

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee

Thursday, June 8, 2023

Meeting Summary

Harbor Island Park, Mamaroneck, NY



Welcome

- **Nancy Seligson** (NY CAC co-chair, Town of Mamaroneck) called the meeting to order at 9:30AM and introduced **Jason Pinto**, the Superintendent of Recreation for Mamaroneck Village, to speak about the harbor, followed by educator **Kyle Troy** who gave an overview of the activities and projects at the Marine Education Center in Harbor Island Park.
- CAC members and meeting attendees around the room and remotely introduced themselves. A quorum of 23 CAC members was in attendance.
- **Alicea Charamut** of the [Rivers Alliance of Connecticut](#) spoke about the group, which has worked to improve local water quality since 1992. The group applied to rejoin the CAC as a member, and the CAC approved the motion—*welcome!*
- **Holly Drinkuth** (CT CAC co-chair, The Nature Conservancy) called for approval of the March 9, 2023, meeting summary; **David Miller** motion to approve, and **Carl Harvey** seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Lightning Updates: LISS staff provided brief program updates. CAC members were encouraged to listen for priorities and opportunities to meaningfully participate in LISS programs and work groups.

Jimena Perez-Viscasillas (NYSG/LISS) - Environmental Justice Work Group (EJWG):

- The Environmental Justice Needs Assessment to better understand the needs, concerns, and challenges of underserved communities in the NY and CT portions of the LIS region while prioritizing relationship building is underway. The project lead, NY Sea Grant is working closely with the contractor Responsive Management and a core team of LISS staff to hold public-facing meetings and events. LISS partners and CAC members are invited to join upcoming meetings with community leaders. For more information contact Jimena at jbp255@cornell.edu.
- DEIJ trainings are planned for the fall, potentially including the September 14 CAC meeting
- [Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund \(LISCIF\)](#) is a new grant and capacity-building program hosted by Restore America's Estuaries in partnership with LISS. Trainings for this program are expected to be scheduled for the fall with the RFP coming out sometime in October.

Sarah Schaefer-Brown (NYSG/LISS), **Sara Powell** (NYSG/LISS), and **Deb Abibou** (CTSG/LISS) - SRC Extension Professionals Team:

- Conducted the first Annual Bi-state Workshop based on the results of an informal assessment of community and municipal needs related to resiliency.
- A Resilience Resource Hub and training programs are in development; trainings so far have included Erosion Forums in Nassau and Suffolk.
- The [Breaking Down Barriers \(BDB\) grant-writing assistance program](#) has received 20 applications. Training programs are being tailored to address barriers groups face ahead of applying for grants identified through the BDB process.

Robert Burg (NEIWPC) LISS Communications, Outreach, and Engagement (COE):

The first COE Work Group meeting was held in April led by Lillit Genovesi (NYSG); the meeting included lightning talks on educational programming from different organizations around the Sound and breakout discussions about topics the COE WG should focus on such as networking, sharing existing resources,

and creating new resources. A highlight of the meeting was that many groups who have not typically been involved with LISS work groups attended. Robert noted it would be good to involve the new WG in developing regional outreach campaigns.

The Public Perception Survey project, led by CT Sea Grant and including the LISS COE Team members and CAC reps including Nancy Seligson and **Maureen Murphy** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) is in development. Survey questions will explore people's relationship with the outdoors and the Sound, and their behaviors, knowledge and attitudes related to environmental topics. Data analysis is expected toward the end of the year, with a report and presentations likely in the winter.

Jim Ammerman (NEIWPC) gave an overview of [LIS Research Grant Program](#) projects funded in 2022:

LISS funds are administered by CTSG and NYSG for projects with management implications. In the last round, 18 of 25 pre-proposals were encouraged to submit full proposals. Of the 17 full proposals submitted, 9 were selected for funding including 5 water quality projects, 3 focused on habitat, and one focused on accessibility to the Long Island Sound coast. Find the full project list and descriptions [HERE](#).

CAC Led Futures Fund Proposals: Save the Sound, Harbor Watch, The Nature Conservancy-CT, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Maritime Aquarium, Mystic Aquarium, the Town of Groton and Eastern CT Conservation District reported they had applied for 2023 [Long Island Sound Futures Fund grants](#).

Mark Tedesco (EPA LIS Office) gave a brief overview of the [LISS Policy Committee](#) Meeting at the Nissequogue River State Park on July 13th. EPA Region 1 and 2 administrators David Cash and Lisa Garcia, NYSDEC Commissioner Basil Seggos, and CT DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes will attend. The agenda will include updates from the LISS program—including remarks from Nancy and Holly on behalf of the CAC—and it will set the stage for upcoming work such as the CCMP update or revision.

