

Management Committee Meeting Virtual Attendance (MS Teams) April 16, 2026 – Meeting Summary

Attendance

Management Committee Members: Cassie Bauer, NYSDEC/DMR; Chris Bellucci, CTDEEP/BWPLR; Todd Chaudhry, USGS; Sylvain De Guise, CTSG; Holly Drinkuth, CAC/TNC; Whitney Fenwick, MADEP; Marco Finocchiaro, EPA/R2; Michele Golden, NYSDEC/DOW; Jim Hagy, EPA/OW; Regina Lyons, EPA/R1; Audrey Mayer, USFWS; Thomas Morgart, USDA/NRCS; Leah O'Neill, EPA/LISO; Evelyn Powers, IEC; Todd Randall, USACE; Becky Shuford, NYSG; Jen Street, NYSDOS; Brian Thompson, CTDEEP/BWPLR; Penny Vlahos, STAC/UConn; Gary Wikfors, NOAA/NMFS

Guests: Deb Abibou, CTSG; Danielle Alexander, NYCDEP; James Ammerman, NEIWPCC; Samantha Apgar, USFWS; Denise Argue, USGS; Erik Bedan, CTDEEP; Shahela Begum, RAE; Kathy Bell, EPA/LISO; Jess Brandt, CTSG; Robert Burg, NEIWPCC; Quinn Burkhart, NEIWPCC; Jeff Caiola, CTDEEP; Jeremy Campbell, NYSDOS; Carrie Clingan, NFWF; Emma Coffey, CTDEEP; Maggie Cozens, CTSG; Kyra DeGroat, NYSDEC/ NEIWPCC; Ashley Desrosiers, EPA/LISO; Alex DuMont, NEIWPCC; Melissa Duvall, EPA/LISO; Adrienne Esposito, CCE/CAC Member; Richard Friesner, NEIWPCC; Lilli Genovesi, NYSG; Benjamin Goldberg, NYSG; Megan Granato, CTDEEP; Gina Groseclose, USGS; Nicole Hammond, EPA/LISO; Kristina Heinemann, EPA/LISO; Elizabeth Hornstein, NYSG; Tim Hunter, CTDEEP; Ken Janus, Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut; Shauna Kamath, NYSDEC/DMR; Knight, Kate, CTDEEP; DeAva Lambert, CTDEEP; Kellie Marty, RAE; Jean McInnis, Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut; Julie Merluccio, NYSDEC/NEIWPCC; Maureen Murphy, CCE; Kevin O'Brien, CTNERR; Suzanne Paton, USFWS; Jimena Perez-Viscasillas, NYSG; Sara Powell, NYSG; Hope Savercool, NYSDEC/NEIWPCC; Samarra Scantlebury, NYSDEC; Sarah Schaefer-Brown, NYSG; Sarah Schechter, CTSG; Denise Stranko, Save the Sound/CAC Policy Subcommittee; Kelly Streich, CTDEEP; Cayla Sullivan, EPA/LISO; Nikki Tachiki, EPA/LISO; Abigail Winter, CTDEEP; Bessie Wright, EPA/LISO; Kimarie Yap, NYSDEC/NEIWPCC; Unidentified Caller, 978-XXX-XXXX

Introductions

Leah O'Neill, EPA Long Island Sound Office (LISO) Acting Director, started the meeting at 9:01 am. Leah provided an agenda overview then turned to Marco Finocchiaro for EPA staffing updates.

Marco introduced himself as Acting Manager of the Watershed Management Branch in EPA Region 2. This position was formerly held by Rick Balla. Marco's acting role started at the end of March and will continue until mid-July. Marco provided an update on the EPA LISO Director position. Hiring a permanent Director is a priority for EPA Regions 1 and 2. On April 13, the job announcement for the full-time Director position was posted on USAJOBS. Applications will be accepted until April 24. The position is open internally to EPA employees with a duty station in the Region 2 New York City office. EPA is working hard to fill the position as soon as possible.

Leah opened the floor for other staffing updates. The following were shared:

- Shauna Kamath announced that Julie Merluccio started as Long Island Sound (LIS) Habitat Restoration Coordinator for New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Julie previously worked for NYSDEC's Tidal Wetlands Office and spent time with the National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Brian Thompson announced that this meeting will be his last LIS Partnership MC meeting as he is retiring on June 1. Brian has been doing this for almost 20 years. He is pleased to have been part of LIS Partnership and see everything the Partnership has accomplished. Leah acknowledged Brian's legacy, thanked him, and noted that he will be missed.

Advisory Committee Reports

Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

Penny Vlahos provided the STAC update. The last STAC meeting was held on February 20. Over 120 abstracts were submitted for the two-day [LIS Research Conference](#) that will be held in Mystic, Connecticut, in early June. Abstracts are being reviewed now. Penny thinks the conference will be very successful and noted there is a lot of interest. LIS Partnership research proposals deadlines were discussed. The deadline for letters of intent has passed and those are being evaluated.

The STAC also discussed the joint meeting with the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Penny said there will be a meeting with the CAC to discuss the agenda for the joint STAC/CAC meeting that will be held in Port Jefferson, New York. The agenda will be shared in the future.

The STAC has two vice chairs to allow for mentoring and training. Penny announced that Michael Whitney, from University of Connecticut, will be the Connecticut Co-chair and Dianne Greenfield, a harmful algal bloom specialist, will be the New York Co-chair. Michael and Dianne will work with the current STAC chairs and attend meetings over the next year before the current chairs depart.

The first STAC newsletter was released with support from Nicole Hammond. The STAC hopes the newsletter will be useful for the July visit to Capitol Hill. The next newsletter will be published in early September. Suggestions for areas to be covered are welcome. Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) goal updates will be covered in future newsletters.

A communications workshop was held last Friday. There will be a debrief at the next STAC meeting. Penny heard it was a very useful workshop, especially for early career folks and graduate students.

STAC letters were provided to EPA to press for the replacement/hiring of the EPA LISO Director. EPA provided a prompt response and hiring is underway.

LIS Partnership Work Group reports were provided to the STAC and followed by presentations on:

- Combining acoustic telemetry and stable isotope analysis to assign critical foraging grounds in LIS and the northwest Atlantic Ocean (Oliver Shipley, Stony Brook University)
- Overview of harmful algal bloom monitoring and shellfish programs at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) (Emily Marquis, Connecticut DoAg)
- LIS Clearinghouse updates, recent developments, activities, and proposed improvements (Chris Schubert, U.S. Geological Survey)
- ROMS-RCA model updates (Andrew Thuman, HDR)

Many STAC members want to use the ROMS-RCA model and several submitted proposals that plan to use the model. Penny said a lot of outputs are due in May and those should address important questions. The final product is due in August.

