



**Long Island Sound Study
Management Committee Meeting Notes
Housatonic Community College
Thursday, July 18, 2019**

Attendees: Jim O'Donnell, STAC/UCONN; Dave Lipsky, NYC DEP; Richard Friesner, NEIWPCC; Jim Ammerman, LISS/NEIWPCC; Becky Shuford, NYSG; Sylvain DeGuise, CTSG; Tom Morgart, USDA-NRCS; Casey Personius, NYSDEC; Judy Preston, LISS/CTSG; Koon Tang, NYSDEC; Sue Van Patten, NYSDEC; Nicole Tachiki, EPA LISO; Mel Cote, EPA R1; Mark Tedesco; EPA LISO; Rick Balla; EPA R2; Holly Drinkuth, CAC/TNC; Nancy Seligson, CAC/NY; Audra Martin, NEIWPCC; Jayne Beckmann, NYCDEP; Dimitri Katehis, NYCDEP; Nancy Ferlow, USDA-NRCS; Mark Parker, CTDEEP; Phil Trowbridge, CTDEEP; Nelle D'Aversa, NYSDEC/NEIWPCC; Robert Burg, NEIWPCC; Paul Stacey, STAC

Introduction:

Mark Tedesco called the meeting to order at approximately 9:50 a.m. and self-introductions followed. Tedesco noted that Koon Tang had reviewed and commented on the April 25 meeting minutes. Tedesco reviewed the changes that were made to summary. Mark Parker added an additional comment and Tedesco agreed to make the additional changes and post the final meeting summary on the LISS website. Tedesco then reviewed the agenda.

Reports:

- **Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) Updates:**
 - Jim Ammerman and Jim O'Donnell gave a brief overview of the June 21 STAC Meeting. The focus of the meeting was climate change with updates from CIRCA, presentations from UCONN faculty on downscaling climate models, a Yale economist on economics of coastal resiliency/armoring against climate change impacts, a CTDEEP presentation on SLAMM model, and LISS updates from Mark Tedesco and Jim Ammerman. Overall, the meeting was very technical and informative. Meeting notes will be posted on the website [here](#).
- **Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Updates:**
 - Nancy Seligson gave an overview of the June 13 CAC meeting. They are working on identifying and refining priorities to provide in advance of the 2-day MC meeting in October. The CAC previously provided a letter to the Management Committee with three main priorities: coordinating nitrogen science and necessary actions, prioritizing Implementation Action tracking and accountability, and assessing progress, performance and research needs. The CAC developed a chart with proposed funding by CCMP themes based on increased funding for LISS. The House passed a proposed budget of \$21 million and CAC has identified the need to build capacity within the LISS to handle the increase in funding. The CAC will be preparing documents and suggested budgets to submit in advance of the October MC meeting. Please refer to the CAC [meeting minutes](#) for more information.
 - Holly Drinkuth shared that the CAC spent a lot of time looking at the links to Implementation Actions in the CCMP. Documents and priorities will be made available in mid-September.

- Mark Tedesco mentioned the package of materials for the October meeting is expected to be distributed October 1. Each workgroup was asked to provide material by August 15 for discussion at the September 4 Implementation Team Meeting.

Budget Overview – Mark Tedesco

- FY 19 Budget and Workplan; application and award status – there were a few changes to the budget since the April MC meeting
 - NYSDEC DOW gave a follow-up presentation on the Hydrodynamic Modification Modeling proposal for Nassau County, and the Management Committee had a call to approve the proposal at \$500,000.
 - NYSDEC was unable to move forward on the Flax Pond proposal due to a change in state match funding. Those funds (\$900,000) were reallocated to support the CTDEEP Merwin Meadows Dam removal (\$400,000) and additional support for NYSDEC for stewardship and land acquisition (\$500,000).
- Planning for the FY2020 – The October MC meeting will focus on planning priorities for the FY2020 budget and beyond. To make this meeting as efficient as possible, technical workgroups are preparing supporting documents to distribute prior to the meeting. A package of support material will include: 2015 implementation actions, progress in implementing the CCMP and shortfalls/gaps, update on the EPA Program Evaluation results – still waiting on the final letter, science needs assessment, and a status on ecosystem target achievement. The package will also include a timeline of management decisions that are important for the Management Committee to consider in planning the for the budget process.
 - Main goals of the October MC meeting: summarize progress implementing 2015 CCMP IA's and outcomes, identify key funding priorities for the FY 2020 budget and beyond, and update changes in the IA's for the 2020 appendix amendment
 - Phil Trowbridge commented that the Management Committee should consider beyond the FY2020 budget to help the program have a long-term vision. Additional thought should be given to future priorities so that timing of projects can be adjusted to reflect changing budgets.
- Tedesco then announced changes in Management Committee representatives.

