

**Sustainable and Resilient Communities Work Group
ZOOM Online Meeting
Wednesday, November 9, 2022 – Meeting Summary**



Attendees

Rebecca Shuford, NYSG	Harry Yamalis, CT DEEP/LISS
Sylvain DeGuise, CTSG	Kathleen Fallon, NYSG
Nancy Balcom, CTSG	Marcy Balint, CT DEEP
Alicia Tyson, CTSG/LISS	Samarra Scantlebury, NYS DEC
Sarah Schaefer-Brown, NYSG/LISS	Brian Thompson, CT DEEP
Elizabeth Hornstein, NYSG/LISS	Salme Cook, USGS
Sara Powell, NYSG/LISS	Alison Branco, TNC
Paul Stacey, Footprints in the Water LLC	Liv Herdman, USGS
Dave Kozak, CT DEEP (retired)	Corey Humphrey, Suffolk County SWCD
Kris Masterson, USGS	Anthony Allen, Save the Sound
Sarah Watson, CT DEEP	Sue Van Patten, NYS DEC
Kristen Laccetti, EPA	Holly Drinkuth, TNC
Jennifer Street, NYS DOS	Marty Garrell, Adelphi

Welcome

- Sylvain & Becky welcomed everyone to the meeting & asked three new members to introduce themselves:
 - Jennifer Street, NYS DOS, New York State Coastal Management Program
 - Marcy Balint, CT DEEP Land & Water Resources Division Planning Unit
 - Dave Kozak, retired CT DEEP, a previous member of this group - welcome back!

Final findings and recommendations of SRC Needs Assessment; Elizabeth Hornstein & Sarah Schaefer-Brown

- Elizabeth began by reviewing how the SRC EPs have spent the majority of the past year reaching out to stakeholders in our respective regions to learn more about the environmental threats they are concerned about, challenges and barriers they are facing, and what support they need to advance sustainability & resilience in their communities. This Needs Assessment will inform our future work to ensure training programs, etc. that we develop are useful and effective.
- The SRC EPs have spoken to a wide variety of stakeholders throughout Long Island Sound. We connected with ~60% of municipal governments in the coastal region. We will still continue to reach out to communities and have conversations and build relationships even though this formal NA process has concluded.

- Just under half of our conversations were with government entities - most elected officials represent local governments. About 30% of our conversations were with NGOs, watershed organizations, etc. And about 20% were with community groups, faith-based organizations, businesses, and resource users.
- The major environmental thread identified was stormwater and associated flooding impacts. Other major threats include coastal erosion, water quality, development impacts, sea level rise, coastal flooding, tree loss, extreme weather & storms, habitat loss, and invasive species.
- The major challenge/barrier that we heard about was limited capacity. This issue manifested in multiple ways - number one being that communities lack staff and technical expertise, and also have limited access to information. Because communities are lacking this capacity, we also heard that there is often inefficient or non-existent coordination across all levels of government. Related, we heard a lot about a lack of political will, leadership, & action - there are lots of studies that aren't being implemented, and frequent changes in leadership/staff can make it difficult to maintain momentum.
- Also related to governance challenges/barriers, we heard that codes & ordinances can be difficult to update, enforcement can be uneven, multiple jurisdictions can create confusion, and some community groups are concerned about how updates to codes & ordinances might impact private property owners/businesses.
- We heard from pretty much all groups that it is challenging to navigate the funding landscape. Burdensome grant requirements are challenging to deal with (e.g., match requirements, QAPP requirements, etc. There is a lack of adequate & long-term funding to build up community capacity.
- Institutional inequities are another challenge/barrier that we heard about - not all communities are included in decision-making, and decision-makers may not be fully representative of their communities. Additionally, disconnects/lack of trust between government institutions and communities with EJ concerns, which can lead to limited/no collaboration.
- Needs that we identified include: leadership/champions, increased capacity, coordinated approaches to planning, sharing of experiences & case studies, identification of funding opportunities and resources/tools, technical guidance, step by step guides of 'what to do' (e.g., updating codes, conceptualizing projects, communicating about priorities), and general education/outreach to elevate the general knowledge the public with regard to sustainability & resilience.
- Given the needs we've identified, some ideas the SRC EPs have developed about potential Training & Education opportunities include:
 - A series on resilience for municipalities
 - Simple grant guidance
 - Identifying priorities & communicating effectively
 - Ecosystem-service valuation
 - How to use existing/new tools
 - Topical issues (e.g., living shorelines, green infrastructure)

