



Long Island Sound Study

A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

**LISS HRSWG Meeting
Meigs Point Nature Center
Hammonasset State Park
February 8, 2017
9:30AM-2:15PM**

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Robert Burg, NEIWPC / Long Island Sound Study
David Gumbart, The Nature Conservancy – CT
Chris Haight, NYC Parks
Dave Kozak, CTDEEP – Land & Water Resources
Elsa Loehmann, CFE – Save the Sound
Amy Mandelbaum, NYSG / Long Island Sound Study
Victoria O’Neill, NEIWPC/Long Island Sound Study
Mark Parker, CTDEEP / Long Island Sound Study
Suzanne Paton, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Chris Pickerell, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Judy Preston, CTSG / Long Island Sound Study
Ron Rozsa, The actively retired salt marsh MD
Laura Shappell, NY Natural Heritage Program
Jim Turek, NOAA Restoration Center
Barry Udelson, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Roger Wolfe, CTDEEP – Wildlife Division
Jamie Vaudrey, University of Connecticut
Tim Visel, The Sound School
Harry Yamalis, CTDEEP / Long Island Sound Study

Over the Phone: Soren Dahl, NYSDEC and Aaron Hopkins, US Army Corps of Engineers

Notes:

Welcome, Introductions, & Announcement/Introduction to Meigs Point Nature Center

- Ranger Russ welcomed us to the new nature center and encouraged us to walk around the facility.
- After introductions, the co-chairs opened up the meeting to announcements. Several grant opportunities were mentioned including the NOAA 2017 Coastal Resiliency Grants and the NYS Invasive Species Rapid Response and Control Grant Program
- V. O’Neill updated the group on the release of the NYS Ocean Action Plan and the new NYS SLR Projection Regulations.

Habitat Restoration and Protection Goals & Parameters Priorities document: UPDATE

D. Kozak

- D. Kozak provided an update on the status of the document. The co-chairs incorporated all of the comments received during the November 15, 2016 LISS HRSWG meeting and presented this final version to the LISS Implementation Team. The Implementation Team approved the document and agreed to have it distributed and discussed at the LISS Management Team.



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- As a result of the Implementation Team discussion, the co-chairs set-up a call with LISS EPA (Mark Tedesco, Leah O'Neill) and NFWF (Lynn Dwyer) to discuss how best to use the goals and parameters priorities for funding.
- NFWF and EPA agreed to have the co-chairs review the 2016 LIS Futures Fund RFP in order to insert goals and parameters priorities, under the guidance of the CCMP. The co-chairs completed the edits and sent them to NFWF. NFWF will review the suggested changes and determine if they can be included in the 2017 RFP.
- In addition, the co-chairs, EPA, and NFWF decided the best way to incorporate all of the goals and parameters was to add them to the existing LIS Habitat Restoration Grant Guidelines. The co-chairs revised the existing 2015 version and created a 2017 version that is now available on the LISS website:
http://longislandsoundstudy.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/grantguidelines_2017_FINAL.pdf
- Also, the co-chairs will (upon the suggestion of the LISS HRSWG members) create habitat restoration success stories on the LISS website. These stories will describe successful LIS Futures Fund projects. The stories will help new or unsuccessful applicants with developing their proposals. The stories will be broken up by habitat type.

Eelgrass Monitoring: past results, present survey plans, future monitoring techniques

S. Paton

- S. Paton discussed history and protocol of the LIS aerial surveys for eelgrass.
- Surveys were completed in 2002, 2006, 2009, & 2012.
- An aerial survey with groundtruthing is planned for 2017.
- Groundtruthing is necessary for monitoring. Extensive groundtruthing is needed where areas are in question. The aerial images alone are not enough to delineate the deep water edge of beds and sometimes even ensure patches. Isolated meadows do not stick out on the images. It is essential to have divers map these types of areas.
- A cheaper, easier monitoring technique is needed for the future. Is there a technique we can use annually? Continue doing the aerial surveys as funding allows but monitor annually in order to capture yearly changes.
- What are other states doing? Narragansett Bay did the same protocol in 2016.
- Peconic Estuary Program flew aerial surveys in 2014. South Shore Estuary Reserve is flying aerials this year but under different protocols with NOAA.
- Presentation:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/t3l2drzmgk11pw/Eelgrass_LIS_HRWG_2_8_2017_Paton.ppt?dl=0

Eelgrass Restoration & Management: past work, present plans, and future restoration techniques.

