP (Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan). LINAP is an initiative that began in 2015 as a governor's initiative and aims to assess nitrogen pollution in LI waters and identify sources, establish N reduction endpoints, and develop implementation plans to achieve reductions. The program is partner driven, not regulatory. Some of its major focuses have included septic tank replacements programs in Suffolk and Nassau counties and fertilizer reduction efforts.
- The program is working on a 10-year strategic plan (2025-2035) to transform LINAP into a more holistic Action Agenda, including other focuses in addition to nitrogen, with greater durability and greater funding opportunities. For more information on LINAP, visit the [DEC LINAP webpage](#) or contact Sue at [susan.vanpatten@dec.ny.gov](mailto:susan.vanpatten@dec.ny.gov)
- **Kelly Streich** (CTDEEP) gave an overview of CTDEEP's nutrient management efforts and Second-Generation nitrogen strategy, which has a three-fold focus: nutrient reduction from wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs), enhancing stormwater management, and prioritizing embayments.
- Work on **WWTPs** includes operating the Nitrogen Control Program, reissuing general permits for nitrogen discharges at WWTPs, and continuing the nitrogen credit trading program.
- For stormwater management:
  - The 2015 MS4 General Permit includes expanded coverage across the state, conditions to reduce runoff, and practices to address POCs (pollutants of concern). DEEP has developed support resources for MS4 communities (such as town by town factsheets) and worked with UConn CLEAR to conduct public outreach to municipalities for the General Permit.

- CTDEEP revised the 2004 Stormwater Quality Manual and the 2002 Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines, and took steps towards nutrient reduction in agriculture, including continuing to revise Nutrient Management Plans, issuing CAFO General Permits, funding nutrient reduction projects, coordinate with NRCS, and participate in the National Water Quality Initiative.
- In **embayments**, CTDEEP is working on outreach with UConn CLEAR to help improve education on nitrogen sources, eutrophication susceptibility, and best management practices, and to solicit input on local-level actions. They've also continued work on embayment-specific nutrient modelling and work to address onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS).
- Kelly noted the CAC members can join the [Water Quality Planning Listserv](#) and the summer public engagement sessions for the [NPS Management Plan](#) and shared a list of resource links in her presentation.

#### Discussion

- **David Miller** mentioned the [Septic System Replacement Fund](#) of NYS and the importance to keep supporting it. Sue also noted enhancement systems need to be incentivized as well.
- **Alicea Charamut** asked whether there were conversations between CTDEEP and DPH to determine which agency has jurisdiction over OWTS. She noted concerns over legislative sessions seemingly determining these jurisdictions and permits not having more environmental considerations if DPH took control. Kelly said it is a valid concern and said she has been able to include DPS in some of her technical work, though she is not sure where the legislative bill will land. Holly mentioned CAC members could send in testimony on that bill.
- **Kamazima Lwiza** (STAC co-chair, Stony Brook University) asked about the water quality model, mentioning some of its challenges and weaknesses. He noted that the STAC is not included in the assessment team. Mark said HDR will cover this at the LIS Research Conference. The DO is much improved, and there has been a lot of feedback and discussion on the calibration from the model evaluation group. He said it might be useful to have a presentation on it to the STAC for review and comment.
- **Denise Savageau** (CT Association of Conservation Districts) noted reducing nitrogen is critically important and mentioned work being done in Greenwich with shellfish. Part of the work includes restoring the benthic layer, and she encouraged us to look at NOAA's work and consider it in our plans. More here: <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.0c03066>
- **Paul Stacy** (Footprints in the Water) said the LISS conversation has centered around modelling for far too long, and management focus should now prioritize land management and climate change. He also notes LISS does not have much authority over N reduction strategies. He shared the [Local Watershed Assessment Tool](#) developed by CLEAR. Other ecosystem issues need to be taken into consideration. Nancy and Holly noted this is an important point and having a watershed approach is being addressed in the new CCMP.

