

Long Island Sound Study
Citizens Advisory Committee Thursday, June 23, 2016
Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, CT
Meeting Summary

Welcome, Housekeeping & Logistics

The meeting started at 9:45 am with a quorum of 28 members present. Nancy Seligson, CAC NY Co-chair, Town of Mamaroneck, introduced and welcomed Sherri Jewhurst, Acting LISS Director, who is sitting in for Mark Tedesco until September 15th, 2016. Sandy Breslin, the new CAC CT Co-chair, from Rivers Alliance Connecticut, announced that Audubon NY has a new government relations hire, Sasha Eisenstein, who will start July 5th and will be looking forward to joining the CAC. Sandy also acknowledged CAC individuals who recently received environmental awards: Carol DiPaolo, honoring her 30 years of work for Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor; Nancy Seligson for her efforts with Sustainable Westchester, NY; and Margaret Miner, Rivers Alliance Connecticut, who received a Lifetime Achievement award from the EPA.

NRCS Long Island Sound Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (LISW-RCPP) Judy Preston, Coordinator

Judy presented information on the 2015 award of \$10 million dollars to the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation to administer a landscape scale initiative in the Long Island Sound watershed to reduce nitrogen pollution to Long Island Sound. The program will implement best management practices on private, working lands in the watershed. The three strategic program areas within the LISW-RCPP are managing soil nutrient loss, protection of non-industrial forest habitat, and mitigating erosion on working lands through riparian restoration. The greatest challenge – and opportunity, will be the coordination of multiple New England states (six in all) and agencies. By reducing stormwater pollution in one of the most densely populated regions in the country, the results will benefit not only the country's second largest estuary, but pave the way for region-wide resolutions to environmental challenges. CAC members suggested additional partners that may be interested in this collaboration, as well as interest in seeing more information as the program progresses (<http://LISW-RCPP.com>).

CT Second Generation Nitrogen Strategy

Rob Hust, CT DEEP

Rob provided a brief history of the LIS TMDL as well as current trends in nitrogen loading to LIS. As management priorities are changing over time, as reflected in EPA's new Nitrogen Reduction Strategy, and citing multiple eutrophication-related impairments in Long Island Sound, and findings substantiated by the *UConn Embayment Susceptibility Study* published in 2015 by Dr. Jamie Vaudrey, CT DEEP will be taking a three-pronged approach to managing nitrogen issues in LIS in the future. These include planned upgrades to wastewater treatment plants and a continuation of the trading program; enhanced nonpoint source/stormwater management (both regulatory and non-regulatory); and an increased focus on action plans and management measures in coastal embayments. Rob detailed more of the specifics of these proposed actions, including the state's priority embayments and other related efforts.

LIS Report Card

Tracy Brown, Director Western Sound Programs, Save The Sound (STS)

Tracy provided an overview and preliminary results of the 2015 LIS Sound-wide Report Card, and introduced the proposed Unified Water Study. The Study will recommend standardized citizen water monitoring criteria to better understand and assess the ecological health of the Sound's bays and harbors. Five parameters were identified: total nitrogen, total phosphorus, chlorophyll *a*, secchi depth, and dissolved oxygen. The program is still a work in process and looking at how to capture the impact of nitrogen. STS will be regrouping and seeking input from stakeholders over the winter to determine if the current parameters and scoring support the new action plans for LIS (EPA Nitrogen Strategy, Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan, CT Integrated Water Resource Management Plan). The 2016 Report Card (using 2015 data) has an October release target and will be 4 pages (not 6). The 2017 Report Card will reflect any

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agreed upon changes and will have an early summer release, using 2016 data. The Unified Water Study will be designed to support regulatory agencies' efforts to assess and prioritize work in the Sound's bays and harbors, and bring stakeholders together. By engaging community groups and management, STS hopes to arrive at consensus on achievable monitoring parameters, with wide adoption in 2017.

The CAC weighed in with their hopes and concerns about the Report Card, including confusing terminology, and the usefulness of certain indicators. They also indicated that how the information is presented is critical. There was consensus on the need and desire to align volunteer monitoring efforts to produce useful, robust and credible data, and that the effort must be sustainable. It was noted that it takes time to see the result of actions in the form of improvements to water quality however, macro algae could be the quickest to show a positive response.

Policy Committee Updates

Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, reported on funding for LIS. The House appropriations bill is currently at \$10 million (with thanks to CT Congresswoman Rosa DaLauro and NY Congressman Steve Israel) – this has been a goal for years. The bill has to go to the full house for a vote by the end of July and still needs to go through the Senate. A July 14th trip to Washington, DC is planned, with a lot of work to do before then. The policy committee is developing thank you letters (CAC will provide talking points) to Congressman Lee Zeldin's office, as well as a welcome letter to the new LI Co-chair of the LIS caucus. David Miller, NYLCEF, made a motion, seconded by Adrienne Esposito, to send a letter after checking with Congresswoman DaLauro's office.

