

**Joint Meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee and  
Science and Technical Advisory Committee, LISS  
Friday, January 27, 2017  
Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, CT.**

**Welcome and Introductions, STAC & CAC Co-Chairs**

Sandy Breslin, CAC CT Co-Chair with Rivers Alliance in CT and Nancy Seligson, CAC NY Co-Chair with the Town of Mamaroneck, opened the meeting at 10:00 with a warm welcome for all. There was a quorum of 39 participants present.

**Keynote Address: Robert Klee, Commissioner CT DEEP**

Jim O'Donnell, STAC Co-chair with UConn CIRCA, introduced Robert Klee. Commissioner Klee addressed the audience about the challenge of communicating science in a changing world, saying that "Part of our charge is to speak on behalf of the organisms that can't speak for themselves. The trends are clear: climate change is real – we're a state that says that; not all of them do. Temperatures in Long Island Sound are increasing; this is not insignificant. We are more like a mid-Atlantic fishery; trawl/catch surveys show new entrants coming up from the south. The *data* is telling us vs what the public policy arena is telling us. Our challenge is communicating these big issues in ways that people can get them. Mark Twain aptly stated: "*A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.*" "

Commissioner Klee gave several examples of CT DEEP communications issues regarding the public's interactions with wildlife. The examples highlighted challenges for CT DEEP, particularly with reduced staff and a fractured communications landscape. The Commissioner showed a portion of a CT DEEP *Wastebusters* video as an example of emerging communications programs. Visual translations, such as Story maps, are very useful. He also cited other DEEP education programs, such as *No Child Left Inside*, and the 11<sup>th</sup> annual winter festival this year. He thanked all in attendance for the good work they do for LIS and around the Sound.

**Discussion:** When asked if the topic drives communication techniques vs the same techniques for all subjects, he replied "Yes; we need to determine who we are trying to reach, influence and motivate – this helps determine the tools used. The challenge is time and resources; there are 30- 40 retirements a year at DEEP without replacements. Partnerships are more and more important. " The department is drawing upon staff, especially young professionals, to help with social media. What's happening with the federal government activities couldn't be coming at a worse time, with a low budget and the importance of Climate Change as an issue.

Commissioner Klee cited the importance of resiliency, referencing CIRCA, NERR, the Blue Plan, and how they are energizing people to do things with more collaborative approaches.

**Overview of LISS Communications, Mark Tedesco, Director EPA LISS**

Mark Tedesco discussed the variety of tools used for LISS Communications, emphasizing the "shifting waters" of how we communicate. The LISS tries to craft an overall message and who we communicate this with is also important. Mark showed a brief video that illustrates the importance of building partnerships to communicate a key issue. *Securing Florida's Water Future*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le8n-QqULs>

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The video was produced about southwest Florida and paid for by the Chamber of Commerce. It demonstrates the link between water quality and tourism industry in that state. Mark stressed that it was not just scientists, but officials, citizens, etc. who were talking about water quality in this video. Part of our challenge for LIS messaging is who we say it *with*, not just what we say. **Discussion: It was recognized that we need an agreed upon numeric economic value for LIS with which we can all feel comfortable and be consistent communicating.** The economic value of LIS should be a major talking point when addressing the incoming administration.

**Case Study: Using Research to Drive Action on LI and in CT, Holly Drinkuth, Director Outreach and Watershed Projects TNC CT**

Holly described how TNC is using research to drive action on Long Island and in Connecticut. Models were created using Jamie Vaudrey's work on 110 embayments around the Sound. The facts can now help develop strategies to help people understand the facts and move to action. The challenge is to help communities understand how to restore and protect water quality and support ecosystems on which we depend. Awareness leads to a willingness to act. TNC used a marketing based approach to generate qualitative information from polling done in the Saugatuck River watershed in CT. Sixty percent of responders thought fertilizers have the greatest impact on water quality, whereas only 30% thought septic systems had a major impact. There is clearly an opportunity for education. The good news is that 75% of the people polled expressed a willingness to reduce fertilizer use. Dealing with wastewater is tougher as people are less willing to act (40-30%).

Holly talked about the importance of developing messages that are consistent for TNC as well as partners. She referred to the "message triangle" that generates three tested messages known to resonate with people. This information is available at the LI Clean Water Partnership website: <http://www.longislandcleanwaterpartnership.org>. TNC is moving forward in the Niantic and Pawcatuck watersheds in CT with more of this type of effort.

**Discussion.** There was discussion about sequencing messaging on a communications campaign when it is not a linear process and there are multiple things to do concurrently. Communication needs to start at the level of understanding of the audience. Holly said that that one of the biggest challenges of implementation was that municipal officials initially felt attacked as they didn't understand the issues. There was public outcry about hypoxic events affecting things people cared about such as shell fishing, swimming, tourism. There was agreement that there is a strong intersection between water quality and human well-being. Money is well spent to engage communities.

**Communications Program Intro, Christine O'Connell, Associate Director Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science at Stony Brook**

After a brief introduction to the objectives for the day, Christine launched the attendees into the "mirror" exercise, designed to demonstrate that communication doesn't happen until the

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person you're talking to "gets it". This requires you to slow down and pay attention to your audience, create easier transitions, maintain eye contact, use more deliberate actions, and be

repetitive. Communication should have a logical order; it's not about trying to be clever, but about getting your audience to follow you. When communicating science, we often try to be

clever, show that we're smart. Your audience has to be with you. It's not about *you*; it's about *them*. Find the common ground, build the connection. Facts don't matter: what matters is *connections*. People make decisions based on what matters to them. The public is disillusioned with science. According to our survey of STAC and CAC members, 75% of the participants today felt that effective communications are extremely important to the success of the LISS. Most of us got into this because we wanted to make a difference: it's important to remember why we're doing what we're doing.