CAC Priorities

The EJ Work Group worked with the CAC co-chairs to facilitate a discussion at the March CAC meeting around priority EJ work for the CAC. Nancy, Holly, and CAC Member Coordinator **Francine Gordon** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) evaluated and categorized discussion results into recommendations both for the CAC and the LISS program. Recommendations broadly fell under 4 categories: **1) communications, outreach and engagement 2) watersheds and embayments 3) science and management (CCMP), and 4) public access**. Results can be viewed in the attached presentation.

Holly and Nancy included the recommendations to evaluate and revise the CCMP, incorporate targets and indicators for watershed function and coastal access quality, and use conversational language and public facing tools in the CAC priority letter submitted to the LISS program in April 2023.

Action: The co-chairs and Francine will request CAC member input to prioritize EJ actions for the coming year.

CCMP Overview and Revision Update, Mark Tedesco

The Long Island Sound Study program was created in 1985 through appropriations and became a National Estuary Program (NEP) in 1987 when the NEP program was created by Congress. In Section 320 of the Clean Water Act, LISS is charged with the creation of a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the Sound.

The original plan created in 1994 focused on *problems*: floatable debris, hypoxia, management of living resources, etc. In 2011, the CAC led a visioning process and developed a Sound Vision Action Plan that divided future management into 4 categories.

The current CCMP, revised in 2015 is structured with an overall vision and the four management categories inspired by the *Listen to the Sound* sessions. It also includes ecosystem targets – the environmental and human outcomes the program wants to achieve by 2035 - with associated goals, outcomes, objectives, strategies, and implementation actions. The program must conduct either a minor *update* or a major *revision* of the plan in 2025.

The LISS EPA Office is proposing an 18-month CCMP revision process to be completed by January 2025. The recommended approach would maintain the current vision, organizational themes, cross-cutting principles, and identified goals for achievement by 2035. Objectives of the revision would focus on evaluating the ecosystem targets - potentially modifying them or setting new ones – and strengthening the links between ecosystem targets, actions, and metrics used to track progress. Additionally, the program would like to use the process to streamline and emphasize communication of the CCMP.

The LISS Management Committee will review and provide feedback on a final approach at the July 20 meeting. The policy committee will also be briefed on the proposed process at the July 13 meeting.

Discussion: The CAC members and attendees provided feedback on the recommended process.

Generally, CAC members and meeting attendees expressed support for the LISS EPA Office proposal for a 2025 CCMP revision rather than an update. Benefits discussed included opportunities for greater flexibility in adaptive management, alignment with increased program funding, and appreciation for the goal of fewer actions to help make the CCMP less confusing and more relatable.

One concern mentioned was that the 2015 CCMP cross-cutting principles are often lost in the implementation actions and the revision process should consider how the principles connect to themes as well as ecosystem targets. Additionally, CAC members expressed concern that a revision process might not be adequate and wondered if a “reset” or “almost new CCMP” would provide more room for innovation and new thinking. Specifically, members of the CAC have expressed the need for a “one water” approach that expands beyond nutrient reduction to include a holistic approach for restoring biological integrity in the watershed.

Mark Tedesco noted it is appropriate to begin speaking about outcomes for the revision process, and that we should set the process, but not limit the opportunities. He noted determining the revision outcomes requires more input and agreement from different perspectives. Nancy Seligson asked Mark Tedesco what would be useful for LISS from the CAC in this process. He said the CAC should participate in the process; if the program charges different writing teams to work on different areas, it would be useful to have CAC members involved in that and help integrate the work of those teams.

Nancy Seligson asked whether anyone is considering a visioning process (like *Listen to the Sound*) or some other effort to engage the public. Mark Tedesco said the process does not recommend updating the vision, partly because it takes time and there is some immediacy to use the funding we have now. He also noted the program has greater ongoing public engagement and outreach now than in 2015.

Nancy encouraged the CAC to begin thinking about their level of participation in the revision both as a collective and as organizations and individuals in this process. Holly noted Francine Gordon has been regularly communicating with CAC members about opportunities to participate in LISS efforts and will continue to update members on the revision process.

CAC Policy Subcommittee Updates: Adrienne Esposito (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) and Bill Lucey (Save the Sound) gave policy updates for New York and Connecticut.

Federal Updates

- The Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act is expiring in September 2023. The **CAC Policy Subcommittee** has begun conversations with some congressional leaders and **will meet with the bipartisan LIS Caucus, co-chairs Congressmen Courtney and LaLota** asking them to co-sponsor reauthorization of the Act.
- The Subcommittee is **planning a visit to Washington DC in October** when the Senate and House are both in session.
- The subcommittee will circulate a **letter about the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act's reauthorization** for CAC review and send to all LIS senate and congressional members.
- **Save Plum Island Coalition** is very active and will be meeting with congressional members on how to get the island preserved in perpetuity.
- Bill Lucey asked the **Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission** to consider changes to mackerel fisheries river herring bycatch management due to the decline in CT's blueback river herring fishery. The commission is close to either reinstating a buffer zone from the border of Maine to the tip of Long Island to protect those fish or go for timed area closures. Bill suggested this as an item for the LIS Caucus to discuss after the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act is reauthorized.

