

Management Committee Meeting Virtual Attendance (MS Teams) July 17, 2025 – Meeting Summary

Attendance

Tachiki, Nicole (EPA); O'Neill, Leah (EPA); Hagy, Jim (EPA); Shuford, Rebecca (NYSG); Reilly, Adam (EPA); Seligson, Nancy (CAC); Drinkuth, Holly (CAC); Vlahos, Penny (Guest); Fenwick, Whitney (DEP); Hammond, Nicole (EPA); Ammerman, James (NEIWPC); Morgart, Thomas - FPAC-NRCS, CT; Janus, Ken (Mohegan Tribe); Savercool, Hope (NEIWPC/DEC); Mayer, Audrey (FWS); Hunter, Timothy (CTDEEP); Deguise, Sylvain (CTSG); Streich, Kelly (CTDEEP); Bellucci, Christopher (CT DEEP); Ferlow, Nancy - FPAC-NRCS, CT; Balla, Richard (EPA); Friesner, Richard (NEIWPC); DuMont, Alex (NEIWPC); Sullivan, Cayla (EPA); Yap, Kimarie V (DEC); Spencer, Evelyn (EPA); Thompson, Brian (CT GOV); Kamath, Shauna R (DEC); Lyons, Regina (EPA); Wright, Bessie (EPA); Duvall, Melissa (EPA); Stacey, Paul; Van Patten, Susan E (DEC); Schechter, Sarah (CTSG); Hornstein, Elizabeth (NYSG); O'Brien, Kevin (UCONN); Cozens, Margaret (CTSG); Goldberg, Benjamin (NYSG); Argue, Denise (USGS); Genovesi, Lilli (NYSG); Perez-Viscasillas, Jimena (NYSG); Cernadas, Sara (DEC); Winter, Abigail (CTDEEP); Brandt, Jess (UCONN); Bedan, Erik (CTDEEP); Knight, Kathleen (CTDEEP); Apgar, Samantha (FWS); Coffey, Emma (CTDEEP); Lwiza, Kamazima (Stony Brook); Marty, Kellie (RAE); Begum, Shahela (RAE); Scantlebury, Samarra S (DEC); Crk, Tanja (EPA); Alexander, Danielle (DEP); Wikfors, Gary; Abibou, Deborah (CTSG); Powell, Sara (NYSG); Burg, Robert (NEIWPC); McInnis, Jean (Mohegan Tribe); Bumgarner, Johnathan (USGS)

Introductions

Meeting began at 9 am. Leah started off the meeting and reminded that April MC committee meeting notes are ready for review and please let Nicole Hammond know if you have any edits. Rick provided updates on EPA staffing and LIS Office closure. Nicole (Nikki) Tachiki is serving as the acting LIS Office director through October this year through a temporary promotion as noted in an email from Javier Laureano. Region 2 is working to find solutions to provide additional support. Regina noted that R1 has lost people in leadership roles, and it is important to remember that EPA has lost individuals in support offices like IT, communications and public affairs. David Miller (NYLCVEF) made a motion to approve the meeting summary of the June 11, 2020 CAC meeting; Carl Harvey (Menunkatuck Audubon Society) seconded; the motion carried.

Staffing Updates: Nancy Ferlow (NRCS) shared that she will be retiring September and Tom Morgart will be taking her place as a member of the MC for NRCS. Susan (Sue) Van Patten shared that she has good news that there is an addition to the DEC LIS program, Hope

Savercool. Hope introduced herself and shared that she's taking over Chris Eagler's role as a part of NYS DEC Division of Water. Denise Argue also mentioned that John Bumgarner is taking over the role as the Long Island Sound Coordinator for USGS.

Advisory Committee Reports

Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC):

Penny Vlahos provided the updated for the STAC. Penny shared that the last STAC meeting was June 27th and the STAC has an assistant, Nicole Hammond who is working on several initiatives for the STAC including a website update and newsletter. Penny also shared that at the last meeting there were presentations from each of the Long Island Sound workgroups which will have participation from STAC members. The goal is to have regular reports from the WG to keep open communication. During the meeting there were additional presentations including one from Nikki about the CCMP Signing and budget updates and presentations from new investigators. One from Shuwen Tan who is based out of UCONN and her work focuses on internal waves and is looking to apply her work to Long Island Sound. An additional presentation from Anil Yazici from Stony Brook whose work focuses on equitable access to Long Island Sound waterfront and beach through on demand mobility via a pilot study. Additionally, during the meeting there was an update on the Long Island Sound Data Clearinghouse from Tim Stagnitta. Penny also noted that there will be a joint STAC and CAC meeting in September.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC):