The next STAC meeting will be the joint meeting with the CAC in June. This joint meeting was moved up from September and will be held before the Capitol Hill visit.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

Holly Drinkuth provided the CAC update. In February, CAC leadership met to think about new leadership structures given the departure of long-time co-chair Nancy Seligson. The leadership group also identified priorities for internal coordination, being intentional about not duplicating LIS Partnership work, and ensuring the CAC is clear about its role and benefits to the Partnership.

The March CAC meeting focused on policy coordination and governance. The CAC is working on an intentional recruitment process to expand membership and support increased collaboration. Policy Subcommittee co-chairs provided reports regarding New York, Connecticut, and the federal level. The four vice chairs gave high level overviews of the CCMP goals. There were MC updates and communications updates on the Report to Congress. Finally, there was a presentation from the Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds Work Group Co-chairs on CCMP objectives and implementation opportunities for the New York septic system replacement program.

The CAC is currently working on the following items:

- Coordinating the July trip to Washington, D.C., with Policy Subcommittee co-chairs.
- Creating a “value proposition” that will be used as a recruitment tool to explain CAC membership benefits to potential new members and clarify roles and expectations.
- Planning the joint STAC/CAC meeting on June 18 in Port Jefferson, New York. This date will enable earlier priority setting work and earlier sharing with Work Group Co-chairs and the MC, while also serving as preparation for the Washington, D.C., trip.

FY2026 Work Plan and Budget

Budget Overview

Leah provided an overview of LIS Partnership funding, which has generally increased over the past decade. LIS Partnership has two funding mechanisms: Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 119, which is LIS geographic program funding that constitutes the bulk of the Partnership’s funding, and CWA Section 320, which is National Estuary Program funding. Infrastructure funds come from both LIS Partnership funding mechanisms. Infrastructure funds were only intended for five years, so these funds are not included in the planning target for fiscal year (FY) 2027.

Leah reviewed incoming and outgoing funds. Incoming funds include CWA Section 119 funds (about 97% of funding), CWA Section 320 funds, and statutory match. The statutory match directly supports CCMP implementation and is calculated as a percentage of the funds. Together, these funds form the planning target. Funding is determined annually by Congress. EPA cannot commit to future appropriations. The base budget covers ongoing items already approved by the MC, like personnel, administration, monitoring, modeling, and education, as well as level funding for pass-through programs. If there are unencumbered funds after base commitments, the Partnership seeks supplemental proposals. Most proposals should go through the competitive pass-through programs (Research Grant Program, Futures Fund, and Break Down Barriers). Sometimes, however, there is work that expands base programs, new opportunities that do not fit into the competitive programs, or priority efforts the MC wants to ensure gets funded. These projects go through the supplemental process.

For FY 2026, combined appropriations for the two funding mechanisms are almost \$42 million, including funds for this year and carry-over funds from last year. The base proposals amount, an

estimated \$34,518,364, is subtracted first. EPA maintains a fiduciary reserve knowing the base amount fluctuates due to changes in staffing, indirect rates, etc.

The additional funding needs for this year include:

- \$7 million in supplemental funding. Supplemental proposals came in through the technical work groups, which have broader engagement and can gather more diverse information.
- Increasing funding for Futures Fund. This is the first year that ongoing programming is allowed. Some supplemental proposals previously ineligible for Futures Fund might now be eligible. Additional funds could support projects pushed to this competitive program.
- Increasing funding for the Research Grant Program. The number of pre-proposals doubled this year, and the Partnership has not increased the research budget in several years.
- Funding for the states. In the last few years, the MC has decided to forward-fund the states.

The total funding request is over \$14 million, which exceeds available funds. Thus, the MC will make recommendations to EPA on how to implement the remaining approximately \$7.5 million.

On March 24, the Implementation Team (I-Team) discussed the supplemental proposals. If the MC agrees with the I-Team's recommendations, funded proposals total just under \$4.5 million. Increases in Futures Fund and the Research Grant Program are proposed with the remaining unencumbered funds. Three supplemental proposals would be added to the base if approved: Marine Debris Removal and Prevention (American Littoral Society), Coastal Stewardship Protecting Shorebirds (National Audubon Society), and Integrated Modeling Framework: Use, Maintenance, and Support (New York City Department of Environmental Protection).

Open Discussion for MC Members

Leah summarized the items for the MC to consider:

- Questions about supplemental proposals and recommendations.
- Support for competitive pass-through programs. Currently, the base includes \$12.6 million for Futures Fund, \$3 million for research, and \$1.5 million for Break Down Barriers each year. Break Down Barriers funding was increased last year. Futures Funding was increased about 2-3 years ago. It has been some time since the research funding pot increased.
- The program must meet the aggregate statutory match requirement to implement the budget. Some supplemental proposals cannot meet match requirements. Generally, the Partnership relies on overmatch provided by New York and Connecticut. The Research Grant Program and Break Down Barriers also do not often meet match requirements and rely on the states for a portion of the match.
- There is the option to hold funds for FY 2027. FY 2027 will be the first year the program does not receive the infrastructure funds that the Partnership has been receiving over the last five years. Infrastructure funds have gone to Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York.
- The MC should also think about the LIS Community Impact Fund as an ongoing programming piece to wrap into the future budget.

Penny strongly supports increasing research funds. Today, \$3 million is very small and disproportionate to potential impacts. Penny noted that research dollars stay in the states to train the future workforce. Penny thinks it is important to focus on return on investment. She wants to hear from the review committees for research, Futures Fund, and other efforts about how increases will impact each program. It is a priority for the Partnership to see clear achievements from its investments. Penny does not want the money to be lost in the abyss.

Sylvain De Guise spoke about the research program. In the last cycle (2024), about \$6.6 million was competed and 13 projects were funded from 37 pre-proposals. The success rate was 35%, so 35% of pre-proposals were funded. This year, 72 pre-proposals were received and about \$5.5 million will be competed. If the average proposal size remains the same, about 15% of pre-proposals can be funded. This success rate is as competitive as that of the National Institutes of Health and U.S. National Science Foundation. If \$1 million was added, the success rate comes to 18%.

Sylvain said the research program has always wanted research projects that contribute directly to management or decision-making. Funded research is meant to be applicable, either fundamental research that informs processes like modeling, or applied research that, for example, assesses usefulness of marsh restoration methods to immediately inform restoration practices.