New York Policy Updates

- The governor's staff are holding a public [listening tour for the Environmental Bond Act](#). Two in-person sessions take place Aug 15 from 1-3pm at the Westchester County Center and Aug 24 from 1-3pm in Suffolk County Community College. There will also be two virtual sessions.
- Action: Francine Gordon will share information on the Environmental Bond Act Listening Tour.*
- The Suffolk Legislature agreed to a public hearing June 21 at 4pm in Riverhead on a potential expansion of the sales tax to be used for a septic tank and sewage replacement fund. CCE is encouraging high turnout for the hearing.
 - The Birds and Bees Protection Act passed the senate on June 7th and is on the assembly debate list

Connecticut Policy Updates

- The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy did not pass, though the tire EPR did. (EPR places the responsibility of the disposal or recycling of a product on its producers).
- CT Climate Bill to establish emissions targets was 'watered down to a roadmap', and then defeated.
- The Environmental Justice Bill passed. Although 'watered down', it is a big win that requires state agencies to have projects approved by stakeholders in disadvantaged communities.
- All Single-Use Bills – Styrofoam, straws, balloons – did not pass.
- The Riparian Buffer Zone and Inland Wetlands Bill passed the house 150-0, but it did not make it to the senate consent list given Republicans filibustered the entire day on affordable housing.
- CT eelgrass restoration working group focused on the commercial industry was approved. This is separate from the EPA and the CTNERR eelgrass restoration group exploring best practices for LIS

eelgrass conservation to meet the CCMP eelgrass targets in NY and CT. Contact **Cayla Sullivan** for more information about that project.

- The Balloon Bill failed in part because there was a concern about the possibility of racial profiling which led the Black and Puerto Rican Caucuses to come out against it. Discussion about resources for reducing balloon use included America the Beautiful, biodegradable balloons, balloon strings and behavior change campaigns about balloon releases. **Samarra Scantlebury (NYSDEC)** noted Ocean Action Plan has a balloon debris working group with initiatives, information and campaigns to divert or substitute balloon use.

Discussion

- The EPA ended its public comment period on reducing the [PFAS](#) maximum in drinking water down to 4 parts per trillion, and will announce an MCL by the end of the year. Adrienne also mentioned fishing bans in Long Island due to high levels of PFAS found in finfish. Bill Lucey added that CT has closed two rivers due to PFAs and are testing fish flesh. CTSG began four 4 PFAs studies in the spring.
- Nancy Seligson noted that **Kamazima Lwiza** (Stony Brook University) questioned if research was being done about EJ implications related to offshore wind energy projects and increased workforce at the Management Committee meeting. Members of the Management Committee mentioned New London, CT faces limited affordable housing, but they did not know of any research on the impact to low-income communities. **Micky Weiss** (Project Oceanology) said the New London state pier is being used to build and deploy turbines, which displaced fishermen who used that pier. Some fishermen claim they were hired to be scouts for the industry as an attempt to placate them. It is a complex issue. In Connecticut, EJ implications are a talking point from representatives of the fishing industry, many of whom are not in favor.
- In NY there are 5 offshore wind projects at different phases of the approval process; the South Shore Wind Farm is in advanced stages and installing turbines soon. Sunrise Wind will connect to Suffolk County and Empire Wind 2, which has been highly controversial, will connect to Nassau County. For more information on those and the other offshore wind projects, visit: windworksli.org.

Announcements

- The next STAC Meeting on June 30 will include a presentation from staff from the Chesapeake Bay program and cover more details on the 2020 research projects. A summary of the watershed approach presentation **Paul Stacey** referred to during the CAC meeting is available in STAC's February meeting minutes.
- **Carl Harvey** shared an update on the Ukraine Humanitarian Aid Project. More funding is needed to send shipments; interested people can contact Carl at cenbts64@gmail.com
- June 20th is International Horseshoe Crab Day - Tagging Event at Stratford Point in CT will be held in honor of Dr. Jennifer Mattei, who passed away in December.
- Anyone interested in joining the conversations with community leaders as part of the EJ needs assessment should feel free to reach out to Jimena Perez-Viscasillas at jbp255@cornell.edu.

Meeting adjourned about 2:00 PM. Some attendees visited the Harbor Island Park Shoreline Restoration site. The next CAC meeting will be held **September 14th, 2023, at SoundWaters in Stamford, CT.**