Nancy Seligson and Holly Drinkuth provided updates for the CAC. Nancy shared that they just returned from their trip to Washington D.C. and that there was CAC meeting on June 12th. 21 people attended the trip which has been the largest group so far and they had a breakfast meeting with six congressional representatives. The breakfast meeting included an introduction of the CAC and its priorities, CAC members shared stories of recent accomplishments in restoring LIS to demonstrate how the money in the Partnership is spent on the ground. The CAC also shared with congressional members about the issues and gaps and concerns they have going forward. During their trip, the CAC had three priority asks: 1) reauthorize the Restoration and Stewardship Act which expired in 2023 2) support funding for National Estuary Program 3) and support Plum Island. CAC also emphasized the importance of federal partnerships (e.g. NOAA, USGS, FWS, ETC.) in accomplishing goals. Overall, there were positive and effective conversations with both NY/CT representatives surrounding gaining support for the goals of the CAC along with positive conversations with members of EPA HQ.

During the June 12th CAC meeting, additional vice chairs were elected; Sarah Deonarine from Manhasset Bay Protection Committee, Vicky O'Neil from Audubon, Sarah Crosby from Maritime Aquarium and in September Andrew Ely from Project Oceanology. Additionally, there was a presentation from Cayla about the stewardship strategy and time was spent planning for upcoming events and actions. It was noted by Penny that in the upcoming meeting between the STAC/CAC there will be a joint letter to congress if anybody has ideas of items they would like to be considered.

FY25 Budget Recap

Leah provided a brief update to the FY25 Budget. Leah shared that that EPA project officers are processing the awards and will reach out to recipients if needed. If recipients have any concerns about awards being finalized before October 1st, please reach out to your PO. Leah also noted that aggregate statutory match has been met, and we send a big thanks to the states of New York and Connecticut. The final budget table will go out to the MC members within the next few weeks. Leah also noted that as agencies and programs go through staffing changes, any carry over funds will be driven by MC decisions moving forward. Leah also shared that a requirement of the National Estuary Program (NEP) to submit an annual workplan at the beginning of June. Cayla Sullivan has been taking the lead on this, and EPA LISO is working on pulling together the plan to submit in early August.

FY26 Workplan: Evelyn provided an overview to the FY26 Workplan. Evelyn shared the workgroup memo that was shared with the workgroups. The memo highlights the upcoming trajectory of workplans and format. Layout will include mission statement, full membership list, background and desired outcomes of their workgroup aligning with the CCMP. There was an additional section added that will keep track of recent accomplishments and ongoing projects and an example table was provided for Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife.

Nancy asked if desired outcomes refer to the outcomes in terms of restoring Long Island Sound because a concern of the CAC is that actions and work that has been done is communicated as outcomes not necessarily the impact of that action. Evelyn noted that the outcomes and cross cutting issues that were laid out in the CCMP are the driving force, a top down instead of the typical bottom up from actions. Evelyn noted that the last section is an ask for FY26 Funding priorities and needs and the addition of this to the workplan should make the process for drafting supplemental proposals and approval by the MC easier. The memo has been shared with WG chairs and the due date for work plans is due in mid-September. EPA plans to review and distribute works plans by the October MC meeting where there will be presentations from each WG.

Sylvain Deguise agreed that the top-down approach is good and noted that for the SRC WG that are working developing their 5-year plan. He noted in the plan that some work was sequential and knowledge building, so it wasn't necessarily addressed in the first year. Sylvain asked if it is okay to continue to do that because not all the objectives might be addressed in the workplan for this year as progress continues over the next couple of years. Evelyn noted that there is no penalty as progress moves forward under the new CCMP and it is not expected that each objective is going to be targeted with funding starting off.

Rebecca (Becky) Shuford ask for Evelyn to clarify the memo in the context on the funding cycles and what that means for the workplans. Evelyn added that fiscal year 2026 starts October 1st, 2025, and funds will be used the duration of the winter into spring for allocated projects. The workgroup within the workplan will also identify funding priorities using anticipated FY26 appropriations for projects October 1st, 2026, to September 30th, 2027. Deb Abibou asked for additional clarification on funding cycles language. Evelyn added that funding cycle indicates that the grant is being distributed while the actual fiscal year starts this October. Even though the federal fiscal year starts, EPA may not get its budget until federal fiscal year ends for the

back year, we are essentially using FY25 funds to fund the next year. Even though it's two-year money, it's not received until the second year. Sylvain suggested that we adopt common language to decipher differences between the grant year and appropriations process. Nikki closed out the conversation suggesting for it to be brought up at the next core program staff meeting for discussion.