Becky Shuford said the research program has criteria for societal benefit and/or impacting the CCMP. The research program also talked about whether the LIS Partnership communications team could help make the research and its impacts more visible. The research program runs a rigorous technical review process and only funds projects that are fundable. If the trend of increasing pre-proposals continues, the research program will have more than enough fundable proposals to consider. The program would be happy to fund more of the 72 pre-proposals received this year. Becky guesses there will be a continued increase in pre-proposals over the next few years.

Penny asked if part of the increase is a reaction to federal funding changes. Becky said the increase in proposals seems to be a trend seen elsewhere as more people submit to fewer opportunities.

Becky said a massive amount of effort goes into reviewing pre-proposals. Additional funding for the research program means more return on the review panel's investment and time.

Leah noted that Penny proposed a 25% success rate as a goal for the research program in the chat. Leah asked what funding amount would be needed to reach that rate.

Becky said the two-year cap for projects is \$500,000 (\$250,000 per year). Many projects are at that cap so \$1 million could potentially support two additional projects. If the average funding amount per proposal remains the same, Sylvain said adding \$3 million to the pool would result in a 24% success rate for the 72 pre-proposals.

The Partnership distributes \$1.5 million to each Sea Grant annually for a total of \$3 million. Two years of funding are combined for the research program, so it is anticipated that \$6 million will be distributed every two years. Leah asked whether Sylvain was suggesting \$9 million for a two-year competition. Sylvain said that is correct. Most funds, minus grant management costs, are competed. If \$8.5 million was competed from a \$9 million appropriation for a two-year cycle and the average size of the proposals remains about the same (\$500,000 per two years), 17 projects could be funded. This would result in a 24% success rate.

Jim Ammerman clarified that the cap is \$500,000 per year, so some projects can be \$1 million over two years. The average is not that high. Projects requesting over \$250,000 per year (\$500,000 per two-year cycle) are required to be multi-disciplinary. Some smaller projects (\$200,000 - \$300,000 per two-year cycle) are submitted, so the average is about \$500,000 per project for two years.

Leah reminded the MC that they do not need to choose to fund Futures Fund or the research program. There are other options if funds remain in the fiduciary reserve.

Leah invited Carrie Clingan from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and Bessie Wright, EPA Project Officer for the NFWF agreement, to provide information on Futures Fund. The Request for Proposals (RFP) is out now, and a lot of proposals are already coming in.

Carrie said they are seeing an uptick in people reaching out and scheduling proposal lab. In general, NFWF is seeing a big uptick in people looking for funding. Carrie thinks Futures Fund is about 20% ahead of where they were last year at this time (about a month until the deadline). NFWF increased the cap on implementation and outreach projects. Due to inflation, NFWF might not want to fund more projects but fund each project at a higher amount to better cover costs.

Bessie said one focus for Futures Fund is meeting the Total Maximum Daily Load by reducing nitrogen. Many nitrogen reduction projects are so expensive that Futures Fund dollars are only a portion of the project's total funding. The higher cap addresses that need. Carrie added that the higher cap also allows for more matching contributions which benefits the Partnership.

Leah noted that leverage dollars is an important program metric. The amount of leverage dollars is often increased by Futures Fund work. A couple years ago, Futures Fund shifted from supporting very small- or medium-sized projects to supporting medium- and large-sized projects. The Community Impact Fund has picked up technical assistance for small entities to receive their first federal grant/pass-through for communications, outreach, education, or implementation projects.

Becky raised the Futures Fund policy change approved by the MC at its last meeting. Bessie clarified this was flexibility regarding ongoing programming. A project is eligible for Futures Funds dollars three times before being considered ongoing programming. In the past, ongoing programming was not funded. Now, Futures Fund will support ongoing programming with a subset of funds. Becky thought this additional remit could benefit from increased funding. Bessie agreed.

Leah welcomed Ashley Desrosiers, EPA Project Officer for LIS Community Impact Fund (LISCIF) under Restore America's Estuaries (RAE), and Shahela Begum, LISCIF Program Director for RAE, to discuss the LISCIF pass-through program and proposals under review.

Ashley echoed the uptick in interest, letters of intent, and proposals this year. Last year, RAE received 27 letters of intent for a total funding ask of \$2.4 million. This year, there were 57 letters of intent with a funding ask of \$4.8 million. Of those, 40 were invited to the full proposal round and are being scored now. There is still an ask of almost \$3.4 million, and RAE is only able to distribute \$1.2 million this round. Final selections will be extremely competitive. Ashley wanted the MC to be aware of LISCIF demand when considering the budget for the next few years and thinking about the long-term future of LISCIF as infrastructure monies sunset.

Shahela added that they see a capacity building element for organizations that reapply. For example, an organization may not have had any staff at one point but has since gained staff. Once organizations get their first federal grant, states and other agencies take notice. Organizations that never had a physical location are getting donated spaces. The demand and need for LISCIF funds and support in future years will likely increase.

Leah noted that the MC does not have decisions to make on LISCIF today. The pass-through programs operate like accordion files to accommodate budget increases and decreases. LISCIF was infrastructure-funded and has funds through FY 2029. The MC should understand these implications for the future budget and the opportunities to expand or contract pass-through programs as needed. If the MC wants to continue LISCIF, funds need to be secured in 2027 or 2028.

The only pass-through program not highlighted was Break Down Barriers. This program received increased funding last year, and it is not being considered for further increases now. Increases are being discussed for the Research Grant Program, due to rising demand and lack of recent funding increases, and Futures Fund, due to changes in ongoing programming allowability.

Supplemental Proposals Discussion

Becky proposed a conversation around supplemental proposal submission. She did not fully understand who was eligible to submit supplemental proposals, the distinction between what might fit better under Futures Fund or the Research Grant Program, or how the Work Group and I-Team evaluations come into play when it comes to the MC considering supplemental proposals ranked medium, medium-low, and low.

Leah usually covers these items during the October MC meeting. However, that meeting was canceled due to the lapse in federal appropriations. As a non-competitive program, anything that can go through the competitive programs should do so. Supplemental proposals should be high-need projects that the MC feels cannot risk competition because the projects are essential for CCMP implementation. The Partnership cannot have rubrics as a non-competitive program. Instead, the Partnership relies on the Work Groups to integrate needs and identify what cannot be funded through the competitive programs. This is why the conversation opened with discussion on increasing funds for some pass-through programs. Those programs require competition and have policies in place to ensure each proposal is the best it can be. Supplemental proposals may, for example, cover small pieces needed for CCMP implementation, capture a key metric that needs to be reported, or fund essential ongoing work that competitive programs cannot support. The MC makes recommendations to EPA. EPA determines if activities are allowable and within statutory requirements, funding mechanisms are in place, and recipients are in good standing.