- Workshops to empower local leaders
- Other next steps:
 - SRC Bi-State Workshop update
 - Thursday, December 1, 2022 - 12:30-4 PM on Zoom
 - More information & [register here!](#)
 - SRC Resource Hub
 - This will be a major focus for the SRC team in 2023, when we will put out an RFP to hire a consultant to help us build this.
 - The SRC EPs will continue working to increase regional coordination. There are multiple ongoing efforts, and we will continue to lay the foundation for increased gov't coordination and improved regional planning.
 - Breaking Down Barriers/Project Pipeline
 - We are aiming to roll out our LIS Resilience Grant Writing Assistance Program next week! This will offer up a small pot of money to assist municipalities and communities in hiring a consultant to put together grant applications for sustainable/resilient projects.
 - We've established an Implementation team to help us evaluate how year 1 of this program goes, so we can make changes/improvements for year 2.
 - Monitoring & Evaluation
 - Will be continuing to monitor our progress via Gantt chart
 - Will also be tracking progress through LISS reporting and tracking of ecosystem targets; will be having conversations with EPA about the best metrics to track our work
 - Will be keeping spreadsheet of training/education programs to both track progress and also opportunities for working regionally and/or with partners

Questions/Comments

- Save the Sound is kicking off a project to identify ecosystem services and other nature-based benefits that can/should be incorporated into benefit-cost analyses for coastal projects. If there are resources others know of that we should reference, please let me know! Trying to build on backbone of FEMA BCA - build off something that's existing and accepted but incorporate more nature-based benefits.
- Anthony- how do you see those training programs coming together? Will you be working with partners? As a group of 5? Sarah: Mix of both. Will be fleshing out those details in the new year.
- Dave - what will be presented at the annual workshop? Sarah: Will be sharing our NA findings, as well as having breakout sessions on various topics to highlight projects from CT and NY and provide a forum for sharing lessons learned/connecting with communities dealing with similar issues.
- Dave: Any example of successful road flood improvement projects? Would be good to share at future workshop.

- Paul Stacey: The Meriden CT flood project is probably the best I've ever seen. It checks most of the boxes for building resilience with social-ecological outcomes, and at a reasonably large scale to make a difference. Perhaps a model for as complete an S&R project as can be accomplished in SES context. On the downside, you don't have near enough money, but perhaps chipping in on meaningful projects, or even small public works/infrastructure projects, can help make a difference. As noted by the small communities, "bottom-up" projects are a heavy lift, especially at a meaningful scale, and are quickly offset by new development and existing lack of good management practices for new projects. Here's Meriden's:
<https://www.ser-rrc.org/project/harbor-brook-daylighting-project-meriden-connecticut/>
- Paul Stacey: For those of you who have not seen the new UConn CLEAR Watershed assessment and planning tool for CT, it's worth a look, and its Web app is easy to use and will help local officials and the public plan for ecological resiliency that provides for social resiliency. Check it out at:
<https://experience.arcgis.com/template/68b1ebdd244a4f1a800a15af0e600307> and the Webinar will be available in a day or two at:
<https://clear.uconn.edu/webinars/2022-library/> It has also been recorded at today's LISS Watersheds WG meeting.
- Kris Masterson: Is there a written list of survey questions? Wondering if needs/etc. can be shown spatially. No - there is no formal survey; because of restrictions related to our federal funding, we did not do any formal surveys, all of our information is coming from informal discussions/meetings. We do have more information on the backend. Not sure its appropriate to share our group synthesis table directly, but the SRC EPs are happy to talk with USGS to make sure all pertinent information gets transferred as appropriate.
- Paul Stacey: I know this is redundant for most everyone, but CLEAR also has an excellent series of Climate Adaptation Academy materials and workshops that were targeted for local officials. Very helpful to municipalities that have to deal with contracting, financing, legal authorities, and permitting. <https://climate.uconn.edu/caa/>
- Dave: Can you elaborate on the type of flooding you heard most about? Sarah: heard a lot about flooding from stormwater; challenging topography creates stormwater issues. Alicia- Eastern CT heard about urban flooding/stormwater issues, riverine flooding and flooding due to storm surge and tides.
- Brian (CT DEEP) - Additional positions at CTDEEP to be added in the infrastructure permitting section and a NOAA funded capacity building position which is anticipated to start in December/January.