Bioextraction Strategy Presentation by Susan Van Patten (Long Island Sound Coordinator – NYDEC) and Kimarie Yap (Bioextraction Coordinator, NEIWPC)

Highlights:

In 2018, Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) launched the Nutrient Bioextraction Initiative in partnership with NEIWPC and Long Island Regional Planning Council (LIRPC), with funding provided by the Long Island Sound Partnership.

- Goal is to establish an industry to make bioextraction a sustainable long-term management strategy to target nitrogen polluted waters.
- Vision: Improved water quality and cleaner waters in LIS, strengthen coastal economies and local businesses and benefit local communities and provide environmental stewardship opportunities.
- Role: develop and manage projects to address bottlenecks of bioextraction industry; facilitate communication, resources and collaborations with partnerships on many levels (state, nonprofits, academia, etc.); outreach to raise awareness and promote efforts.
- Expectations: water quality improvements take many years to be seen after implement; establishing a brand-new industry takes a long time.
- Bottlenecks include needing more growers; development of non-food products, acceptance and understanding. This will be addressed by facilitating communications and openly sharing resources to build partnerships, connecting people together.
- Aim to Expand Communications across LIS Partnership: Bioextraction Newsletter and other communications products, presentations to partnership members and external partners, Bioextraction Advisory Committee (BAC), hiring of bioextraction assistant, increase in NY and CT cross-state efforts.

Previous Work/Studies:

- Commercial Bioextraction Economic Feasibility Study by SUNY Farmingdale o Most effective seaweed is Ulva (Sea Lettuce) and shellfish is ribbed mussel
 - o Recommended profitable, feasible product markets
 - o Barriers to industry establishment, resource access, regulations, lack of processing facilities
 - o Bioextraction can be a profitable industry!
 - o Next steps: research on Ulva as seaweed fertilizer and continue investing in ribbed mussel research, share finds with aquaculture growers to gauge interest

- Super Kelp Pilot Study – Bioextraction Effectiveness (DEC, SUNY, Save the Sound) o Removal Scale: 1-acre farm to 15 lbs of N and 118 lbs of C
 - o Poor kelp growth due to poor seed spool quality
 - o Total heavy metals less than detection limit
 - o Next steps: Current study focusing on alternative seed sourcing method to address seed quality issues, future study on the impact of sugar kelp by extractive aquaculture and decipher how the pounds of nutrient removed compare to land-based management practices.
- Sugar Kelp Fertilizer Trails – Commercial Farm (Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County) o LIS sugar kelp is comparable or better than commercial kelp fertilizer for crop yield and growth
 - o LIS sugar kelp increases plant micronutrients and improves crop flavor
 - o No heavy metal uptake in crops
 - o Next steps: compare effectiveness between Ulva and sugar kelp fertilizers, develop fact sheets to promote LIS seaweed fertilizer to farmers
- Ribbed Mussel Pilot Study – Bioextraction effectiveness and Animal Feed Suitability o Scale 1 acre-farm is 124 lbs N and 715 lbs C
 - o Promising results for animal feed suitability based on nutrient and contaminant data
 - o Next steps: determining how removal rates compare to land-based management practices, Phase 2 Aquaculture Hatchery Method Refinement to scale up seed production
- Challenges: Cycle of proposal development to funding awarded is time-intensive and there is a need to adapt research needs after new data are discovered in pilot studies and many of these projects are multi-year
- Solution: Instead of funding individual projects and staffing there is a suggestion to provide a chunk of funding to cover multiple projects. This would allow flexibility in timing for working with species with specific growing seasons and adapt to next-steps projects based on pilot study results.

Discussion: Penny asked if it is possible to come up with numbers of potential market demand for products and are there any local groups that have interest in being a part of the initiative. Susan answered that they have work with fertilizer companies, but they haven't done calculations for demand, but it could be done. Penny added that she would like to know based

on the growth rate limitations is the target maximum percent of substitution that could be achieved for lawn fertilizer in CT and NY. Susan shared that NY has put together what they would like to see homeowners do in fertilizer application under the LINAP resources and the next steps are providing a product that is effective and affordable. The team has been working Cornell who works directly with farmers and there has been interest in golf courses and wineries. Kimarie added Zach Gordon at CTSG has noted a greater supply in sugar kelp than demand and an option to fix that would be to develop the market for a fertilizer. Sue and Kimarie noted that some golf courses use kelp fertilizers from Maine and transitioning that to LIS based products decrease carbon usage and stimulate a local market.