Cassie Bauer and Holly echoed what Becky said. Cassie had questions about what is or is not eligible. Holly thinks it is important for the Work Groups to use similar processes to determine what is or is not eligible. Leah stated the goal was to direct the Work Groups for consistency across the review process. With the lapse in federal appropriations and Mark Tedesco's retirement, EPA LISO is doing its best to keep things moving. EPA LISO is working to develop a consistent process so the Partnership can anticipate timelines and be prepared in the absence of immediate EPA direction.

Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds (CWHW)

The I-Team recommended funding two Suffolk County efforts through New York State, a continuation of bioextraction, and a marine debris removal and prevention project.

Michele Golden said NYSDEC Division of Water wanted to withdraw the two proposals not recommended for funding (gametophyte kelp culturing and landscape turfgrass alternatives).

It was generally supported by the MC to fund the four CWHW proposals recommended for funding. It is up to EPA to best implement the MC's recommendations. Sometimes, EPA must pivot due to funding mechanisms and recipient standing. If EPA is unable to secure a supplemental proposal, that funding could go toward Futures Fund or the Research Grant Program.

Leah reminded attendees that the MC may recommend certain proposals, but EPA must ensure the statutory match requirement is met. EPA usually meets with New York and Connecticut to discuss whether proposals that cannot meet their match can be further supported by the states.

Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife (THAW)

Leah noted that the proposal ranked second by the THAW Work Group was submitted through the Informed and Engaged Public Work Group and was highly rated by both Work Groups. The top two proposals (River Restoration Network and Coastal Stewardship Protecting Shorebirds) were recommended for funding. The other three proposals were either recommended for Futures Fund or future consideration.

Cassie believes the Sunken Meadow project came in for supplemental funding last year and was recommended to go through Futures Fund. Cassie thinks this project was submitted as a supplemental proposal because the cost was greater than the maximum allowed under Futures Fund. Now, the project is coming back for the same Phase I after getting \$1.5 million from Futures Fund and the recommendation is to push the project to Futures Fund again. Cassie wanted to ensure the project is eligible for Futures Fund. She asked if projects over the Futures Fund cap should get kicked to the supplemental process or be required to parse out funding over multiple years. Leah reiterated that a project should go through Futures Fund if possible. If a project exceeds some threshold, it could come in as a supplemental proposal. It is up to the MC to decide if Sunken Meadow is such a high priority that it needs to be funded via the supplemental process.

Bessie confirmed that Futures Fund funded the Sunken Meadow project at \$1.5 million. The cap for implementation projects was increased to \$2 million in the RFP, so this Sunken Meadow project is eligible. If selected, it would have another year of Futures Fund funding (up to \$2 million) before being considered ongoing programming. Right now, the Sunken Meadow project is funded at a level that is higher than what was planned for the ongoing funding pot. When the project exhausts available funds through Futures Fund, Bessie thinks it would be appropriate to bring the project back to the MC. It still has up to \$4 million available if the supplemental proposal is updated to \$2 million and submitted to Futures Fund. Bessie noted the proposal does not currently meet the match requirement so that would need to be addressed for Futures Fund.

Carrie added that the education and outreach cap was increased to \$500,000.

Bessie said the River Restoration Network and shorebirds projects were identified by reviewers as necessary to fund. While eligible as ongoing programming, these projects are so important that they are no longer considered competitive and require a non-competitive avenue for funding.

Cassie said the Sunken Meadow project might not be submitted to Futures Fund if it does not have the match. She noted \$1.5 million has already been invested and the project was vetted through Futures Fund. Cassie asked if it makes sense to go through with the first phase that was funded if the project does not get additional funding to complete Phase I. She wondered whether the project should go through the supplemental process since it has already been vetted and is a priority. Bessie said the Sunken Meadow project is close to meeting the match requirement for the \$1.6 million supplemental proposal and might be able to find additional match. If meeting the match requirement is not an option, it would be worth considering as supplemental proposal.

Cassie said the River Restoration Network proposal mentioned they want to be considered for base funding in the future. She asked if the MC would discuss that next year. Leah said yes. EPA had a discussion with the recipient, and it was determined that if the proposal was approved by the MC, it would be a one-time request. Depending on how the supplemental proposal and the recipient's current awards proceed, it could be added to the base. That would be an MC decision for next year.

Leah said the top three THAW supplemental proposals (River Restoration Network, Coastal Stewardship Protecting Shorebirds, and Sunken Meadow Restoration) may be eligible for Futures Fund. It would be a question of whether the MC feels these projects are high priorities that should move forward as supplemental proposals. Choosing to fund or not fund these proposals impacts the amount of unencumbered funds that can go to the pass-through programs discussed earlier.

Bessie pointed out that if the MC chooses to move the shorebirds project to Futures Fund, the funding ask represents more than half of the pot planned for ongoing programming. This would significantly limit the number of ongoing programming that could be funded. Bessie reiterated that

the shorebirds project is considered nonnegotiable at the review table and stressed the importance of keeping Futures Fund competitive. If the shorebirds project comes to Futures Fund, it will be funded. This is why it needs to be supported non-competitively.

Holly feels it is important to fund projects that the Work Groups identified as priorities. Since the Work Group identified the River Restoration Network and shorebirds projects as important, Holly does not think these projects should be moved to a competitive program.

Sylvain asked about the chances of a Futures Fund proposal being funded to have a sense of how competitive the competitive pool is when considering whether projects should remain in the non-competitive pool or be moved to a competitive pool. Carrie said about 1 in 2 proposals (50%) submitted to Futures Fund are funded. Odds for the Sunken Meadow project might be better considering the scale of the project and experienced grant writers. However, Futures Fund is still competitive so there is a chance the project might not be funded. Bessie noted that Sunken Meadow has been previously funded and it was clear the project was multi-phased when it was originally submitted. Futures Fund encourages multi-phased projects to get larger impact projects through the door and intends to see projects through to completion.

Suzanne Paton serves as a Futures Fund proposal reviewer. She said the shorebirds project was kicked out last year and could not be funded through Futures Fund anymore prior to the change allowing ongoing programming. Reviewers agreed the project was a high priority and ongoing need, so it makes sense to add it to the base if the MC approves. The idea was to submit the project as a supplemental proposal this year for MC approval and base consideration. Leah confirmed that the MC would be approving the shorebirds project as a supplemental proposal for this year and approving its addition to the base for future years.