There was a reference to, and recommendation to read, the Yale program on Climate Change Communication: <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/global-warmings-six-americas/> Remember why we got involved in science. Remember how we were inspired. Connect to universal truths and use the "wonder factor". Answer the "so what?" first.

Christine emphasized that the purpose of science is communication and it's not communication unless the audience is getting it. Science is stagnant otherwise. She quoted Alan Alda, the founder of the Communicating Science Center: "*Communication is not something you add on to science; it is the essence of science.*" She stressed: *Know your audience. Know your goals. Goals should include getting the audience to "know" something, "feel" something, and "do" something. Know something, feel something or do something. Goals have to be about your audience (not you).*

Christine cited examples of ineffective communication: The Anthrax scare and the CDC website with information that alarmed people further instead of calming their fears. Her advice was to "Engage first, then bring in complexity." She cited a paragraph of information on baseball not at all clear to anyone who doesn't know baseball, and used this as a comparison to science.

How do you get people to care the way you do? It's hard to know what people don't know, and it's easy to get stuck. Communication is not about translating word for word – it's not translating, but interpreting. You have to get people to care before you give them the details. Christine recommended that you find the universal story in your story; there are universal human stories. To this point she suggested that so much of teaching is about empathy. She used as an example a video where a couple of teenage girls think that DNA is in their hair – because they watch crime shows where hair is used to test DNA. The public *wants* to understand scientific information; you need to make the connections for them. And people care about people; they don't generally think about other species. Disney is exceptionally good at this; making people care about fish, Bambi, etc.

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Christine, Sandy, and Nancy, assembled 5 random people from Housatonic Community College to participate in an exercise about translating science to non-scientists. Jim O'Donnell volunteered to explain a passage about hypoxia to the assembled participants, with varying degrees of success. Their responses demonstrated that everyone takes away something different from what we communicate. If someone has a question, you've engaged them. Not everyone in the random group knew the location of LIS. We presume that LIS is important, but we also lack diversity in our audience.

Recommendations from this exercise included: Ask a question first to get a sense of what your audience knows. This might have led Jim to begin by introducing himself with: "I'm a scientist who works on the ocean". When we give a talk, it's what we want to tell our audience, not necessarily what they want to know. This is key to how do you make people care? You have to say where you're coming from and then ask your audience where they're coming from.

**Communicating LIS Science: Distilling and Engaging, Christine O'Connell**

After lunch, Christine engaged everyone in additional exercises designed to simplify messaging for communicating. One on one, an exercise designed to share something about yourself proved to be surprisingly difficult. She suggested that you start your interaction or talk with a question and or share something about yourself (or both).

A second exercise was done in small groups designating members as various constituents (an eleven-year-old, fisherman or Trump supporter/businessman). LIS topics (water quality, N reduction, climate change, habitat quality, behavior change) were selected, and the exercise became trying to pay attention to the person that you're talking to and understand what is important to them in order to communicate the topic. Christine coached that you need to connect your topic to "so what". If people are concerned about money, then tie your topic to that. But what if you want to get past the economic reasons? To this, Christine offered:

1. There are practical reasons to care, such as \$
2. There is the Sense of Wonder (an example being the highest re-read article in NYT was about black holes) Tap into this.
3. Personal piece: people will care if they care about you

At the end of the exercise participants were given only 15 seconds to explain their "so what" topic. , This was deemed the most favored because it cut to the point. This is your "so what". This, Christine explained, is what someone is going to remember. How many things do you actually remember from a talk? One, maybe two. Now start with "*What I'm most excited about*" for your conversation. If you're excited about it, your audience will be too.

**Feedback and Next Steps, STAC & CAC Co-Chairs**

At 3:00, NY participants headed to the ferry. Those remaining discussed reactions and possible next steps. It was suggested that some simple messages – such as jobs, regulatory reform,

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economic valuation are needed to talk about LIS. How do we connect this to the environment? We also don't want to lose the opportunity to bring people to the Sound that might otherwise not go there or have the opportunity. It was agreed that we don't need "fear and guilt" messaging, but find ways to inspire more pride and ownership of the Sound. The biggest take home messages from the day was our role as disseminators of information, how much we still have to learn from others, and the need for two-way dialogue. We need to invite some participation from non-traditional groups more formally; perhaps seek their membership on the CAC, or in other forums. More dialogue is needed. PACE University's LULA program (Land Use Leadership Alliance) was cited as potential model with the suggestion we could do this sort of thing through the CAC. It was noted that if we want to include other communities in our meetings we might have to meet in the evenings. It was noted that many people are involved with LIS at different levels. It's important to get people out onto the Sound. The Sea Grants have done a lot of work on coastal storm awareness and communications; this is a good way to reach out to municipalities. Webinars might be an avenue to communicate to a wider audience. There was agreement that it is important to have the CAC/STAC agree about a handful of key messages about LIS so that we're all communicating the same message. This concept is key to Social Marketing; the LISS Public Involvement and Education work group (PIE) is working on this. This is also the idea behind the Message Triangle cited in TNC's work.

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 pm.