

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee

ZOOM Online Meeting  
Thursday, March 9, 2023

**Meeting Summary**



**Welcome**

- **Nancy Seligson** (CAC NY co-chair; Town of Mamaroneck) called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Final attendance: 25 CAC members, 68 total participants.
- People joining the meeting for the first time introduced themselves: **Emily Hadzopulos** previously worked for the Seatuck Environmental Association and now joins The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as their Freshwater Restoration Project Manager; **Jessica Cañizares** joined TNC as their Coastal Restoration Project Manager; **Amanda Center** from Responsive Management is part of the team conducting the EJ Needs Assessment for the Long Island Sound region, and **Maria Tzortziou**, a researcher at Columbia and CUNY, introduced herself as the new STAC liaison for NY.
- Nancy began the meeting by celebrating the LISS FY23 budget reaching \$40 million, which she noted increased from what was \$6 million just a few years ago. **Holly Drinkuth** (CAC CT co-chair; TNC) acknowledged that this was the goal budget as of 6 years ago, and they finally made it, and thanked the CAC as this would not be possible without their efforts. She also noted the importance of keeping funding at this needed level by showcasing the improvements to LIS and showing real results.
- Nancy and Holly opened the floor to member updates:
  - TNC announced the first Coastal Watershed Network Meeting is taking place in person in Port Jefferson on March 30, 2023.

**LISS Updates**

**Leah O'Neill** (EPA) gave an **Overview of the Long Island Sound Study FY2023 Budget:**

- LISS has two funding sources: Clean Water Act Section 119 - LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act and the Clean Water Act Section 320 - National Estuary Program (NEP). Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding is coming through both of those.
- General LISS Budget process: The federal fiscal year (FY) begins Oct 1. A 2-day Management Committee (MC) meeting was held in 2022 to help scope out priorities and actions for FY23. Implementation Team (IT) meetings helped further scope this and the MC met again in Jan to review proposed FY23 needs. Final budget recommendations will be reviewed at the MC April meeting. Holly and Nancy highlighted that they participate in the MC and IT meetings and share the CAC priorities with them as part of their co-chair roles.
- The first few years of budget increases allowed the program to fill longstanding gaps, and then expand existing programs. Some areas of expansion include Environmental Justice, increased Monitoring, Modeling, and Federal Coordination. (Find pdf of presentation attached).
- The CAC develops an annual letter of priority recommendations to help shape budget priorities. Leah noted that the LISS CAC is known as one of the strongest across the country and is often used as a model across NEP programs. She gave the CAC a huge THANK YOU for all their efforts and input!

**Evelyn Spencer** (EPA) presented on LISS Work Group (WG) Coordination:

- Evelyn has been working on website updates and WG coordination. The main goal of this process is to have uniformity and transparency among LISS partners. The goals of each WG will be made available so people can determine whether they would like to be involved. Meeting notes and links to calendar with meeting dates will also be made available on each WG page.
- Meeting links were taken out of the website to avoid issues, but meetings are still open to the public – interested parties need just reach out.
- Evelyn shared further details about how to streamline WG coordination using the LISS SharePoint. **Harry Yamalis** (CT DEEP) supported the idea and **Denise Savageau** (Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts) requested meeting transcripts be made available in addition to video recordings.

Nancy invited CAC members and meeting attendees who have attended other WGs meetings to share their experience:

- **Sarah Crosby** (The Maritime Aquarium) gave a Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) Update: The STAC met on Feb 24 and included a LISS budget update from Mark Tedesco, recent outcomes of the LIS Research Competition from Sylvain DeGuise, an update on LISS Renaming from Robert Burg, a presentation on eelgrass work in LIS by Cayla Sullivan, a presentation from Paul Stacey on integrated watershed management, and a discussion on potential LISS student fellowships. Sarah noted the “meat of the meeting” were presentations from new investigators: Liz Suter of Molloy University, Catherine Matassa of UConn, and Meghana Parikh and Katie McFarland of NOAA Fisheries.
- **Kate Knight** (CT DEEP) gave a Climate Change and Sentinel Monitoring WG (CCSMWG) update: The group held a joint meeting with Habitat Restoration and Stewardship WG and the Indicators WG to discuss saltmarsh sparrow and salt marsh priorities. The group’s current priority is to revisit and update the climate change sentinel monitoring strategy. One of the opportunities for collaboration is with USGS to determine if the database they have can serve the WG’s purpose. Next meeting will look at Sea Level Rise affecting marsh models.
- **Jamie Vaudrey** (CT National Estuarine Reserve Reserve - NERR) provided a brief NERR overview and shared information about new staff including Jason Krumholts and Larissa Graham. They are in the process of hiring a person to oversee monitoring and management. The NERR website is ALMOST ready for release! The NERR is also forming work groups to help develop educational programming, identify monitoring sites, etc. Anyone interested in or who has suggestion for interested parties can contact Jamie at [jamie.vaudrey@uconn.edu](mailto:jamie.vaudrey@uconn.edu)

