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Spring 2024

Memorial Day weekend is often seen as the unofficial start of summer. As the weather turns warmer, residents of the Long Island Sound region take to landscaping and gardening their yards, engaging in outdoor activities that frequently involve the application of nitrogen-based fertilizers. However, any excess fertilizer that isn't absorbed by lawns and gardens is washed away by rainfall into water bodies that discharge into and pollute the Sound. This spring edition of *Sound Matters* focuses on research and outreach programs aimed at reducing nitrogen levels in the Sound through sustainable lawn care and gardening practices.

LISS NEWS

Study on Residential Fertilizer Use Helps to Identify Nitrogen “Hot Spots”

More than one million families live in single-family homes around Long Island Sound. Each of them makes decisions regarding their yards that influence the health of local rivers, streams, bays, and eventually the Sound. Through two research projects funded by the Long Island Sound Study Research Grant Program, **Dr. Robert Johnston**, an environmental economist at Clark University in Worcester, MA has looked for ways to reach homeowners to teach them about how to have healthy fertilizer habits. The newest of the projects, which is to be completed this year, includes the creation of maps that will allow resource managers and policy-



Dr. Robert Johnston of Clark University.
Photo courtesy of Johnston.

makers to identify nitrogen “hot spots”— neighborhoods and communities where homeowners are both likely to apply large amounts of fertilizer and where there also is a high likelihood of nitrogen flowing directly to the Sound. You can read more about Johnston's research in the Sound Spotlight section of the [Media Center](#).

Year Two of Long Island’s Stormwater Mitigation ‘Garden Rewards’ Program to Start Accepting Submissions



A homeowner's rain garden in Northport, NY. *(Photo Courtesy of NEIWPC)*

Following a successful pilot in 2023, the ‘Garden Rewards’ program will soon be accepting applications for year two. Through the program, Long Island homeowners looking to help curb stormwater runoff are eligible for up to \$500 reimbursements to cover the cost of mitigation projects like rain barrels, rain gardens, and native plantings. The program is a partnership between the Long Island

Regional Planning Council (LIRPC), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), NEIWPC, and the Long Island Sound Study. You can read more about 'Garden Rewards' and its second year in this [Sound Spotlight](#).

Fact Sheets Shine a Light on Sustainable Coastal Gardening and Landscaping Practices



An elderberry bush (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *canadensis*), which thrives in slight shade and seasonally flooded soils. *Photo by Judy Preston.*

Judy Preston, the Long Island Sound Study's former Connecticut Outreach Coordinator through Connecticut Sea Grant, is a self-proclaimed "plant person." After successfully creating and implementing the Connecticut Coastal Gardening Certificate Program, Preston retired from her role with LISS but she continues to be an educator of native plants and sustainable landscaping practices. She recently developed four fact sheets for

Connecticut Sea Grant on riparian buffers, climate landscaping, native plants, and lawn care. You can read more about Preston's recommendations for coastal gardening in this [Sound Spotlight](#).

Remembering Senator Lieberman, Champion of Long Island Sound



Senator Joe Lieberman speaking at a press event in front of the Capital in 2010.

Former U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, who died from complications of a fall in March, championed many environmental causes in the Senate. Among his successes was the Long Island Sound Improvement Act, which made the Long Island Sound Study a permanent program. The 1990 law created an Environmental Protection Agency program office for Long Island Sound with a full-time director, an annual

budget, and a charge for EPA to develop and implement a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan with support from a Management Conference. You can read more about Lieberman's contributions throughout his lifetime in this [Sound Spotlight](#).

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

Meet Christopher Eagler



Chris joined the Long Island Sound Study with NEIWPC in October of 2023 as the Long Island Sound Regional Coordinator. In his new role, Chris works to improve water quality in the Sound by providing technical support on municipal public education projects. He also supports the implementation of our nitrogen reduction strategy.

We asked Chris a couple of questions so that we could get to know him better. Learn more about Chris [here!](#)

SOUND BYTES (LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY NEWS BRIEFS)



Dr. James Hagy gives a presentation on *Quantifying and Forecasting the Seasonal and Spatial Extent of Hypoxia in Long Island Sound* at the LIS Research Conference.