Kevin O'Brien shared information regarding the ocean acidification project proposed by Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve (CTNERR) in coordination with Connecticut Sea Grant. This effort is a larger strategy that wraps around existing tools and data to provide a mechanism for group input and a coordinated management strategy. This proposed strategy is the step to connect science and research to management decisions. It involves taking the information and providing a structure to determine how the data can be used. Leah noted that this ocean acidification strategy proposal was ranked sixth by the Work Group and not recommended for funding at this time by the I-Team.

Penny was curious about the added value for ongoing ocean acidification efforts. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP) has an ocean acidification monitoring effort, the Interstate Environmental Commission (IEC) has a coastal monitoring effort, and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is updating its monitoring effort. Since all three groups are involved very deeply in coordination and understanding the utility of the data, Penny is not sure where CTNERR's strategy proposal came from. Kevin said there are a lot of ongoing efforts and degrees of coordination but there does not seem to be an overall strategy or structure for the vision for ocean acidification monitoring in coastal LIS. Penny asked what that structure would be since she feels coordination is already underway. Penny noted that there is a common place where data is stored and efforts to understand how to compare old data to new and emerging data. Kevin said questions remain about data application, use, and management needs. There are great existing data structures, foundations, formats, and tools. The value added is to take that and develop the strategy for getting it out and making the best management decisions.

Cayla Sullivan led the long-term coastal acidification monitoring ad hoc group when it started in 2022, but that group has not met in a while. Cayla thinks there is enough data to start analyzing and making recommendations about applications at the management level. The ad hoc group has not had a chance to meet and identify next steps. Cayla feels strongly that an analysis of current data is needed. The Partnership is in a good place to talk about analysis and management applications. After analysis, the Partnership will be ready to consider what is next for acidification in LIS.

Leah summarized the general MC recommendation to fully support the Work Group's recommendation to fund River Restoration Network and Coastal Stewardship Protecting Shorebirds proposals. Leah did not hear consensus on Sunken Meadow and recommended circling back later. Leah said it sounded like the migratory fish escapement tracking and coastal ocean acidification strategy proposals are not recommended for funding at this time.

Break (10:35 am to 10:45 am)

FY 2026 Work Plan and Budget Continued

The Sustainable and Resilient Communities Work Group did not submit any supplemental proposals. Base funding levels and ongoing activities will be maintained.

Informed and Engaged Public (IEP)

Leah stated that the Stewardship Strategy Implementation proposal was reviewed and highly rated by the IEP and THAW Work Groups. The I-Team recommended it for funding, along with proposals for Connecticut's coastal public access guide, Sound Gardens, and the mobile nursery lab.

Sylvain spoke about the LIS Schools Network (LISSN) and LIS Mentor Teacher (LISMT) Program supplemental proposals. These programs are part of the IEP base. LISSN is a relatively new program. Last year, Connecticut Sea Grant invested in assessing strengths, weaknesses, and best practices. The funds requested are for a half-time staff person to implement those best practices. LISSN engages entire schools in a project focused on a topic related to LIS. Sylvain thinks it would be a shame to have put in time and effort to identify best practices and assess strengths and weaknesses then not implement them. Sylvain also described the LISMT program, which involves recruiting teachers to hold workshops and teach their peers. The program has been running for over 20 years, and the request is to assess program strengths, weaknesses, and best practices that can be implemented to improve the already successful program. Both requests are for half-time positions and a low level of funding. They are both under the IEP goal, which is requesting and would be receiving the least amount of supplemental funding.

Leah asked if the requests were one-time requests. Sylvain confirmed they are discrete requests. As best practices are identified for the LISMT Program, there might be another discrete request next year for implementation. However, these requests will not be sustained over time.

Holly asked if these two projects were additions to what is covered in the base. Sylvain said the LISSN base request last year had a graduate assistant funded for a year to support the program. This year's base request replaced the graduate student with a half-time staff position. EPA asked Connecticut Sea Grant to pull the half-time position out of the base and submit it as a supplemental proposal. Connecticut Sea Grant also added a half-time staff position for the LISMT Program to the base request and was asked to pull the half-time position out of the base and submit it as a supplemental proposal as well.

Richard Friesner asked if schools and teachers were already recruited and would be turned away if not funded. Sylvain said no. Ongoing program funds are in the base budget. The supplemental

proposals are for half-time positions to implement best practices for LISSN and identify best practices for the LISMT Program. Richard said that sounds like a logical next step. Leah confirmed that the Partnership funds LISSN and the LISMT Program through the base. The supplemental proposals would add half-time staff positions for a single year.

Robert Burg noted that the IEP Work Group received the LISSN and LISMT Program proposals late and that might be why the proposals did not rank high. Sylvain clarified that the supplemental proposals got to the Work Group late because Connecticut Sea Grant was asked to pull the half-time positions from the base. Proposals were routed to the Work Group as quickly as possible.

Holly wanted to clarify why the LIS High School Summit was submitted as a supplemental proposal rather than going through Futures Fund. Typically, if a project is eligible for Futures Fund but gets submitted as a supplemental proposal there is a reason. Leah said this was due to timing. When this proposal was submitted to the Work Group, it was not eligible for Futures Fund because it was ongoing programming. At the January 15 MC meeting, the MC decided to expand Futures Fund to ongoing programming so this project would now be eligible.

Bessie noted that the LIS High School Summit project was pulled out of Futures Fund the year before last after receiving funding three times. The project was funded for one year as a subaward. Adrienne Esposito confirmed the LIS High School Summit project was funded for three years before Futures Fund stopped funding it. At that time, they were instructed to submit a supplemental proposal so the project could be considered for inclusion in the base to promote continuity. Adrienne said the project grows each year. There have been times when they had to tell some high schools to limit the number of participants given lack of funding. Adrienne also noted that Futures Fund can only support 50% of submitted projects. Since this project requires consistent funding each year, she said the supplemental process might be the best way to accomplish that goal.

Becky mentioned a note stating the LIS High School Summit was limited to Citizens Campaign Fund for the Environment (CCFE) partner schools. The education component of the Partnership works to have opportunities open to any school or program. Becky asked if there are plans to make the LIS High School Summit broadly accessible to additional schools on Long Island.

Adrienne noted the program embraces all schools. They work in communities including Riverhead, Rocky Point, Uniondale, and Brentwood. They have turned schools away due to limited funding, but they do not limit who can participate. The program could be easily grown. It is not just a CCFE project; the Atlantic States Marine Conservation Society and Friends of the Bay are partners. It is a collaborative effort that is open and unrestricted. They have embraced many high schools but cannot meet the needs of all schools since it is not a large grant.

Jimena Perez-Viscasillas said the note was something the IEP team identified as a potential discussion point if there was interest in moving this project into the base, which is not the case at this time. The rest of the Partnership's education and outreach portfolio is open to all. For example, Jimena has funding for four mentor teachers annually, but any teacher can apply to participate in any given year. It was Jimena's understanding that schools participating in the LIS High School Summit are the same each year. She asked if there was a process for schools to apply each year.