Breakout Rooms to solicit feedback on NA findings and recommendations;

- Questions our breakout rooms will consider:
 - How can we encourage local leaders & build political will?
 - How do we increase coordination - both among partners & across levels of government?

- What conversations can we foster to discuss funding & implementation barriers? Who should be at the table?
- Room 1 (Elizabeth) report back: Talked out building political will from the ground-up/community level (including through watershed groups), appealing to multiple sectors (LINAP is a good example), tying actions to benefits for coastal economies, and partnership with groups that are good at advocacy. Successful coordination: CT Shellfish Plan is a good example - formed a mutl-sector permitting workgroup; need to identify shared outcomes; get permitting officials out to see what they are regulating.
https://jamboard.google.com/d/12Rv9McL5BQuQABaY8lQOX_VcKVWybxBNLIflWjrRx6M/viwer?f=1
- Room 2 (Sarah S-B) report back: Ideas to increase coordination included training for community groups that included training on how projects move through the municipal process, training for government agencies about how to work with community groups, holding time for grant applicants to discuss projects with a funding agency (the discussion could involve other non-profit partners and funding agencies). Ideas to encourage political will and local leaders included highlighting proactive climate efforts, advertising the project local communities are doing to motivate other municipalities to take action too. Ideas for conversations to foster to discuss funding/implementation barriers could include more conversations with consultants to discuss barriers, challenges, needs and see if there are similar/overlapping projects.
<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1TbBCLGS0VqtJy4Zw0cjCi-Z66qPmJ1B8GWQtmLPGJs/edit?usp=sharing>
- Room 3 (Alicia) report back: Ideas for dealing with funding and implementation barriers included determining if funding agencies can carve out funds to support applicants or find boundary organizations to play support role; build and share templates that can work from town to town - or generic/replicable projects that can be translated to other locations; include strategic partners and bring voices to table not currently being heard; encourage granting agencies to weight partnerships among multiple organizations higher; use field trips to illustrate concepts; ensure that there is regularly-scheduled followup to manage timeline and accountability; and provide multiple levels of resources to meet multiple needs. To increase coordination, understanding networks is key and this can be done by participating in calls of other networks to learn what they are doing; balance regional coordination with manageable scale locally; rally around scale of watershed organizations with subwatershed planning; help populate town websites and publish information
https://jamboard.google.com/d/1V6kJzFrNajXXylg1zSslaVM8HUZvF_MSk2m7cRbLfDM/edit?usp=share_link
- Room 4 (Sara P) report back: Ideas for ways to increase leadership & political will included: providing education/talking points to local leaders that make them feel comfortable taking leadership on projects, thoughts on ways to make information on grants and the grant application process simpler, and the acknowledgement that leaders don't have to be elected officials and the importance of connecting leaders/municipal staff with the beauty of LIS - a reminder of the unique natural resource at hand and why we all do this work. Our group

also discussed the challenges associated with permitting - more staffing is needed at the state level, and more coordination to improve facilitation of resilience projects. Can the federal \$ allocation to LISS help support increased state staffing levels?

- https://jamboard.google.com/d/1zHhNL0Lujk2XhA1J7bb3I-YPuSaxNPkFL_pqiAYuEg8/viewer?f=0

Updates from Work Group Members

- Alison Branco - TNC in NY has 2 open positions on our climate Adaptation team (my team). Please send me any and all good candidates who are looking - these are on the earlier career end of the spectrum.

Wrap up & Next steps; Becky Shuford & Sylvain DeGuise

- Thanks to all!
- Next SRC WG Meeting: 02/14/2023
 - Other proposed 2023 meetings: 05/09, 08/08, 11/14

From the chat:

Anthony Allen - Save the Sound is kicking off a project to identify ecosystem services and other nature-based benefits that can/should be incorporated into benefit-cost analyses for coastal projects. If there are resources others know of that we should reference, please let me know!

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Paul Stacey - Won't have time to talk about this, but I encourage thinking about Results-Based Accountability. Look at the book, "Trying hard is not good enough" by Mark Friedman. CT's General Assembly adopted the practice, and I had to defend spending for environmental management to the state Finance Committee. Results Accountability needs to show direct benefit at the community level, and the favorite question the committee always asked way, "What can we do for free?" Check it out: <https://clearimpact.com/author/mark/> Quick follow-up - it would be difficult to show Results-based accountability for community impact with the LISS spending focus these days. Spending has increased, improvements are flat or in decline, especially for nitrogen since all treatment plant upgrades are done.