

Executive Steering Committee Meeting Notes
Tuesday, January 17th, 2023
Meeting conducted remotely



Attendees (committee members in bold):

Javier Laureano, EPA Region 2

Mark Tedesco, EPA LISO
Cayla Sullivan, EPA LISO
Esther Nelson, EPA LISO
Kristen Laccetti, EPA Region 2
Melissa Duvall, EPA Region 2
Rick Balla, EPA Region 2
Alyssa Arcaya, EPA Region 2
Peter Brandt, EPA Region 2

Ken Moraff, EPA Region 1

Leah O'Neill, EPA Region 1
Ashley Desrosiers, EPA Region 1
Casey Abel, EPA Region 1
Evelyn Spencer, EPA Region 1
Mel Cote, EPA Region 1
MaryJo Feuerbach, EPA Region 1
Graham Stevens, CTDEEP
Brian Thompson, CTDEEP

Erik Bedan, CTDEEP

Christopher Bellucci, CTDEEP

Katie Petronis, NYSDEC

James Tierney, NYSDEC

Cassandra Bauer, NYSDEC

Julia Socrates, NYSDEC

Sue VanPatten, NYSDEC

Agenda Items

Governance Document

- Mark Tedesco reviewed the purpose of the governance document and explained that it was memorializing the organizational structure and function of the Long Island Sound Study. The committee inquired about any areas of disagreement or controversy and Casey Abel explained that a lot of people wanted to know more about the executive steering committee and the Policy Committee due to them not meeting in the past few years. Mark mentioned there was discussion about the decision-making process, the use of a consensus approach rather than majority voting. Javier Laureano mentioned the integration of climate change and environmental justice in the future. Mark responded that those topics are cross-cutting principles of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan; updates to the plan can always refine approaches. The governance document provides clarity on the process by which the Management Conference would make decisions.
- **Action: The executive steering committee approved the governance document to be presented to the policy committee.**

FY 23 LISS Work Plan and Budget

- Leah O'Neill reviewed the general structure of LISS, sources of funding, past and current appropriations, and match requirements. She highlighted the increase in the FY 2022 CWA 119 budget from \$32 million to \$40 million in the FY 2023 budget. The committee discussed how the increase in staffing at EPA has greatly helped the program, as have increased support for positions in partner organizations.
- The committee discussed the importance of leveraging federal funds. Jim Tierney mentioned the New York Environmental Bond Act that voters passed in November. The Bond Act will make funds available for implementation of projects benefiting Long Island Sound. LISS funding can help as seed money to plan and design projects. Mark Tedesco mentioned recent LISS investments into providing technical and financial assistance to communities to help them identify, plan, and propose projects to available funding sources. Staff support through EPA and partners is needed. CTDEEP agreed and mentioned CT has launched its own programs to create a pipeline for resiliency projects and planning and they are looking to double down on that.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Budget and Planning

- Evelyn Spencer reviewed the BIL budget and the current and ongoing projects for FY22 and FY23 and Kristen Laccetti outlined the objectives for BIL funding. Ashley Desrosiers described the Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund, environmental justice priorities, and ongoing work.

- The committee discussed the importance of not only funding projects but funding programs that help EJ communities apply for grant funding and inquired about any methodology LISS has to assign weight to applications based on impacts to EJ communities in regard to grants like LISCIF. Mark Tedesco explained that LISCIF grant is meant to have all funds go directly to EJ communities and mentioned the new Sustainable and Resilient Communities initiative will be funding technical assistance to communities to develop and submit funding applications. Graham mentioned the challenge that communities have in developing and managing grants to address environmental issues.
- **Action: LISS will continue working with grantees and the states to ensure grants are available and attainable for EJ communities.**

Nitrogen Reduction Strategy

- Mark Tedesco described the success of 2000 TMDL being applied to permit limits and wastewater treatment plant upgrades, emphasizing the 50% reduction in maximum area of hypoxia from the early 2000s and the LIS being the only estuary to show a convincing reversal of hypoxic conditions that were driven by nutrient pollution. He highlighted a few efforts between EPA and the states that are very important to this work. Jim Tierney highlighted that one of the current efforts, the systemwide hydrodynamic and water quality modeling project, will greatly help to determine how much more New York needs to be doing and mentioned hydrodynamic modeling can also assist in climate resilience planning. Ken Moraff shared how the nitrogen projects have progressed over the years and how now is the time to complete new technical support activities and develop set new nitrogen reduction targets as needed. He asked whether we have enough information to put together an integrated schedule of products from ongoing activities and a timeline of for decisions. He also mentioned the upstream states want to be engaged as that process moves forward.
- **Action: LISS will develop a more detailed schedule for outputs and decisions those outputs would support.**
- **Action: LISS will add to the Policy Committee agenda about how to best involve upstream states.**
- **Action: EPA team will schedule a discussion between EPA Region 1 and Region 2 to address upstream states perspectives and opportunities for involvement.**

Communication, Outreach and Education (COE) Plan and Renaming

- Casey Abel gave an update on the COE Plan, explaining it started with a research phase where major communication gaps were identified and finished with a 5-year plan and 15 goals where the vision of the project is for a deep and wide collaboration across the full diversity of LIS communities. She explained the recommendation of increasing staff support to prioritize and improve communications. She mentioned the recommendation for renaming the LISS to better emphasize the partnership for implementation rather than study.

2025 CCMP Update vs Revision

- Esther Nelson gave an overview of the CCMP and whether LISS should do a full revision or just an update for 2025, explaining a full revision would require extensive staff time. She mentioned that if an update was done in 2025 a full revision could be done in 2030. The LISS will be reaching out to partners for perspectives on the benefits of one approach versus the other.

Input on Policy Committee Meeting

- Leah O'Neill mentioned that LISS is looking for input on the Policy Committee agenda and meeting including on if it should be virtual or in-person. Input from the ESC is welcome through their Management Committee staff representatives. In general, the Policy Committee agenda will mirror the ESC agenda with the addition of discussion of tributary state participation in LISS.