Adrienne said there is a mix. They used to work with North Port but no longer do so since there was a lapse in funding and lack of continuity. Adrienne said they continue to offer programming to the schools they work with. If other schools approach CCFE, they are embraced if funding is available. CCFE could seek out other schools, but they are limited by funding. In this program, CCFE and partners go into the schools to give presentations, do a field trip, and host a conference for

students to present their work. It requires several months of work in a school and commitment from schools and teachers. The program is open to all schools but is limited by funding/resources. They have never turned schools down but have asked schools to reduce participant numbers.

Jimena noted that the LIS High School Summit is a great program, but she feels it would need to be forever growing to add more schools. It makes more sense to have this project go through Futures Fund so it can retain its current format.

Leah clarified that EPA cannot fund Citizens Campaign for the Environment so the funds would need to go to CCFE. Adrienne confirmed funds would go to CCFE.

Bessie said the Futures Fund cap for education and outreach is \$500,000. CCFE could apply as an ongoing program. Right now, the request is for \$164,000 but the program could be expanded. While Futures Fund is competitive, the project has a solid chance (1 in 2) of getting funded, especially with a strong proposal. Bessie pointed out that CCFE may be able to get more resources if the proposal goes through Futures Fund rather than the supplemental process. Adrienne said it is a challenge and stated all their grants were denied last year.

Leah said there was support for the four supplemental proposals recommended by the I-Team (Stewardship Strategy Implementation, Connecticut's coastal public access guide, Sound Gardens, and the mobile nursery lab). Leah did not hear consensus on the LISSN, LISMT Program, and LIS High School Summit proposals. Leah added that EPA does not have an existing funding mechanism for CCFE so implementation would require outside determination.

Crosscutting Proposals

There are three proposals from USGS, one proposal from IEC, and one proposal from New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP). IEC realized efficiencies under an existing agreement and proposed to purchase equipment to sample for PFAS with unexpended funds. This request is coming to the MC because it would be a substantive workplan change with future budget implications. If LIS Partnership purchases equipment, it is implied that the equipment will be used for future sampling and analysis. This funding would come out of IEC's existing award. If not funded, IEC would reduce its FY 2026 base budget request. The NYCDEP project is a modeling effort that would be added to the base. EPA has an existing agreement with NYCDEP for integrated modeling. This supplemental funding is for overall support and maintenance continuity. The I-Team recommended funding two USGS proposals, the IEC proposal, and the NYCDEP proposal.

USGS's Clearinghouse project was not recommended for funding. The Clearinghouse is funded through the base and there were a lot of questions from the I-Team on the outreach expansion. The I-Team proposed to fund the Clearinghouse at the base level for now.

Sylvain asked why the crosscutting proposals did not come through the Work Groups and undergo some review and ranking like the other supplemental proposals. Leah said technical aspects of the USGS proposals were reviewed by the CWHW Work Group but were submitted a bit later. While other technical work groups were well-poised to transition to the 2025 CCMP, the CWHW Work Group had to make significant changes and combine about three work groups. Denise Argue said a big reason why USGS proposals were not worked through Work Groups was because USGS was shut down when supplemental proposals were introduced to the Work Groups.

Jim Ammerman spoke with USGS about their proposals and LIS priorities. They agreed the two proposals recommended for funding were important. The third supplemental proposal for the Clearinghouse includes funding for more outreach. Jim recommends at least funding the outreach

component of that supplemental proposal. Jim added that research grantees are now required to participate in the Clearinghouse. There will be a Clearinghouse demonstration at the upcoming research conference. Jim argued that Futures Fund should consider requiring grantees who collect data in specific locations to use the Clearinghouse as well. Leah clarified that the Clearinghouse proposal has three tasks, and Jim is recommending the MC consider funding Task 1.

Gina Groseclose, USGS staff involved in the Clearinghouse project, said Sea Grant now requires groups receiving funding to put data into the Clearinghouse. She pointed out that Task 2 creates a tool for uploading data into the mapper. There is a limited amount of outreach included in the base funding request. The intention of the outreach in the supplemental proposal was for Gina and Chris Schubert to talk about utility and benefits, as well as generate user buy-in. Sylvain clarified that it is not a Sea Grant decision to use or not use the Clearinghouse. Sea Grant is carrying through the requirement of their award letter that the Clearinghouse be used by research grantees.

Deb Abibou said Gina's description of the outreach method is different from the proposal. Some questions arose because the proposal described identifying outreach advocates in committees and work groups. It sounded like that might include Sustainable and Resilient Communities Extension Professionals (SRC EPs) or others but there was no communication to discuss whether SRC EPs have capacity. Gina said outreach advocates would be part of a steering committee to advise on outreach events and what would be useful to a broad audience. Outreach advocates would not necessarily be conducting outreach activities. Deb said the commitment level makes a difference. Nikki Tachiki asked whether USGS would do the actual outreach while LIS Partnership partners provide guidance as steering committee members. Gina confirmed that was the intention.

Nikki asked how Task 2, which Gina said was about building a tool to help users upload data, will work with Save the Sound's Quick Drops. Nikki thinks there has been an effort to funnel information into the Water Quality Exchange and wanted to know if others see this task as complementary. Gina said they are working to incorporate Quick Drops into the mapper as part of current funding. Nikki asked how that ties into Task 2 and the development of a different capability. Gina said that would incorporate anyone who is not putting their data into Quick Drops. Jim said Quick Drops is a database primarily for water quality and for small community groups. The Clearinghouse/mapper is not a true database. It is essentially a metadata database with links to other databases like Quick Drops. With the mapper, you can see where samples have been collected and get links to the data or information about the data. Nikki asked Gina if Task 2 aims to make the Clearinghouse a database. Gina said no; the intention is to show where data is collected and provide links to where the data is hosted. The Clearinghouse would not host the data.

Holly asked if all the work can be accomplished in the one-year timeline and whether it might be possible to stage coordination and decision-making for next year. For example, could USGS carry out Task 1 and part of Task 2 then come back with a plan? Gina said Task 2 and Task 3 are mainly supported by two separate contractor teams so it should be feasible to accomplish within the year.

Jim emphasized that the outreach task is the most important to ensure data collectors are using the Clearinghouse. Maintenance and improvement will be needed, but that is beside the point if the Clearinghouse is not used.

Leah said the MC is in support of the I-Team's recommendations. Given the questions on the Clearinghouse proposal, the recommendation may be to just fund Task 1 of that proposal.

