

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
Thursday, December 14, 2023
Meeting Summary



Welcome

- **Nancy Seligson (CAC NY co-chair; Town of Mamaroneck)** called the meeting to order. A quorum of **21** CAC member groups were represented. A motion to approve the September CAC Meeting Summary was made by Nancy Seligson. **Carl Harvey (Menunkatuck Audubon Society)** made a motion to accept the summary. **Kamazima Lwiza (Stony Brook and STAC NY Co-chair)** seconded this motion.
- Nancy introduced **Chris Eagler (NYDEC)**, environmental analyst with NYSDEC Division of Water serving as the Long Island Sound Regional Coordinator. Chris highlighted the goal of partnership-building between himself, municipalities, and communities in improving water quality across the region as a cornerstone of his work.

New Member Vote and Co-Chair Election

- **Sally Connelly (City Island Oyster Reef Project)** was introduced as a CAC member candidate. Nancy made a motion to approve the nomination of the City Island Oyster Reef Project as a CAC member. The motion was carried unanimously. Sally introduced the City Island Oyster Reef Project, an organization that leads research and restoration projects and conducts educational outreach with schools and communities throughout the Bronx.
- Nancy raised the election of the CAC CT co-chair stating that **Holly Drinkuth (TNC in CT)** was the only nominee and called for other nominations from the floor. **David Miller (NY League of Conservation Voters Environment Fund)** made a motion to close the nominations, which was seconded by **Mickey Weiss (Project Oceanology)**. Nominating committee member Mickey Weiss made a motion to accept Holly Drinkuth as the co-chair for the CAC, which was seconded by David Miller. The motion carried unanimously. Nancy thanked Holly for her continued service to the CAC and for being a great Co-chair partner.

Future Funds Announcements

Nancy invited CAC members who received Future Funds Awards to briefly comment on their projects.

- **Denise Savageau (CT Association of Conservation Districts)** announced that all five of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in CT received grants including over \$3 mill for dairy farm nutrient management projects in the state.
- **Jean Pillo (Eastern Connecticut Conservation District)** received a grant for a project with a farm in North Stonington CT for manure management and nutrient reduction in the watershed.
- **Megan Granoto (Town of Groton)** announced that the Town received two awards for projects related to permeable pavement and resilience. Funding will go towards a feasibility analysis and a co-designing effort with contractors. The Town of Groton is working with UCONN CLEAR to conduct the project and will provide a region-wide workshop to share resources with other municipalities. The second project is in partnership with the Nature Conservancy, with funding

to conduct a feasibility analysis of a road stream crossing in Groton, specifically addressing fish passage improvement and flood resilience infrastructure.

- **Bill Lucey (Save the Sound)** reported they received an award to assist with ghost lobster trap marine debris removal, remarking that **Sarah Crosby (Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk)** will share more information. Bill also announced that STS received funding to look at the Rainbow Dam in Farmington River and Save the Sound's ecological restoration team is partnering with Billion Oyster Project to look at Turtle Cove and other oyster projects, which are currently in the primary assessment phase.
- Sarah Crosby reported that the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk received an award for the next phase of the living shoreline/habitat restoration project at Veterans Memorial Park in Norwalk Harbor and that Cornell Extension Cooperative received funding for additional ghost lobster trap removal in Connecticut and New York.
- **Maureen Murphy (Citizens Campaign for the Environment)** announced they received an award for the construction of rain gardens in Northport village.

Mark Tedesco (EPA) congratulated the grantees and announced that Lynn Dwyer from NFWF is going to retire next year. He recognized her efforts as instrumental to the LISSFF grant program.

- Mickey Weiss announced that **Andrew Ely (Project Oceanology)** will be representing Project Oceanology at CAC meetings moving forward. Andrew Ely then introduced himself and communicated his background and enthusiasm for being involved.
- **Allison DePerte** from the Atlantic Marine Conservation Society introduced herself and expressed her organization's interest in joining the CAC. (Action: Nancy to contact Allison regarding CAC membership)

Policy Subcommittee Update

Adrienne Esposito (Citizens Campaign for the Environment and CAC Co-chair of the Policy Subcommittee) gave an update report.