Nancy noted it is not necessary to be a ‘member’ of a WG to attend their meetings. If something looks interesting, please attend and let Holly and Nancy know!

**Lillit Genovesi** (NYSG) gave an update on the new upcoming **Communications, Outreach, and Engagement (COE) WG**:

- The new COE WG replaces the old Public Involvement and Education (PIE) WG. Lillit will be the NY co-chair for this new WG; the other co-chair will be the CT Outreach Coordinator (position is currently vacant).
- The goal for this WG is to achieve wider and deeper collaborations and publicity with partners across the region by implementing objectives of the COE 5-year Plan. Holding community conversations and convening the COE WG are recommendations of the plan. The group will be

celebrating successes and sharing opportunities for engagement in improving estuarine health. It will also provide an opportunity to network, share resources, and serve as a think tank center for developing new tools.

- Lillit asked the CAC to help get the word out to education, outreach, and communications people in their organizations or other contacts they might think are interested, especially encouraging groups that are not currently as involved with LISS.
- The WG plans to meet 3-4 times per year with 1 in-person meeting, with the first meeting kicking off on **April 27 from 10:30am – 12:00pm**. Join the COE WG email list: [https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_4It09eDt6IkNXtc](https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4It09eDt6IkNXtc)

**Robert Burg** (NEIWPCC) gave an update on the **LISS program’s potential name change**:

- Robert began by noting this presentation in an update from the one he gave to the CAC in December, in which he went over some of the pros and cons of a potential name change.
- He shared that many see the LISS name as dated, still reflecting a time when LISS was mostly a study program in the 80s and 90s. The name also makes it difficult to explain who we are and what we do to the public. Robert also showed how our name compares to other national estuary programs (NEPs) – most have updated their name and now have some version of *program or partnership*.
- The LISS EPA office asked the program’s web developer to explore name changes with a storyboard approach using 5 variations of potential names. Robert presented 2 of them, showing what the new logo would look like under different templates LIS Estuary Program was the top choice, followed by LIS Estuary Partnership.
- Next Steps include potentially gathering information for this name change through the public perception survey, investigating legal issues with name change, reporting out the renaming presentations to the MC, and adding renaming as a topic for the next Policy Committee meeting. If there is a consensus to rename, the program will then create a new logo, make design modifications, and work with groups like the CAC to raise awareness about the new name.
- **David Miller** (NY League of Conservation Voters) commented that the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act sunsets in September 2023 and the LISS name is in the language of the law. The CAC’s Policy Subcommittee recommends supporting the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act as is, without any changes. **Bill Lucy** (Save the Sound) suggested having another poll with just program vs partnership.

**Policy Subcommittee Update**

**Adrienne Esposito** (Citizen’s Campaign for the Environment) gave updates for the CAC’s trip to DC and policy updates for NY:

- She began by thanking Tripp Killin, (Jeniam Foundation) for providing the bus to DC for past trips and thanked the people involved in that trip. The group met with Congressional Representatives Andrew Garbarino, Anthony D’Esposito, and Nick Lalota, all from Long Island. D’Esposito and Lalota are freshmen. The meetings went very well with great attendance from a diverse group of CAC Policy Subcommittee members. The group focused on getting new officials up to speed

on LIS. They discussed how the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act sunsets this year and the importance of getting it reenacted and talked to them about becoming part of the LIS Congressional caucus. All three representatives were interested in participating on the LIS Congressional Caucus, helping to reauthorize the bill and helping to preserve Plum Island. Subsequent to the CAC meeting, Nick Lalota and Joe Courtney were appointed as the Co-chairs for the LIS Congressional Caucus.