Final Decisions

Leah reviewed the final decision points that were tabled earlier related to the LIS High School Summit, LISSN, LISMT Program, and Sunken Meadow, as well as possible increases to Futures Fund and the Research Grant Program. Leah asked the MC for final recommendations on prioritization and budget distribution for those items. EPA was especially interested in hearing recommendations on whether to fund the Sunken Meadow project or direct the project to Futures Fund since it is a high budget item. The other three supplemental proposals requested smaller amounts so it would be easier to accommodate them later in the fiscal year if funding is available through the fiduciary reserve or other avenues.

Cassie agrees projects like Sunken Meadow should go through the competitive process. However, since LIS Partnership already partially funded Phase I, Cassie wants to know whether that partial funding will have meaningful results if this second part of Phase I is not funded. If no meaningful results will be realized without additional dollars, it might make sense for the project to go through the supplemental process. If the partial funding will produce meaningful results, the project can go through the competitive process. Bessie said Phase I is required to meet certain outcomes under the Futures Fund award. Bessie thinks it might be worth having a conversation with the Sunken Meadow proposers to see whether they could produce the additional match required for Futures Fund. State overmatch can be applied to Futures Fund awards; this would need to be included in the application. Because the project came to Futures Fund as a phased project, Futures Fund expects to see the next phases coming through. So long as the proposals continue to be strong, they have a good chance (not guaranteed) of continuing to be funded. Cassie asked how much additional match was needed to see if New York could provide the match. Holly thinks Cassie's point about moving the project forward is important. Clarifying whether match is available is also important because this is a critical CCMP implementation project.

Holly was in favor of supporting the lower ranked IEP proposals. Leah said EPA still needs to determine funding mechanisms for some of those proposals. There is about \$700,000 in the fiduciary reserve but a lot of that goes to increasing indirect cost rates or staffing changes in the base. However, there may be other available funds to utilize.

Gary Wikfors spoke on behalf of increasing the research budget. The local community has many world-class marine scientists. The opportunity to have them work locally is too good to pass up.

Jeremy Campbell asked what the total project cost is for the entire Sunken Meadow project and whether it was being shopped around for other funding. Bessie shared the budget table from the supplemental package. The total project cost is \$1,631,254 with match of \$652,501.60 (about 40% match). Another 10% in match would be needed, which could be met with state overmatch. Bessie said Futures Fund dollars are part of a larger effort. Leah clarified that the federal match requirement is based on total project cost. It looks like the match provided is closer to 20% of the requirement, so they would need significant match to move forward through Futures Fund. Cassie noted that the proposal states they intend on applying to NYSDEC's Water Quality Improvement Project program for Phase 3 (Phragmites control) and the New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) Coastal Rehabilitation and Resilience Projects program for Phase 2 (ditch filling and tidal creek adjustments). However, they do not specify the total amount for all phases.

Suzanne acknowledged that these projects are very expensive. She would prefer everything to go through the competitive process. Suzanne mentioned a Hammonasset project in Connecticut and a desire to move a Futures Fund application forward. It is an \$11 million project, and they are working to get the other \$9 million needed to supplement the \$2 million from Futures Fund. Even

with \$12 million in the Futures Fund, marsh restoration projects are expensive, and more are being queued up for the next few years. There will be needs if other federal funds are not available.

Suzanne recognizes research is important and acknowledges a need to address information gaps. She advocates for research proposal reviewers to ensure projects have management implications and advance CCMP goals. Suzanne knows this is happening, but she is concerned that results are not helping inform management actions. Becky clarified Sea Grant research must be driven by management or end user needs. There are specific criteria about management and end user engagement and participation, including letters of support from management. The technical review team includes management agencies in Connecticut and New York that are part of the LIS Partnership. This is a priority fully baked into the RFP and evaluation criteria.

EPA will distribute the FY 2026 work plan and funding memo in next few weeks. EPA will implement MC recommendations with available funds and ensure work is allowable, recipients are in good standing, and the Partnership meets the aggregate statutory match requirement. A meeting with the states will be required to determine available overmatch. All applicants should anticipate submitting final applications to EPA in the first week of June.

Match considerations are essential. CWA Section 320 requires a one-to-one match on total award cost. For example, a \$500,000 project requires \$500,000 in match to meet the statutory requirement. The rest of the funding comes from CWA Section 119. Those funds require 5% match on education and outreach and 40% match on all other work. Interagency agreements, contracts, and EPA-held funds do not need match.

Leah provided a brief overview of the general budget process and timeline. It was a big loss to not have the two-day October 2025 MC meeting due to the lapse in federal appropriations. As a result, EPA held a combined I-Team and MC meeting in December. Currently, EPA is seeking recommendations on how to implement the budget. EPA will distribute final guidance.

LIS Partnership Management Committee Membership

The Connecticut DoAG Bureau of Aquaculture sent a letter to EPA requesting to join the MC. Per the governance document, requests to join the MC are routed through EPA.

Leah provided an overview of the LIS Partnership Management Conference structure. The Policy Committee consists of EPA Regional Administrators and New York and Connecticut Environmental Commissioners. The Executive Steering Committee includes EPA Division Directors and state Assistant Commissioners or Bureau Chiefs. Today, we are discussing MC participation. There are also Technical Work Groups, as well as the I-Team, STAC, and CAC.

The MC's is outlined in LIS Partnership's [governance document](#). There is an expectation of engagement and a requirement for CCMP implementation. The MC meets quarterly to advance goals and review strategies, actions, and progress in implementation and ecosystem response.

Currently, there are 26 MC members, including representatives from state agencies, federal agencies (including EPA representatives from Headquarters, Region 1, and Region 2), one tribe, STAC (speaking for about 40 members), CAC (speaking for about 30 members), interstate organizations, and universities, local government, and other organizations.

Leah opened the floor for MC discussion on next steps for the Connecticut DoAg Bureau of Aquaculture request and comments on MC membership gaps. Leah noted that New Hampshire and Vermont are only represented in the Technical Work Groups. These states have declined MC representation in the past due to time and commitment.

