



Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (Virtual)
Thursday, December 12, 2024

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

- **Nancy Seligson** (NY Co-chair, Town of Mamaroneck) called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM with a memorial for Marty Garrell, former CAC secretary. Meeting attendees were invited to share their memories of Marty and express their condolences for his recent passing. **David Miller** (NY League of Conservation Voters Environment Fund) suggested creating an annual “Marty Garrell Long Island Sound Leadership Award” for a CAC member that has demonstrated exemplary service. The idea was well-received by the group.
- Final meeting attendance: 22 CAC members, ~67 total attendees.
- David Miller moved to approve the September 2024 meeting minutes. **Maureen Murphy** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) seconded.

Communications Update

- **Anya Grondalski** (NEIWPC) provided an update on LISS social media and made a general call for more collaborative posts, inviting CAC members to involve their organizations in more LISS social media posts.
- Social media engagement from October – November was slightly down across platforms, but Anya explained that this trend is typical for the time of the year.
- End-of-year review: overall accessibility and inclusivity increased across LISS social media platforms, as did engagement with younger audiences and presence on LinkedIn.

CAC Officer Elections

- Two positions, NY co-chair and secretary, were up for re-election. **Sarah Crosby** (Maritime Aquarium) introduced the nominating committee and slate of candidates, listed below:
 - Nancy Seligson as nominee for NY Co-chair
 - **Vicky O’Neil** (Audubon NY) as nominee for Secretary
- Additional nominations were asked from the floor. David made a motion to close nominations, seconded by **Holly Drinkuth** (CT co-chair, TNC).
 - Nancy Seligson was elected CAC NY co-chair for a three-year term (All in favor, none opposed)
 - Vicky O’Neil was elected CAC secretary for a three-year term (All in favor, none opposed).
- Nancy asked CAC members to be proactive about expressing interest in officer positions moving forward.

Management Committee Meeting Recap

- Nancy gave an overview of the LISS management committee meeting, which took place on Oct 23-24. The meeting focused primarily on the CCMP revision process. Nancy highlighted the importance of the September 2024 joint STAC/CAC meeting and letter in shaping the discussion on the CCMP revision.
- **Mark Tedesco** (EPA) reiterated the value of the joint STAC/CAC meeting and letter, explaining that every comment made in the letter had been incorporated into the formal public comment process. Edits to the CCMP were incorporated by writing teams by December 20th. Mark explained that an executive steering committee will be meeting in late winter/early spring to request formal approval of the plan and that the signing event for the completed plan has been pushed back to June to accommodate the production schedule. Mark then described the proposed work group restructuring. Key takeaways are provided below:
 - Work groups will be structured to align with the new CCMP (for example, the COE work group will become the Informed and Engaged Public work group to align with that goal)
 - Each work group will include subject matter experts that correspond with the objectives of the new CCMP
 - Work groups will be charged with tracking progress toward CCMP goals, including successes and suggested improvements
 - A new modeling work group has been added and the sentinel modeling workgroup has been eliminated
- Sarah Crosby stated that she would like to see the sentinel monitoring WG captured within the ‘thriving habitats’ goal since it is being eliminated as a work group. Mark responded that the sentinel monitoring work group co-chairs will work to integrate the topic within other work groups. Vicky O’Neill asked if the modeling workgroup will only cover water quality, to which Mark responded that the monitoring workgroup will indeed mostly focus on water quality, but he expressed hope that other work groups (such as thriving habitats, for example) will be able to lean on the modeling work group as well.
- Mark announced that the management committee selected Long Island Sound Partnership for the new name of the program. The name change will be reflected in the new CCMP.
- The Mohegan tribe has agreed to participate on the LISS management committee. Discussions between LISS and the Mashantucket-Pequot tribe are ongoing. A land acknowledgement has been added to the new CCMP, and it was reviewed by Mashantucket-Pequot tribe.
- Nancy announced that there will be a LISS 40th Anniversary Event on June 18, from 10-2 at the Jay Heritage Center in New York. More details are forthcoming. David suggested meeting with the commissioners in NY and CT prior to the signing of the new plan. Nancy and Holly confirmed that they will explore this idea.

Committee Structure Updates from the STAC and CAC

- **Kamazima Lwiza** (STAC co-chair) gave an update on the STAC, confirming that the STAC will provide more of an advisory role for the CAC. Kamazima stated that the STAC bylaws are currently being revised and that they are also reviewing the roster. **Jamie Vaudrey** (UCONN) announced that they have formed a new hypoxia working group within the STAC, and that the Unified Water Study data will be used to report on hypoxia within the shallow waters of LIS.
- **Jim Ammerman** (STAC) said those interested in joining the STAC meeting list should email him at james.ammerman@longislandsoundstudy.net.