#### **CAC Policy Subcommittee Update (Recording: 2:07:15 – 2:19:23)**

Denise Stranko, Save the Sound

- **Federal Updates:** Congress passed a 2024 budget that includes \$40 million of funding for the federal NEP program, which equals \$850,000 for each NEP, including LISS. LIS geographic program funding in President Biden’s 2025 proposed budget is \$40 million, but the NEP program funding was reduced to \$32.6 million for FY25. Nancy and Holly are working on a CAC letter supporting robust funding for 2025. The authorization for the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act expired in September 2024. There are currently two bills – one in the House and one in the Senate—to reauthorize the legislation. Representatives LaLota (NY) and Larsen (CT), and Senators Gillibrand and Murphy are leading the effort to reauthorize the bill. Representative LaLota (NY) has a bill in the House to designate Plum Island as a national monument which looks promising. Tom Suozzi won the special election to replace George Santos in NY’s third district.
- **The CAC is working to schedule meetings with legislators in DC on July 10<sup>th</sup>.**
- **New York Updates:** Sessions are in full swing and the budget high on the list of priorities: Clean Water Infrastructure funding aiming for \$600 million and \$400 million for Environmental Protection Fund. **Adrienne Esposito** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) is working on introducing a bill to protect horseshoe crabs in NY (commercial fisherman are using them as bait). Water Bill Fairness Act allows local water and sewer authorities to charge a fee for surface runoff. Many flooding and resilience bills are also in the works, plus some on PFAs including bans on some products and one focused on testing in industrial facilities. Finally, the Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act aims to revise a provision of the Suffolk County Water Restoration Act and to put the measure in the ballot in November.
- **Connecticut Updates:** The Legislative Session ends May 8. PFAS Bill that includes a reporting requirement and prohibits the use of PFAS on several products. Establishment of Riparian Buffers Bill has been combined to include the Inland Wetlands Commission Training and enable CTDEEP to use stormwater funds to incentivize conservation upstream buffers, develop mandatory riparian buffers and setbacks from waterways and wetlands, and get training for Inland Wetlands Commission staff. CT is also working on an Eelgrass Bill which aims to establish an eelgrass coordinator in CT to match the one in NY. A larger climate bill with many goals, including codifying greenhouse gases, reduction targets for state agencies, updating emission reduction targets for the Global Warming Solutions Act, and directing CTDEEP to prepare a report authorizing a proposed plan to advance nature-based solutions for climate adaptation and mitigation is also being considered.
- The **New England Fishery Management Council** is accepting comments on proposed Amendment 10 to improve management of Atlantic herring, which currently impacts Long Island Sound populations of River herring.

**Resilience Resource Hub (Recording: 2:24:22 – 2:44:59)**

Sara Powell, New York Sea Grant/LISS; Deb Abibou, Connecticut Sea Grant/LISS

- The LISS Sustainable and Resilience Communities (SRC) Extension Professionals have launched a Resilience Resource Hub, which is available at [LISResilience.org](https://LISResilience.org). The Hub is a tool to help communities find resources to support resiliency projects. The tool includes case studies, a database of grants, information to help groups think through project development and considerations, and more. The Hub also includes contact information for each of the extension

professionals, which are currently located in Suffolk, Nassau, and Westchester Counties in NY, and Eastern and Western Connecticut.

**LIS Environmental Justice (EJ) Needs Assessment (Recording: 2:46:05 – 3:10:40)**

Jimena Perez-Viscasillas, New York Sea Grant/LISS

- New York Sea Grant and partners have just wrapped up the EJ Needs Assessment for Long Island Sound. Part of the project's main goals included identifying barriers to participation and access to LIS for underserved groups and establishing new relationships across the watershed. To this end, a group of LISS staff worked closely with contractor Responsive Management to conduct the assessment. The project included interviews with existing partners and with community leaders, a research review, tabling at existing events and local libraries, community meetings, and a formal survey conducted in person, through phone, and through the web.
- Major findings included that, compared to non-disadvantaged groups, disadvantaged groups reported using the Sound at a lower rate, fishing as a primary source of food at a higher rate, and prioritized wanting less trash and better water quality overall in their communities at a higher rate. Barriers to participation in LISS programming included not being aware of existing opportunities, having competing priorities that prevent them from participating, and limited transportation. Access to the Sound was another major issue.
- Next steps for LISS include working to connect the issues and priorities heard throughout the assessment into management and planning to the extent possible, continue conversations and fostering relationships, and continuing to share results of the assessment. Examples of steps taken include LISCI's working capital advance, exploration of transportation funds to educational beach events, and programs such as Spanish-language webinars on access and events that combine access to nature and public health.
- The broad findings of the assessment were presented during a [webinar on February 22](#) and at the [EJWG Meeting on February 8](#), where there was also a discussion on next steps. A report with more detailed information will follow. Reach out to Jimena for more information at [jbp255@cornell.edu](mailto:jbp255@cornell.edu).

The meeting adjourned at 12:30pm. The next CAC meeting will be held in person on **Thursday June 13, 2024**, at **Housatonic Community College** 900 Lafayette Blvd. Bridgeport, Connecticut. An online Zoom attendance option is also available.