J. Vaudrey

- J. Vaudrey described the Eelgrass Suitability Index that was completed in 2013.
- She explained the reasoning behind the eelgrass ecosystem indicator in the LISS CCMP.



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- The suitability index can determine, based on habitat type, where eelgrass is likely to return if water quality improves.
- Example of eelgrass return after water quality improvements: Mumford Cove in Groton, CT. The sewer discharge issues were solved and it took 15 years for eelgrass to return on its own.
- The model has its limitations. It is not an embayment model, looks a LIS proper.
- Based on the water quality, there is 100 acres possible for restoration.
- Monitoring is difficult.
- Brad Peterson at SUNY SB has conducted drone surveys that is GPS enabled. He has permits and expertise in using this technique.
- Heidi Dierssen at UConn is working on hyperspectral imagery. Eelgrass and algae are reflectant but water clarity is still an issue.
- Satellite imagery now could be used in the LIS to estimate eelgrass areas.
- We need more frequent, within year monitoring to get information.
- The PEP added divers to their monitoring. They really needed it to clarify acreage.
- Possible techniques to discuss and pilot:
 - Diver transects, drop camera survey, video camera, single beam sonar, aerial survey, drones, balloons, hyperspectral imagery, multibeam sidescan sonar, intermittent sidescan sonar, satellite imagery
- Some questions. Why are surveys done in June? Why not in October when eelgrass has the largest biomass. Is it possible to set-up a citizen science monitoring program? There is a program in England that trains citizens to look for SAV.
- Presentation:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/3k9nd2ddvaa8vbs/2017_02_06_Vaudrey_LISS%20HabRestWrkgrp.pdf?dl=0

C. Pickerell

- C. Pickerell discussed all of the restoration projects completed in and around Long Island including St. Thomas Point, Terrys Point, Plum Island, and Great Gull Island in LIS.
- The Eelgrass Suitability Model backed up what they were seeing in the field as far as successful and unsuccessful sites.
- The depth, light, temperature, and sediment are key to restoration success. Before large scale planting effort there is a test planting stage where eelgrass is planted from shallow to deep (deepest site success is 24" at Plum Island in 2010).
- Planting season runs from September to December (as soon as the high temperature end in July/August).
- Parameters that are present in existing healthy meadows are not the same parameters needed for planting new meadows.
- C. Pickerell has used several methods including the free planting, rock planting method and the sandbag and burlap disc method. The burlap disc can hold up to 10 shoots and each disc can be planted in one minute time.



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- A successful site was St. Thomas Point. The site is now 2-3 acres in size, about 9-13' deep. About 12 years old.
- Another successful site is Old Field Point. Planted in 2013, 2014. Has not been monitored recently.
- Important to not move eelgrass plants around from state to state. If you do so, have to be concerned with wasting disease.
- Presentation:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/fcl7slvnnpcj8hm/LISS%20Habitat%20Restoration%20%2B%20Stewardship%20Work%20Group%202-8-17_Pickerell.pdf?dl=0

Hammonasset State Park restoration history presentation & field trip

R. Rozsa

- The Hammonasset Natural Area Preserve (NAP) was established for reasons including protection of all rare species, to encourage scientific research and environmental education, protect the physical & biological integrity of the existing habitats, and to encourage restoration of disturbed habitat
- R. Rozsa presented an overview of the geological history of the barrier beach and salt marsh complex, followed by a summary of the various salt marsh restoration efforts around the park and NAP
- Marshes restored within Hammonasset include the Meigs Point marsh to the east, the Rotary marsh which is more centrally located, and Tom's Creek marsh (northwest end)
- Restoration techniques included tidal flow restoration (ex, connect to tidal creek or healthy marsh by installing pipes under roads), Phragmites control, creation of ponds and creeks to mimic was lost as a result of mosquito ditching, removal of dikes, and removal of dredged material that was placed in marshes to create parking areas.
- Concluded with discussion of Sudden Vegetation Dieback, marsh migration, and return of salt panne habitat and marsh levees.
- Meeting ended with a walking tour of the Meigs Point marsh and Rotary Marsh restoration sites
- Presentation:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/t4ftofynh5q436j/Hammonasset_overview2_Rozsa.pptx?dl=0

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 3, 2017

Location: NY (likely in Queens or the Bronx)

Topics: This meeting will have a tidal wetland focus.