Sarah Crosby, Earthplace/ Harbor Watch, provided a LISS STAC meeting update. Three talks were presented on LIS modeling efforts and connections between LI and CT, including Chris Gobler's algal bloom model. There was a LIS Research Conference update and discussion on the LIS Research RFP, and Mark Tedesco, LISS, spoke about the Nitrogen reduction strategy. CAC discussion centered on the need for the STAC to acknowledge the CAC's important role, and contribute to efforts in Washington D.C.

Sandy Breslin raised the idea of a joint STAC/CAC meeting in the fall; Nancy Seligson suggested that Christine O'Connell from the Alan Alda Science Communication Center present at this meeting about communicating science (her presentation was well received at the recent LIS Citizen's Summit). The possibility of adding another CAC meeting in the fall (possibly November 18th, which is the regular STAC meeting) was discussed. It was suggested that Representative Zeldin could report at the September meeting on Plum Island.

Curt Johnson, Save the Sound, provided draft comments on the CT DEEP Second Generation Nitrogen Strategy Plan in the form of a letter for the CAC to respond to. It was noted that the information on DEEP's website is considerably different than what Rob Hust presented earlier in the meeting. Comments to DEEP are due June 30th. The primary concerns outlined are that the state is not being aggressive enough (NY DEC and EPA have much more aggressive deadlines) and that the timeline is too long. Additional priority watersheds also need to be considered. Curt cited Georgia Basso's Tidal Marsh Study and degree of marsh loss in LIS area, and the value placed on lost services that marshes would provide. Holly Drinkuth, The Nature Conservancy, added that there are additional questions to ask, such as the need to identify ecological endpoints for nitrogen reductions. There was agreement that the plan needs to be "stepped up", with results by 2018, not 2022. The CAC Co-chairs will move a letter along for CAC input and sign-off. Adrienne Esposito made a motion that was seconded by Sarah Crosby to have Curt Johnson revise and send the letter to the co-Chairs for distribution to the CAC. Motion carried.

Mickey Weiss, Project Oceanology, and Denise Savageau, Town of Greenwich, reported on the LIS Research Conference. Both agreed that the conference was excellent; most papers passed the "so what"

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test for providing applied research results with on-the-ground applications. All were encouraged to attend the next conference in two years.

Sandy Breslin updated the group on the Regional Ocean Planning Draft Northeast Plan, which splits LIS by representation from both the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions. Sandy queried CAC interest in providing comments; Maureen Dolan Murphy, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, suggested that the Blue Plan would be the one to comment on. Sandy proposed that the CAC provide a brief letter for the record on the process and importance of the Blue Plan for LIS. Denise Savageau commented on the need to make a connection between land and water in addition to the emphasis on the deep ocean.

Curt Johnson reported on the Latitude 41 Symposium. He said that 150 people attended, including Curt Spaulding from EPA, CT DEEP and NY DEC leadership. There was good discussion on nitrogen endpoints, and discussion on the robust 20 year citizens monitoring program for Buzzard's Bay in MA. Robert Burg, LISS, reported on the LISS Communication group's efforts to launch a potential behavior change campaign focusing on lawn fertilizing, using Jamie Vaudrey's information and community based social marketing; they are looking at working within the Niantic River watershed in CT.

CAC FY17 Priorities: Letter to the Management Committee

Nancy Seligson suggested that the CAC resume (after a CCMP hiatus) providing a priorities letter to the LISS Management Committee, citing this as an important role for the CAC, as the advocacy arm of the LISS, and especially now with the release of the Nitrogen Action Plan, the CT DEEP nitrogen plan and the new nitrogen reduction strategy. She suggested that members give their ideas to her or Sandy. The EPA/LISS will be starting their internal priorities planning over the summer. Curt Johnson suggested looking at timeframes for endpoints, and where work needs to be done, again citing the Basso study and the greater loss of marshes on Long Island than in CT, and the potential to use dredge spoils to build marshes up (the Jamaica Bay example). Sarah Crosby reiterated the importance of salt marsh loss and that everyone should be paying attention to this issue. Denise Savageau commented on the importance of ecosystem services provided by a healthy LIS (shellfisheries, seaweed cultivation) and the issue of contamination of the benthic layer and impacts of trash and plastics on that layer. Denise warned that the Zika virus will have a backlash that includes people not wanting more wetlands. Pat Aitkin, Whaling Museum and Education Center at Cold Spring Harbor, brought up the topics of marsh migration and climate change, and the use of living shorelines to provide resiliency to sea-level-rise. Marty Garrell, Adelphi University, suggested that sea-level-rise and marshes is a long term issue and that giving up sections of the shoreline may be the smartest plan.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 pm. The next regularly scheduled CAC meeting will be held in NY on September 8th, with a tentative joint meeting of STAC/CAC on Friday, November 18th.

The presentations from the meeting are available at: <http://longislandsoundstudy.net/event/citizens-advisory-committee-2nd-quarter>

For additional information on the CAC, visit: <http://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/committees/citizens-advisory-committee/>