CCMP Reporting and Tracking – Nikki Tachiki

- Mark introduced Nikki Tachiki to her first MC meeting as the new Program Coordinator in the EPA Long Island Sound Office.
- Nikki gave an overview of the Horsley Witten progress toward assessing GAO recommendations. There were some broad follow-up discussions:
 - **Question (Q)** (Sylvain DeGuise): Does the 5-year cost estimate represent 5 years from now (2024) or 5 years since the CCMP revision (2020)?
 - **Answer (A):** Designed to represent since initiation of 2015 CCMP (2020) but since it is based on the proposed amounts from the IA supplemental documents, which are yearly estimates, it could be theoretically applied to any 5-year increment.
 - **Q:** If the recommended necessary funds are not met by current or projected Long Island Sound allocations, how will that be deficiency be met?
 - **A:** It is expected that the States will provide support for these efforts as well. The EPA NEP budgets are not intended to be the sole form of support.
 - There were additional discussions on the difficulty of tracking.

2-Day Management Committee Meeting – Mark Tedesco

- Planning status and agenda development – EPA staff and trained facilitators Ellie Tonkin and Joe Siegel will facilitate the meeting. Meeting is structured by CCMP themes. Workgroup leads will present on ecosystem target progress/shortcomings, funding recommendations for FY2020 and beyond, and IA recommendations for 2020 CCMP update. Facilitated discussion to follow presentations. Desired outcome – list of funding and IA priorities for FY 2020 and beyond.
- Phil Trowbridge suggested a big picture overview and priorities discussion at the beginning of the meeting before jumping into themed presentation and discussion.
- Holly Drinkuth mentioned cross cutting issues and environmental justice can also be discussed in a big picture overview.
- Jim O'Donnell identified three topics that should be included on the agenda: climate change adaptation and resiliency, research issues and how research is a component of the program, and the coordination of all the modeling efforts around the sound. The discussion on modeling should include how to challenge the effectiveness of models and a strategy to ensure modelers stay connected to what scientists are researching. Some research projects have brought new things to light and are not in the modeling plans. This is a way to engage academic scientists in the program.
 - Response: Mark Tedesco mentioned that the topics raised by Jim should be components of the theme discussions outlined in the agenda. The science needs discussion should include challenges such as the lack of coordination between modeling efforts.
- Sylvain DeGuise suggested the MC agree on an investment strategy ahead of time. Posed the following questions: –Does the program want to play to its strengths in the next five years developing models or do we want to start investing money in areas where less progress has been made?
 - Mark Tedesco gave an example to Sylvain's point. There is a big investment to understand local water quality and link it to nitrogen loading. This effort has been a new undertaking for the program. Did the LISS put the necessary investment forth to allow this work to come to fruition or does the program need to invest in additional support? To Sylvain's point, the MC needs to make decisions such as this - do we continue to support efforts to understand water quality in local embayments or move on to other topics?
- Paul Stacey stated that IAs and ecosystem targets are disconnected from ecological integrity. LISS can't chart progress by tracking actions and targets. The program should think back to an ecosystem-based management approach; otherwise, management activities are fragmented actions that may not come together to achieve a desired outcome.
- Koon Tang asked if the ecosystem targets need to be re-defined in a way that progress can be easily measured.
 - Becky Shuford responded to Paul and Koon's comments that looking at ecosystem targets versus big-picture ecological integrity are not mutually exclusive efforts. Looking at indicators cumulatively can give a sense or snapshot of ecological integrity. She suggested using visual tracking of indicators to show an overall condition of the waterbody.
 - Jim Ammerman pointed to two challenges of the ecosystem targets. Some of the reporting methods specified in the CCMP are not tightly linked to the target or do not have the measurements in place. Reporting of some of the ecosystem targets should be improved in the CCMP supplement revision.
- Holly Drinkuth and Richard Friesner asked about the level of specificity for outcomes from the MC meeting.
 - Mark Tedesco responded that the FY 2020 budget might reflect fulfillment of big picture questions e.g. where we want to allocate additional funding. The MC will need to identify

gaps for funding but will also need to make decisions about specific projects and research to fund in the next budget.

- Phil Trowbridge emphasized the need for a big picture discussion in addition to the more detail level discussion.
 - Mark Tedesco responded that the October MC meeting planning group will think about adding a big picture discussion to the agenda.
- Phil Trowbridge pointed out that there are several deadlines coming up around 2025 - updates to the CT general permits, NY State WWTF permits renewals, and updates of EPA permits for facilities in tributary states. The goal is to have modeling efforts inform these upcoming decisions. The 2025 end goal provides a defined window where the LISS has opportunities to make real progress. With timing of modeling and permits, there are a lot of MC decisions that should be made within the 5-year timeframe.
- Mark Tedesco provided questions to consider for discussion at the October MC meeting: 1) Do we have agreement on nearshore targets to drive management of local water quality whether through formal plans/TMDLs/etc.? 2) With systemwide modeling effort, are we fine with the sound wide TMDL? 3) Do the upstream tributary permits support water quality?
- Mark Tedesco gave an update on modeling efforts - RFP released July 11 kicks off a lot of follow-up activity. Modeling Management Advisory Group will meet July 31. Workgroup will discuss how to best support the modeling effort/coordination among states. August 20 due date for proposals but NYCDEP is looking into possible extension.

Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment – Juliana Barrett

- Presentation of the vulnerability assessment matrices developed by Battelle, which categorized habitats and threats to these habits as low, medium, or high risk.
- Battelle assessed climate change impacts to the northeast and developed 24 matrices showing risks to climate change – some specific to LIS and some general to the Northeast. Juliana got feedback from the workgroups, government agencies, individual scientists/researchers on the matrices and put comments together.
- Comments were broken down into two categories: general comments on VA process or structure and specific comments to certain stressors or habitat types. See full report for detailed comments.
- Recommendation for next steps:
 - Correlate vulnerabilities to LISS CCMP IAs and outcomes
 - Consider management actions to alleviate risks and vulnerabilities
 - Review matrices every 5 years
- Discussion followed. Discussion included CT specific science on precipitation. Participants resonated with the idea of creating a synergy matrix which combined stressors. Participants also liked the idea of changing the color scheme to a gradient instead of red/green which have underlying connotations. Becky Shuford supported identifying risks with both positive and negative impacts.

GAO Engagement Perspectives (Webinar) – Michelle Treistman

- Michelle shared an overview of themes to Estuary Program Reviews.
- The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is interested in how well these programs function. For more than 10 years, GAO has conducted reviews for several of these ecosystems including the Columbia River Basin, Puget Sound, SF Bay Delta, and LIS.
- All programs have federal and non-federal organizations working toward a common goal.
- None of the programs maintain documentation of overall costs for restoration efforts.
- Lessons learned:
 - Achieving meaningful results requires that all stakeholders are included and work together.

- Having accurate and complete cost information may assist in planning restoration activities and ensure enough funds to carry out activities.
- Developing clear, quantifiable objectives and reliable performance measures can help overseers better assess progress. Including intermediate targets is also important to determine if work is on track.
- Leading practices of performance reporting helps achieve goals.
- It is beneficial to establish standards to assess overall effect of restoration and stewardship efforts on targets.
- **Challenges:** To address challenges, you need to know cost estimates. Having performance goals, measures, and targets are essential to accomplishing goals.
- **Follow-up discussion:**
 - Jim O'Donnell mentioned the need to establish how effective land acquisition projects are.
 - Robert Burg mentioned need to finish habitat restoration database.
 - Paul Stacy suggested the program should consider accounting for habitat destruction as well as protection.
 - Mark Tedesco mentioned the LISS will respond to GAO at the end of the Horsley Witten contract. The LISS will send a formal response of the work done to address the report. The cost estimates will provide a direct response to GAO.

Updates:

- FY 19 EPA Program Evaluation – Mark Tedesco
 - LISS is awaiting final report
- NFWF Futures Fund Update – Nikki Tachiki
 - Received a total of 61 proposals and grant reviews were due July 18th. Meeting on August 2 to discuss the proposals. NFWF had \$2.2 million to award and a total request for \$5.1 million came in through proposals. NFWF has agreed to do more outreach and consider lifting the implementation cap.
- The Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative recently completed its Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund competition and announced 10 grants.
- Nancy Ferlow announced the Southern New England Chapter of Soil and Water Conservation Society will tour the Stratford Living Shoreline on August 9. See www.SWCCSSNEC.org for more information.
- Paul Stacey mentioned CTDEEP has begun their triennial review of water quality standards. National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRS) proposal of Long Island Sound is being reviewed by NOAA. Sylvain said the process will likely take 2-3 years.
- Robert Burg discussed the #DontTrashLISound social media campaign, which begins the week of Aug. 5 and ends Sept. 20, the day before International Coastal Cleanup Day. About 30 posts are scheduled to appear on LISS's Facebook and Twitter feeds and on the Long Island Sound Study website during that period, and another 15 posts are scheduled for Instagram. Many of the posts will emphasize the message to Break the Single Use Plastic Habit to help protect Long Island Sound's wildlife. As part of the campaign, LISS has produced thousands of stickers with images of a harp seal, tautog, and American oyster catcher as representatives of species in the Sound, which are being distributed to the Long Island Sound community through members of the Long Island Sound Citizens Advisory Committee. Residents are being asked to put the stickers onto their reusable bottles when they visit a Sound beach this summer. The campaign is also working with partners to hold beach cleanups in Long Island, Stamford, and New Haven.

- Phil Trowbridge mentioned the State Water Plan for Connecticut was passed in state legislature. It included original language that water is a public trust. CT also voted to have a statewide ban on plastic bags. In the meantime, bags are taxed to reduce use.

Next Meeting & Adjournment – Mark Tedesco

- Meeting was adjourned at 2:20pm.