- The Environmental Bond Act in NY passed, but how the money will be spent has not yet been determined. NYSDEC is crafting guidance for it and will put it for public review in April. The CAC expressed interest in seeing this when it is out for review. *Action: Adrienne Esposito to share DEC's Environmental Bond Act guidance with CAC.*

Bill Lucey gave policy updates for CT:

- Bill began by saying that being part of the Policy Subcommittee has been a very rewarding experience, and that the Congressional reps with whom they met are very engaged.
- Bill has been trying to coordinate the conservation goals from the CCMP to state legislation being considered.
  - o The Eelgrass Working Group has been advanced and will be voted on. This will create a CT-centric group of stakeholders in CT analogous to NY's Eelgrass Task Force. There is potential for them to merge as part of the LISS.
  - o A Riparian Buffer Bill is coming up that would require training for inland wetlands commissioners. Such trainings for municipalities also came up as a need in the CT NERR's latest stakeholder engagement meetings. Jamie Vaudrey of the CT NERR added that the CT NERR is interested in offering such training to inland wetland commissions, and can also help promote trainings from CLEAR, the NEMO program, and DEEP. The CT NERR is also working with LISS to manage the Eelgrass Collaborative - a recommended action of the LISS Eelgrass Management Strategy that Cayla Sullivan (EPA) led.
  - o Related to marine debris, there is a Balloon Bill, Straw Bill, and Styrofoam Bill.
  - o PFAs Bill are advancing that look at testing and remediation. (PFAs is a highly toxic chemical found in fast food wrappers, nonstick cookware, stain guard, etc). Adrienne noted the NY state budget has a new line item for PFAS testing. Sea Grant has also funded 4 upcoming projects researching PFAs. The EPA is releasing new drinking water regulations for PFAs—this could be a game changer for states that don't have such a limit.
  - o Bill noted that there is an emerging issue with river herring bycatch, which CTDEEP presented to the Diadromous Fish Work Group run by Seatuck. In CT, there is a group involved in a 'fish wars' effort against mid-waters trawlers, but some help from NY is needed. Interested people can reach out to Bill at [blucey@savethesound.org](mailto:blucey@savethesound.org)
- Bill mentioned wanting to create a table with the CCMP goals and related legislative actions taking place. Holly seconded this idea.

### **EJ Discussion and Survey Overview**

Holly gave overview of the results from the CAC Survey from 18 respondents. Findings included:

- The majority of CAC members identify as environmental, conservation, or watershed groups (55%).

- When asked how important CCMP themes are to their organization, 17 respondents ranked Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds extremely or very important. followed by 15 respondents each for Thriving Habitats and Sustainable and Resilient Communities (SRC). In previous surveys, CAC members expressed confusion about the meaning of behind the term sustainable and resilient communities, but now appear to better understand and align with this area of work.
- 13 respondents ranked Environmental Justice (EJ) extremely or very important to their organization. This rank has also increased since previous surveys.
- When asked how successfully CAC member organizations are incorporating DEIJ in their work, most respondents, said they somewhat successful (44%). Very successful, not so successful (28%), very successful (22%) or not at all successful (6%). .

**Jimena Perez-Viscasillas** (NYSG) gave an overview of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) principles, their importance in LISS work, and the CAC's role in these efforts. Nancy encouraged people to ask themselves *What can the CAC do to help advance EJ?* The group then split into break out groups to discuss ideas, guided by discussion questions. When the groups reconvened they shared the main takeaways from their discussions. (See attached summarized and categorized list). Some high-level ideas included:

- Highlighting progress and current work being done in EJ when speaking to elected officials
- Threading DEIJ in how the CAC operates with elected officials and generally
- Revising the CCMP to address watershed and community impacts
- Supporting CCMP update to address watershed scale engagement and implementation including development of relevant ecosystem targets and indicators

*Action: CAC co-chairs to draft some sort of proposal consolidating this discussion for the next meeting.*

The meetings adjourned 12:30pm; the next meeting is scheduled for June 8<sup>th</sup> and will be **in-person** at a location still to be determined.