Gary Wikfors is a strong advocate for accepting the MC membership request from the Bureau of Aquaculture. In terms of gaps, the MC can strengthen representation from agencies and entities focused on living marine resources. Gary represents the National Marine Fisheries Service in the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. There are no federal waters in LIS, so Gary plays more of an advisory role rather than a direct role. The Bureau of Aquaculture represents relevant industry and data collection directly in LIS. Shellfish cultivation and traditional fishing practices have been going on sustainably for over 100 years. The role of shellfish and ecosystem services has been discussed by the MC over the last few decades. Shellfish play a pivotal trophic role in balancing primary production resulting from phytoplankton fertilization with nutrients. Although important, the creation of local, sustainable seafood is something the Partnership does not often take advantage of in its messaging. The Bureau is directly involved in that. The Bureau's letter focused on the data they collect to regulate the safe harvest of cultivated shellfish in LIS. Bacteriological data would be a useful indication of sewage pollution. The Bureau also does harmful algal bloom surveillance. Gary thinks this data and representation of food production and other shellfish ecosystem services are reason enough to accept the Bureau's request.

Sylvain also supports accepting the Bureau's MC membership request. He asked who regulates shellfish in New York. Cassie said NYSDEC's Division of Marine Resources (DMR) has a Shellfisheries Bureau which does much of what the Connecticut DoAg Bureau does. Sylvain thinks reciprocal representation is an additional reason to include the Connecticut DoAg Bureau.

Chris Bellucci also expressed support for the Bureau of Aquaculture's involvement. He thinks the Bureau's letter successfully outlined their alignment with the CCMP goals.

There were no hesitations from the MC regarding the Bureau's request. EPA will reply to the Bureau and identify a representative to add to the MC.

Holly expressed support for the Bureau of Aquaculture's involvement in the MC. She also mentioned that the MC should think about geographic expansion given the upper watershed goals in the CCMP. Holly wanted to know if there are geographic gaps in MC membership. New Hampshire and Vermont declined MC representation when EPA reached out during the CCMP revision. However, this is an opportunity to reach out again as level of engagement or participation could change. EPA can pursue options for better understanding. Bessie speaks to New Hampshire and Vermont representatives for other EPA work under CWA Section 319 and when soliciting Futures Fund proposals. The states' CWA Section 319 program has expressed interest in raising awareness that the states are part of the LIS watershed. Bessie has had a conversation about how to expand understanding and interest in LIS within New Hampshire.

Richard Friesner mentioned that every state is structured differently. It is important to have the right mix. If NYSDEC DMR covers shellfisheries in New York, that is good. NEIWPCC coordinates regularly, although infrequently, with upper watershed states for awareness and others do too. Cassie confirmed that NYSDEC DMR has a Shellfisheries Bureau. Cassie is the Bureau Chief for Marine Habitat but works closely with the Shellfisheries Bureau that regulates the shellfish industry, is responsible for shellfish sanitation, and reviews aquaculture permits. Cassie feels MC representation for New York is covered by NYSDEC's DMR habitat folks.

Bessie is discussing Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation participation in the MC and beyond with Council Member Rahiem Eleazer. Bessie is also having positive talks with the Shinnecock Nation. The Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans now own trust land in the watershed again. Their traditional land is the entire valleys of both the Hudson Valley and Housatonic Valley.

Program Topics for Discussion**CTDEEP Vessel Update**

Chris Bellucci appreciated input on vessel names. As discussed at the last MC meeting, there are three schools of thought on naming a vessel: naming it after a person, location/place, or use. They decided to go with “use” and named the vessel Research Vessel (RV) *Sound Outlook*. This closely aligns with the use of the vessel and matches the name of an electronic newsletter published by CTDEEP. Recent sea trials went well. There will be some last-minute tweaks before delivery, which is expected in late May/early June 2026. Chris shared some pictures of the new vessel. It is larger than the *Dempsey* and will be a great space for staff to work. Chris mentioned that the new vessel can get into the embayments, unlike the *Dempsey*, so it sets the stage for a lot of future work in embayments. In the summer, the Partnership could discuss hosting an unveiling or similar event.

Leah noted the vessel was funded with LIS Partnership infrastructure funds. Other assessments indicated a new vessel was essential to maintain monitoring efforts.

2026 Report to Congress

Nikki Tachiki provided an update on the 2026 Report to Congress. Under CWA Section 119, the Partnership is required to develop bi-annual Reports to Congress. The next report is due by end of year. Like previous reports, there will be an introduction, a section for each CCMP goal, and a funding section. EPA LISO will try to write most of the report using April 2026 progress reports as the basis for the content. EPA Project Officers will draft success stories and reach out to grantees to finalize text. EPA LISO plans to finalize content ideas in June and draft text in the summer. The draft will be shared with core staff and the I- Team closer to the September I-Team meeting. Then, the draft report will be shared with the MC for approval at the October MC meeting.

There are new layers of review and approval at EPA for Reports to Congress. EPA LISO is still moving the 2024 Report to Congress through the review process. About two weeks ago, EPA Headquarters review was completed and the draft 2024 Report to Congress was sent to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Any OMB comments will be addressed, and EPA Headquarters will do a final check before sending the document to Congress. EPA LISO anticipates a lengthy review and approval process for the 2026 Report to Congress. As a result, the 2026 Report to Congress will be pushed through the review and approval process as a Word Document. Extensive graphic design and layout will not be pursued until the text is approved. Given the potential for significant delays in finalizing the report, EPA LISO plans to scale back graphics compared to previous years. EPA LISO has started drafting report text. EPA Project Officers may reach out over the summer to discuss projects that have been selected to be featured in the report.

Leah confirmed the 2024 Report to Congress was wrapped into Appendix A in the CCMP.

Ocean Action Plan

Cassie provided an update on the Ocean Action Plan. New York State’s current Ocean Action Plan spans from 2017 to 2027. To facilitate collecting input on the next ten-year plan, NYSDEC and NYSDOS are hosting a side meeting during the State of the Science meeting on June 8 at Stony Brook University. The meeting is free and open to the public. To maximize attendance, the side meeting will be broken into three two-hour repetitive sessions. Participants only need to attend one session. Exact times and locations will be provided later. Side meeting participants will chart the path that upholds shared priorities for ensuring ecological health, promoting sustainable growth,

increasing resilience, and empowering public stewardship of ocean and coastal resources. Register for the side meeting at <https://form.jotform.com/260815136803050>.

Public Open Comment

There used to be a public comment period at the beginning of MC meetings. It is being reintroduced to allow the public non-MC members an opportunity to speak. There were no public comments.

Closing Remarks

Draft meeting notes will be shared with the MC and a final meeting summary will be posted to the LIS Partnership website.

The research conference is scheduled for June 4 and 5 in Mystic, Connecticut.

The next MC meeting will be held on July 16 via Microsoft Teams. This meeting is an opportunity to highlight projects, specific work, research, and other activities. Some agenda topics have been received, including a request for updates on infrastructure work. Email EPA with other topics.

The October MC meeting will be held in-person in Stony Brook, New York, on October 21 and 22.

The meeting adjourned at 12:22 pm.