Kamazima asked 1) how a nitrogen balance is being factored into studies to ensure equilibrium in inputs and outputs 2) clarification on the lbs of N and C and 3) heavy metal impact. Susan noted that we know how much nitrogen needs to be removed which is the motivation behind using bioextraction as a way to remove nitrogen. Kimarie added that pounds of nitrogen removed is within the season and noted that sugar kelp has a winter growing season. Kimarie additionally added that experts at CCSF County noted that the rate that fertilizer is applied would not impact heavy metals; it is applied to large plot of land, and it is not a standalone fertilizer.

Sylvain asked if there has been a calculation on scaling and the potential for removal for the need for quantity to be removed. Susan noted that this is one of many methods needed to remove nitrogen so there is not a calculation as of right now – currently the goal is to figure out the most efficient species. Sylvain added it could be helpful to assign a percentage that is being removed. Kimarie noted that there are counties/towns who are currently trying to develop an aquaculture lease program and plot out sites where shellfish and seaweed can be grown and there are other long term monitoring programs that could give an average of removal rates. Sylvain clarified that it would be beneficial to know rates relative to load removal. Kimarie noted that they will definitely keep that in mind.

Nancy noted that in the CAC's presentations to Congressional members that there were presenters from Manhasset Bay, Oyster Bay and Hempstead Harbor who covered oysters and their importance in improving water quality in embayment's particularly in LIS.

11:06 to 11:11 am Stretch Break

Sustainable and Resilient Communities Presentation: Elizabeth Hornstein (Suffolk County), Sarah Schaefer-Brown (Nassau County), Ben Goldberg (NYC), Sara Powell (Westchester County), Deb Visco Abibou (Western CT) and Sarah Schechter (Eastern CT)

Highlights:

Current five-year plan ends September 2026 and next five-year workplan covers October 2026 to September 2031. Activities include needs assessment, annual workshops, developing and maintaining the clearinghouse, develop training programs, improve coordination among levels of government, support a compound flood risk modeling initiative, create a project pipeline and understand and break down barriers to implementation

Overview of Major Accomplishments

- Conducted a needs assessment through over 300 conversations with a wide range of stakeholders and findings were developed into a 1-page summary. One of the main challenges is limited capacity for resilience work and various funding challenges
- Annual SRC Workshops: Began in 2022 and since then have engaged several hundreds of individuals. Initial workshops were virtual half days in person field trips in 2023. In 2024, workshops were virtual but ranged in time commitment along with field trips prior. All recordings and resources are available at www.lisresilience.org/annual-workshop/. Stay tuned for the 2025 workshops.
- LIS Resilience Resource Hub: A user-friendly website to meet LIS community needs and guided by a committee with additional feedback from testing group. Launched in March 2024. www.lisresilience.org
- Resilience Planning Guide: Useful to help communities move resilience projects from idea to implementation. Includes a printed guide and interactive page on resource hub. www.lisresilience.org/a-guide-to-resilience-planning/
- SRC Training Programs: Programs have reached more than 2,500 people. Examples of ones below and all resources/trainings are archived on resource hub.
 - o Steps to Resilience Webinars – provided introduction to resilience planning steps and strategies and State Climate Certification Programs
 - o Regional Funding Workshops – opportunity for funders and applicants to network, collaborate and support dialogue around resilience-related funding
 - o Long Island Coastal Resilience Forums – workshops to share information on best practices and enhance coordination across communities
 - o Land Use Leadership Alliance Trainings – three-day workshop to train local leaders on land use best practices and policies related to resilience
 - o CT Community Participation and Risk Communication Workshops – community events to build relationships, test engagement strategies and incentives, and identify priority information and training needs
 - o Upcoming Events: training on USGS Compound Flood Mapper, October Coastal Resilience Forums and 4th Annual SRC Workshop

Breaking Down Barriers Assistance Programs:

- Goal is to address main barriers that communities face when trying to advance projects; lack of capacity, expertise and resources to prepare and apply for funding (addressed through grant writing assistance program), lack of capacity and resources to identify, conceptualize and develop projects (addressed through planning support program).
- Grant Writing Assistance Program: Starting in Nov 2022 the program provides funding up to \$9,950 per applicant to bring on consultant for grant application preparation. The goal is to help groups secure funding for sustainable and resilience-focused projects. Program has supported 32 applicants with total allocated funds of \$264,783. \$11 to \$1 return on investment

- LIS Resilience Planning Support Program: Started October 2023 and provides support for project scoping and planning. The goal is to advance sustainable resilience-focused projects to a design or implementation grant-ready stage. Program has awarded nearly \$1.1M to 15 communities.
- To date, the SRC team and programs have assisted over 70 communities with project planning and implementation.

