



**Long Island Sound Partnership
Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)
Virtual Meeting Summary Notes – June 28th, 2025**

In Attendance:

STAC Members: James Ammerman, Penny Vlahos, Robin Miller, Nils Volkenborn, Shauna Kamath, John Bumgarner, Paul Stacey, Sylvain Deguise, Jamie Vaudrey, Kelly Streich, Rebecca Shuford, Emily Wilson, Chris Conroy, Dianne Greenfield, James O'Donnell, Jason Krumholz, Melissa Duvall, Maria Tzortziou, Vincent Breslin

CAC Liaisons to STAC: Sarah Crosby, Mickey Weiss

Others: Shuwen Tan, Robert Burg, Deb Abibou, Hope Savercool, Erica Casper, Harry Yamalis, Samarra Scantlebury, Nikki Tachiki, Alex DuMont, Anil Yazici, DeAva Lambert, Tim Stagnitta, Jimena Perez-Viscasillas, Elizabeth Hornstein, Lillit Genovesi, Sara Cernadas, Kimarie Yap, Katie O'Brien-Clayton, Nicole Hammond, Holly Drinkuth, Sarah Schaefer-Brown, Nancy Seligson, Syma Ebbin, Lane Smith, Bill Lucey, Matthew John Pruden, Gina Groseclose, Judith Sarkodee-Adoo, Emma Cross, Allison Rugila

Opening and Introductions: Penny Vlahos, UCONN

- Penny Vlahos announced that Nicole Hammond would now support STAC by handling meeting logistics, managing the website, preparing special announcements, and launching a new newsletter.
- Upcoming Events: Penny Vlahos reminded members of two key upcoming events. On July 15–16, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) would make its annual trip to Washington, D.C., and she requested that members provide her with short talking points in advance.
- On September 11, there would be a joint in-person meeting of STAC and CAC at the University of Connecticut. Penny explained that a major goal of this gathering would be to draft a joint letter to Congress, reinforcing bipartisan support for Long Island Sound initiatives.

Programmatic Updates: Nikki Tachiki, EPA LISO

- Nikki began by sharing updates from the recent Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) signing and the 40th anniversary celebration held on June 20. She noted that the event featured EPA regional administrators, Connecticut and New York commissioners, and members of Congress, all reaffirming support for Long Island Sound.

- Nikki highlighted new resources, including an updated website, an interactive story map, and a concise “Plan at a Glance.”
- She also confirmed that EPA remains committed to implementing the CCMP, reminded members that all projects must comply with executive orders, and provided a funding update: \$41 million in federal funds supplemented by \$21.6 million in matching contributions, with nearly all partner grant applications already received.

Alignment with Work Groups and Work Group Participation:

Penny outlined a new structure in which STAC topical committees would align directly with the Long Island Sound Partnership’s work groups. STAC members serving on these groups would provide regular reports at each meeting, strengthening the connection between science and management priorities.

Work Group Presentations

Thriving Habitats & Abundant Wildlife - DeAva Lambert (CTDEEP), Sara Cernadas (CTDEEP), and Harry Yamalis (CTDEEP)

- Objectives include restoring 500 acres of coastal habitat, implementing 13 offshore projects, reconnecting 50 habitat patches, and conserving 2,500 acres of open space.
- The group’s actions encompass restoration projects, living shorelines, barrier removal, and land acquisition.
- **Discussion:** Jonathan Bumgarner (USGS) asked how coordination occurs across groups, and the presenters explained their review processes and cross-participation. Paul Stacey stressed that the STAC should prioritize supporting research that directly serves these work groups.

Informed & Engaged Public - Lilli Genovesi (NYSG)

- The workgroup’s goals include improving public access, advancing environmental education, and promoting stewardship. Targets included establishing 40 new access sites, enhancing 60 existing ones, and supporting 18 stewardship projects annually.
- Outreach efforts include updating curricula and leading behavior-change campaigns on stormwater management, plastics, and pet waste. She invited STAC scientists to join the August 16 anniversary celebrations by serving as “meet-a-scientist” participants during public boat trips.
- Deborah Abibou announced a new subgroup on community-centered management.
- **Discussion:** Paul Stacey asked about engaging communities upstream in the watershed, and Lilli provided an example of connecting stream ecology in the upper CT watershed to LIS awareness. Holly Drinkuth clarified that the communications and outreach plan remains valid and current.

Clean Waters & Healthy Watersheds - Kelly Streich (CT DEEP), Susan Van Patten (NYS DEC), and Hope Savercool (NYS DEC)

- The group’s focus covers nutrients, watershed health, pathogens, toxics, and marine debris. They emphasized the need for subject matter experts on toxics and debris, while also recognizing the scope was ambitious. Kelly explained the intent to synthesize data and identify gaps while avoiding duplication of state efforts.
- **Discussion:** Paul Stacey advised narrowing their focus and ensuring coordination. Sylvain

Deguisse reminded the group of the existing bi-state NOAA marine debris plan that could be leveraged for efforts related to marine debris.

Sustainable & Resilient Communities - Sylvain Deguisse (CTSG) and Rebecca Shuford (NYSG)

- This work group was formed after recognizing slow progress toward resilience goals. In its first year, it developed a five-year plan centered on advancing community resilience, integrating nature-based solutions, promoting equity, and addressing climate adaptation.
- Rebecca Shuford outlined future steps to translate the plan into action, noting that the group is still in the early stages of implementation.