- The Long Island Sound Research Conference was held on May 15 in Port Jefferson, NY and joined together over 170 attendees including scientists, regulators, and educators. Check out our social media post about the conference [here](#).
- Restore America's Estuaries announced the 2024 Subawardees of the Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund on May 16 in Bridgeport, CT, and May 17 in the Bronx. LISCIFF is a new grant program formed by a

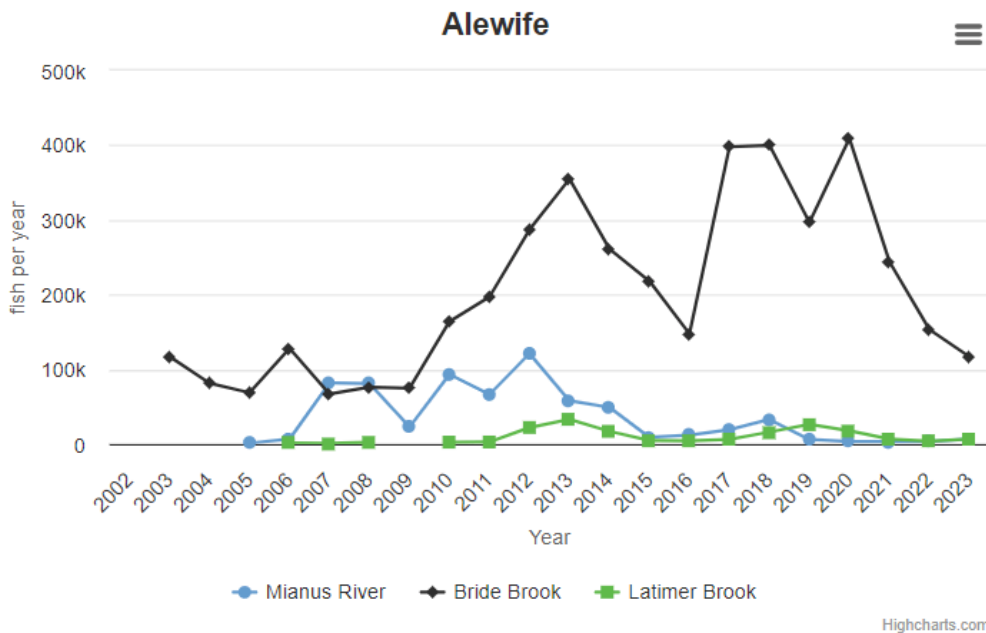
partnership with Restore America's Estuaries, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Long Island Sound Study to build capacity for organizations located in communities af-

ected by disproportionate environmental and human health risks. You can view the list of grant recipients [here](#).

- The Long Island Sound Study is revising its Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan, which was last updated in 2015. Members of the public are welcome to contribute feedback for the update at public engagement sessions or through the [comment form](#) on our website. In-person meetings were held at Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven, CT, and the Division of Marine Resources in Kings Park, NY, as well as virtually. The final in-person sessions will be on May 28 from 2 pm–4 pm and 6 pm–8 pm at Alley Pond Environmental Center in Queens.

FOCUS ON LISS INDICATORS

Anadromous Fish Runs



(Chart/Long Island Sound Study Ecosystem Target and Supporting Indicators presentation)

The Long Island Sound Study Ecosystem Targets and Supporting Indicators microsite tracks indicators that measure the health of the Sound and whether the Study is meeting management targets to help

achieve restoration goals. In each issue of Sound Matters we highlight the latest trends in one of the indicators or targets.

As of 2022, efforts from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to restore river herring populations and other anadromous fish have collectively reconnected 82 percent of potentially passable river miles. However, the removal of dams and widened culverts are only not the only factors impacting river herring. One of the greatest pressures facing alewives is overharvesting.

Connecticut regulations prohibit alewife/blueback herring take, yet overharvesting persists in waters outside of Connecticut's jurisdiction. River herring is caught as bycatch and incidental catch by commercial fleets targeting Atlantic herring and mackerel in Long Island Sound, as well as in other northeast estuaries. When fleets catch river herring, they discard them at sea, or since river herring closely resembles Atlantic herring, commercial fleets are permitted to sell river herring as part of their herring catch.

Learn more at the [Ecosystem Target and Supporting Indicators microsite](#).

SOUND FACT

Best Practices for Lawn Care



Illustration by Lucy Reading-Ikkanda for the Long Island Sound Study.

Responsible lawn care is important for safeguarding Long Island Sound's coastal waters. Avoiding early fertilizer application helps prevent excess nitrogen runoff that can cause harmful algal blooms and hypoxia, or low dissolved oxygen. Homeowners can reduce pollution to the Sound by using less fertilizer and not overwatering their lawns.

Learn more tips on how to keep a healthy and sustainable lawn in the latest Sound Fact posted on our [website](#).

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