- The Policy Sub-Committee met with House LIS Congressional Caucus Co-chairs Congressman Lalota (NY) and Congressman Courtney (CT) and staff of Senator Gillibrand (NY) and Senator Blumenthal (CT) to support and spearhead Reauthorization of the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act. The bill has been introduced into both the house and senate.
- Adrienne reported on the CAC trip to DC in November. She highlighted the successful meetings with congressional members and staff, the request for level funding in the 2024 federal budget for the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act, the need to increase funding in the future, and the ongoing effort to preserve Plum Island. The day was an overall success.
- Bill Lucey noted that **Denise Stranko**, Vice President of Programs at Save the Sound, will be serving as co-chair of the policy subcommittee at CAC meetings moving forward so that he can dedicate more of his time to his Soundkeeper duties.

Management Committee Report-Out

Nancy and Holly briefed CAC members on the October Management Committee meeting (October 18-19) and emphasized how the meeting was a valuable opportunity to voice and ensure that the CAC/STAC priorities from the joint September meeting were noted and endorsed.

Mark Tedesco and **Nikki Tachiki (EPA)** outlined the CCMP revision process currently underway. The Revision and Oversight Group (ROG) developed recommendations for the CCMP revision including:

- Four Goals, each with 3-5 objectives to be developed by corresponding writing teams from January to mid-April:

- Clean waters and healthy watersheds
- Thriving habitats, and abundant wildlife
- Sustainable and resilient communities
- Informed and engaged public.
- Draft vision and mission statements:
 - Vision: *The Long Island Sound in its watershed has clean waters, healthy habitats, thriving wildlife, resilient coasts, and an engaged public.*
 - Mission: *The Long Island Sound Study leads a collective effort to restore and care for the sound and its watershed.*
- Three public engagement sessions with in-person and virtual components will be held In May of 2024.
 - Holly Drinkuth asked that CAC members consider signing up for a writing team by the Jan 12 deadline.
 - Mickey Weiss inquired if any progress has been made on renaming the Long Island Sound Study. Mark Tedesco responded yes, and more updates will be shared over the coming months.

Technical Presentations

- **Penny Vlahos (UConn and STAC Co-chair)** presented her work related to nitrogen levels in LIS, highlighting the trends in nitrogen reduction over time. Penny highlighted a concern in the effect that oceanic warming will have on the reduction in nitrogen inputs and hypoxia overall in LIS and emphasized the importance of developing meaningful outreach programs to connect people with LIS moving forward.
 - Denise Savageau inquired about the effects of land use, particularly forestry, on nitrogen inputs. Penny responded that data sets related to land use, cover, and change over time are critical to developing a comprehensive picture of the dataset, and that her team is looking at that. Denise added that funding for environmental literacy is essential to meaningful outreach in EJ communities, noting at recent conservation district meetings the public expressed desire for more environmental programming and education particularly in underserved areas.
- **Cayla Sullivan (EPA)** presented the Eelgrass Story Map project explaining that it is a dynamic interface communicating the effects of climate change impacts on eelgrass, such as warming waters, intense storms, and sea level rise. Cayla described how the story map engages the user and demonstrates how scientists can make connections between various parameters on eelgrass health and inform estimates for eelgrass productivity.
 - Denise Savageau and Bill Lucey asked about the timeline of incorporating subaqueous soil survey data for eelgrass habitat suitability. Cayla answered that the results will be included in the next story map update. Denise confirmed that the soil survey is complete, and the results are in the process of being written up.
- Mickey Weiss reported on the November 30th STAC meeting. He highlighted presentations related to salt marsh restoration, microplastic species bioindicators, and constraining models of metabolism and ventilation of bottom water and Long Island Sound using oxygen isotopes.

General Announcements

- The calendar for 2024 Long Island Sound Study meetings is available.
<https://longislandsoundstudy.net/calendar/>
- CAC meetings in 2024 will be virtually in March and December, and in-person June and September. The CAC and STAC co-chairs will coordinate to hold a joint meeting in September.
- Holly reiterated that interested individuals should sign up for the CCMP writing teams by January 12th.
- **Jimena Perez-Viscasillas (NYSG)** announced that the EJ Need Assessment report is being worked on and is expected to be circulated early 2024.
- **Jennifer Wilson Pines (Manhasset Bay Protection)** announced that the new MS4 Permit is available on the DEC website.

Meeting adjourned around 12:00 PM.

The next CAC meeting is scheduled to be held remotely on March 14th, 2024.