- **Denise Stranko** (Save the Sound) gave an update on the CAC Ad Hoc Committee looking at CAC structure. They reviewed the bylaws and developed the following questions to bring to the group:
 1. What happens when a CAC officer wants to leave before their term expires?
 - a. Ad Hoc committee suggestion: specify in bylaws there needs to be a special election process
 2. Should there be term limits for officers?
 - a. Ad Hoc committee suggestion: three-year term, three terms for nine years total
 3. Should more capacity be added to the CAC.
 - a. Ad Hoc committee suggestion: add four vice chairs to match the four goals of CCMP and introduce staggered terms
- **Denise Savageau** (CACD) voiced her support of term limits and vice chairs.
- Sarah Crosby expressed her concern about finding individuals to volunteer for these roles, citing time restraints and the level of commitment required.
- **Adrienne Esposito** (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) expressed her concern about term limits, citing the value of cumulative years of experience in the CAC leadership roles.
- **Carl Harvey** (Menunkatuck Audubon Society) stated that it would be helpful to outline and clarify duties and responsibilities of officers and leadership roles in the CAC bylaws.
- Additional comments were invited and should be sent via email.

Action: Francine has sent out an official request for comments regarding restructuring of the CAC. The Adhoc committee will develop recommendations to be considered and/or voted on at the March 2025 CAC meeting.

Futures Fund Report

- Mark provided an update on the Long Island Sound Futures Fund Awards, stating that in 2024 there were 31 awardees.
- Anya invited the group to share stories related to the LISFF awardees, asking that individuals reach out to her at agrondalski@longislandsoundstudy.net

Summary of Findings of Long Island Sound Public Perception Survey

Steve Raabe (Opinion Works) gave an overview of the 2024 Long Island Sound Public Perception Survey to assess public understanding of Long Island Sound and their relationship to it. The survey was conducted across the Long Island Sound watershed in New York and Connecticut and captured data from 3,700 respondents. The survey also featured focus groups to further inform the data.

The full report will officially be released in the coming weeks.

CAC Policy Subcommittee Updates

New York Legislative Updates

Adrienne provided an update on the Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act referendum, which seeks to expand and upgrade sewer systems where appropriate and fund septic system updates via the implementation of a higher sales tax. The act passed by 72% of the vote and will go into effect in March. A

plan will be developed for fund spending by May, which must be approved and voted on by the Suffolk County legislature.

Adrienne also provided an update on the Horseshoe Crab Protection Bill, which prohibits the taking of horseshoe crabs for commercial and biomedical purposes like Connecticut's legislation. Governor Hochul had until 12/13 to pass or veto the bill. Over 40,000 correspondences were sent from throughout NY voicing support for the legislation. Lastly, Adrienne said there is widespread optimism that the LIS Stewardship and Restoration Act will be reauthorized. The bill is being tracked actively and additional updates will be provided as they come.

Update:

- *Governor Hochul vetoed the Horseshoe Crab Protection Bill.*

Denise Stranko provided **Federal and CT Policy Updates:**

Federal Policy Updates:

- Reauthorization of the Restoration and Stewardship Act is currently in the Senate Environment Public Works Committee. There is a possibility the bill has been 'hotlined', meaning the majority and minority leaders agreed on the bill and have expressed unanimous support without a vote.
Update: The LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act was not reauthorized, but has been re-introduced in the current Congress.
- Plum Island Preservation Act: two bills (HR 1584, S 5136) focusing on a preassessment study of the site are currently in the House and in the Senate. Denise explained that this study is an important step to the preservation of the island. Both bills are sitting in their committees and were voted on favorably, but neither one has hit the floor. The policy subcommittee is working to get one of those bills to the floor and onto the continuing resolution.
- The nominee for new EPA Administrator is former congressman Lee Zeldin. Previously, Zeldin restored funding to LISS during the first Trump administration and was a vocal champion for the preservation of Plum Island. Additionally, Zeldin advocated against drilling off the East Coast. Denise indicated that the policy subcommittee has discussed developing a letter to Zeldin expressing their desire to continue a productive relationship with him in the coming years.
- The CAC 2-day Education trip to DC is being planned for 2025. The subcommittee is currently waiting on the updated congressional calendar before proceeding.

Connecticut Legislative Updates

- Denise stated that CT General Assembly's 2025 Long Legislative Session begins January 8. The policy subcommittee is working to defend several pieces of Connecticut environmental legislation:
 - Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA)
 - PFAS legislation
 - Investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy programs (including expanded access to efficient, clean, low-cost cooling and heating systems)
 - Addressing neonicotinoids
 - Expanded riparian buffers bill

- **Alicea Charamut** (Rivers Alliance) added that a task force is being explored to update the Inland Wetlands Act, which is also going to include riparian buffers into CT's regulatory and statutory framework.
- **Bill Lucey** (Save the Sound) provided an update on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries river herring work group stating that bio catch caps will be implemented sometime in the winter/spring of 2025.

Final Updates

- The next CAC meeting will be on Thursday, March 13th and will be virtual.
- The next STAC meeting will be on Friday, Feb 21st and will also be virtual.
- The next LISS Management Committee meeting will be on Thursday, January 16th from 9 AM – 1230 PM, also virtual.