Presentation #1: Equitable Access to Long Island Sound Waterfront and Beaches through On-Demand Mobility

Anil Yazici and Elizabeth Hewitt, Stony Brook University

Anil Yazici presented a pilot project on on-demand shuttle services designed to increase equitable access to Long Island Sound's waterfront and beaches:

- Goal of project was to test a shuttle system to help underserved populations reach beaches, assess community attitudes, and determine whether access improves environmental awareness.
- Anil stressed that while environmental justice is often discussed in terms of pollution burdens, it should also include equitable access to natural resources for recreation, health, and education.
- He noted barriers to access: Long Island's car-dependent structure, limited public transit, costly or resident-only parking, and social inequities in disadvantaged communities near the Sound.
- The shuttle service, run with the company FLEXIGO, allowed participants to book rides via an app using a code. Though efficient, Yazici acknowledged challenges: reliance on smartphones (a barrier for seniors and low-income groups), weather cancellations, and difficulty reaching target audiences despite outreach through community groups, libraries, and churches.
- Outcomes and Next Step: Ridership was modest but promising, and they plan to continue in summer 2025 with refined outreach and updated flyers.

Discussion: Becky Shuford noted updated flyers correcting typos and funding references, which he agreed to share widely. James O'Donnell asked why the project focused only on transportation rather than parking restrictions and beach access permits, which he saw as equal barriers. Anil noted that his personal experience showed transportation to be the most immediate obstacle, and that parking access is also a problem, but the pilot focused first on mobility. He cited the Long Island Sound Needs Assessment as supporting evidence. James noted in Connecticut that restrictive permits are the greater barrier.

Presentation #2: Internal waves in a future climate cool a shallow island reef more than expected

Shuwen Tan, UCONN

Shuwen Tan, a new investigator at UConn's Department of Marine Science, presented her research on internal waves and their role in ocean mixing.

- She explained that stratification (lighter water on top, denser water below) restricts mixing of heat, carbon, oxygen, and nutrients. With climate change, stratification has increased in shallow waters, making mixing even more critical.
- She described how internal waves, generated by tidal flow over ridges or slopes, can propagate long distances and influence ecosystems. Using coral reef case studies (e.g., Dongsha Atoll, South China Sea), Tan showed how internal waves deliver pulses of cooler water that buffer reefs against bleaching, though the effect may be too small to keep pace with global warming.
- Shuwen highlighted new sensor technologies like distributed temperature sensing with fiber optics, which she hopes to deploy in Long Island Sound. She shared preliminary evidence of internal waves in the Western Sound, including satellite imagery and past mooring data showing tidal signatures.

Discussion: Paul Stacey asked whether groundwater inflows could influence temperature readings and serve as a monitoring proxy. Shuwen acknowledged the possibility, explaining that while it was less relevant in her Pacific study sites, such methods could be useful in the Sound, and distributed temperature sensors offer a low-cost tool for teasing apart such dynamics. Penny Vlahos noted the potential importance of this research for mixing and hypoxia in the Western Sound.

Presentation #3: Long Island Sound Data Clearinghouse

Tim Stagnitta, USGS

Timothy Stagnitta (USGS) presented the [Long Island Sound Clearinghouse](#) metadata map application, developed to provide a centralized, accessible “one-stop shop” for information on projects and data sources across the Sound and watershed.

- He explained that many organizations collect data for different purposes, but information is scattered across repositories, creating gaps and inefficiencies. The new public-facing map displays metadata only (not raw data), serving as a directory with links and contacts.

- The current application includes 700–800 layers gathered from state-level APIs, USGS repositories, and the Water Quality Portal. Features include keyword search, subcategories, filterable layers, data export (Excel), and integration with existing portals.
- Future improvements will include dynamic API links with tools like Save the Sound’s system, user-uploaded metadata, and expanded awareness across user communities.

Discussion: Emily Wilson asked whether the tool could be presented to broader geospatial audiences beyond the science community. Tim noted that presentations could be arranged virtually to expand outreach.

Closing Out the Meeting and Next Steps:

- In the next meeting, STAC members of workgroups would give brief workgroup reports at each STAC meeting. Penny noted that while some members were already affiliated with specific groups, others could choose to engage based on their interests.
- Members need to forward any items for the upcoming Washington, D.C. visit, specifically topics or highlights they wanted presented during congressional discussions. Similarly, Penny invited suggestions for the September 11th joint meeting, as well as any new research papers relevant to Long Island Sound that could be featured in the STAC newsletter.
- The STAC is working on recruiting new STAC members, asking attendees to identify emerging investigators or colleagues with innovative ideas who could strengthen the committee’s expertise and collaborative network.
- STAC Contacts for workgroups - Jim Ammerman for Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds, Sylvain Deguise and Rebecca Shuford to represent the Sustainable and Resilient Communities group, Maggie Cozens will serve as liaison for Informed and Engaged Public, Jason Krumholz and Jamie Vaudrey for Thriving and Abundant Wildlife
- Goal of liaison roles are low-pressure commitments, primarily intended to maintain communication between STAC and the LIS Partnership workgroups and provide two-minute updates at each meeting to keep everyone informed.