New SRC Work Plan: Proposed Tasks align with CCMP Objectives

Discussion: Paul asked about forest cover as a method. Elizabeth noted that the goal is implement holistic approaches so community wide watershed plans. Kamazima asked about making sure the award process is equitable. Elizabeth noted that it is evolving discussion and they welcome input. Samarra Scantlebury suggested getting involved with/suggestions from the community engagement subgroup. Deb echoed that it is a great idea and would like to get feedback on evaluation criteria.

Stewardship Strategy Overview: Cayla Sullivan provided an overview on the history of the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative and accomplishments since its formation.

Highlights:

- Goals of the strategy are to 1) lay the foundation for building a network by summarizing site specific challenges, needs and priorities at each of the 33 areas 2) identify approaches to enhance collaboration among managers and partners and 3) establish a framework for action.
- Data was collected on the challenges/needs in relation to the CCMP goals from each of the site managers
- Strategy is now published and available for viewing
- Recommendations included: 1) Developing a stewardship strategy network, and from there establish a framework to establish future projects 2) Enhancing education and outreach about the steward initiative by creating a steward communications subgroup, updated atlas and media, installing signage and social media campaign and 3) Designating new stewardship areas and anchor sites with support from the MC

CCMP Final Products

Nikki provided a summary of what Management Committee had approved for the CCMP final products back at the October Management Committee Meeting. Robert Burg provided a summary of all the products that have been released to date for the CCMP; a four-page overview booklet with a one-page summary, CCMP StoryMap which is available on the website, full CCMP in PDF format and in an interactive flip book format. Future products include fact sheets for 40th anniversary events, new indicators presentation that will track CCMP's measures of success, additional stories and articles focused on CCMP actions and and new State of the Sound report. Nancy noted that some of the CCMP resources were used during their meetings in Washington DC. Paul also added that it would be very helpful to have

communications projects that really speak to how the public benefits from a healthy LIS particularly in relation to the CCMP. Robert shared that Partnership members wrote engaging stories about the CCMP. Nikki echoed that the articles were engaging and Anya prior to her departure worked hard to make sure the CCMP StoryMap was understandable.

Tracking and Reporting Under 2025 CCMP

Evelyn provided an overview on progress reports under the CCMP. There was a break in progress reports for April but moving forward progress reports with significant progress left or new projects will be tracked under CCMP objectives and actions. There will be a training in September and there will be a new template sent out. There are efforts to revise the power BI tracking and reporting tool to align with the new CCMP and will include additional widgets and illustrations.

Update to Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund

Shahela Begum provided updates for LISCIF. The second annual learning exchange was at the CUNY Graduate Center in early July. The purpose of the learning exchange is to bring together communities together in person to collaborate, network and learn together. There were 100 attendees from NY and CT with 7 trainings on a variety of topics. There were recently press conferences announcing the 2025 awardees in CT and NY; this year four of the projects are indigenous led or co-led. There has been funding allocated for another 3 years and RFA will be released in September along with mini learning exchanges.

Other program updates/resource sharing

Cayla - The hypoxia storymap is available and there will be a release of a hypoxia communications toolkit soon. The toolkit will include the storymap, an animated video and graphic. Next steps include installing signage at a location where hypoxia has been present. The StoryMap tells the history of LIS and water quality, focuses on priorities like TMDL, CTDEEPs monitoring program and improvements to the sound. There are also connections to recreation and commercial activities, land development and connection to the upper watershed. The storymap rounds out with Jim Hagy's 2025 hypoxia prediction forecast that was shared with the MC during a previous meeting. There are plans being made for a hypoxia workshop later in the fall.

Robert - Communications and Outreach Team has been working hard and published the CCMP, launched a new website, supported the June 20th celebration. Shout out to Erica for managing social media as there has been significant increase in engagements and impressions on socials but also in website traffic with the release of the CCMP and new website. Robert also added that there is a new subgroup focused on community decision making and there will be 40th Anniversary events through NY and CT

Meeting adjourned at 12:32 pm.