Sustainable and Resilient Communities Work Group Meeting
Virtual Attendance (Zoom)
February 10, 2026, 1-3 PM

Attendees:

Sarah Schaefer-Brown
Sara Powell
Sarah Schechter
Deb Abibou
Ben Goldberg
Elizabeth Hornstein
Becky Shuford, NYSG
Sylvain De Guise, CTSG
Jason Finklestein, USGS
Kris Masterson, USGS
Liv Herdman, USGS
Emile Bensedrine, NYC DEP
Cayla Sullivan, EPA
Carrie Clingan, NFWF
Chris Shubert, USGS
David Jakim, PW Watershed Coalition for Biodiversity
David Kozak
Domenic Romanello, Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk
Erica Casper, CTSG/LIS Partnership
Georgina Cullman, NYC Parks
Gio McClenachan, SUNY SBU
Harry Yamalis, CTDEEP
Hayley Elszasz, MOCEJ
Jess Brandt, CTSG
Jessica Colon, NYC DEP
Jimena Perez-Viscasillas
Jim Ammerman, LIS Partnership
Kathleen Bell, USEPA
Kathleen Fallon, NYSG
Kathy Bunting-Howarth, NYSG
Kate Knight, CTDEEP
Kristina Heinemann, USEPA
Megan Granato, CTDEEP
Megan Lung, Save the Sound
Nicole Govert, CIRCA
Owen Placido, CTSG
Paul Stacey, Footprints in the Water, LLC
Quinn Burkhart, LIS Partnership
Robert Burg, LIS Partnership
Samarra Scantlebury, NYSDEC
Victoria O'Neill, Audubon
Derek Betts, NCSWCD
Kaia Madigan, NCSWCD
Sean Rooney, NCSWCD
Katie Lund, CTNERR
Debbie Einhorn, NYCDEP
Shahela Begum, LISCIF
Diane Ifkovic, CTDEEP
John Bumgarner, USGS
Jennifer Street, NYSDOS
Alyssa Pfitzer Price, SUNY SBU

Welcome & Introductions – Becky Shuford

- New partners joined from NYC DEP Bureau of Coastal Resilience

USGS CFHM - Kris Masterson and Liv Herdman

Assessment of compound flood hazard from the combined effects of sea level rise, storm surge, tidal and groundwater flooding, and stormwater

- What is a Compound Flood Hazard - Project page

    - There is a focus on the LIS watershed and the intent of the study is to understand the rainfall, groundwater emergence, and flood water drivers
    - USGS is working to ensure publications are up to date
- Compound Flood Hazard Study Outcomes
    - Phase 1: Spatial Date Analysis - Mapper is Live
    - https://www.usgs.gov/centers/new-york-water-science-center/science/regional-assessment-compound-flood-hazard-combined
        - Gridded and high resolution maps of potential for flooding hazard, and factors contributing to individual hazards for rainfall (pluvial), coastal, and shallow groundwater (groundwater emergence) flood drivers
        - Analysis of how often flood drivers co-occurred in the past and likelihood of future compound, or co-occurring events
    - Phase 2: Process-based models: Selected focus areas
        - Analysis of compound events to stimulate dynamics and coupling of linked groundwater, coastal, and subterranean infrastructure systems

- Phase 1: statistical and spatial data analysis covers entire project area (subdivided to 900-mx900-m grid cells)
    - Displays compound hazard score for precipitation and storm surge co-occurrences
    - Displays hazard ranks (1-5, greatest hazard rank = 5) for individual flood drivers
    - NYSG and CTSG will be hosting 5 regional workshops on how to use the Compound Flood Hazard Mapper
- Workshops on Web Map Application
    - CT
        - Eastern CT, Stonington Community Center - 2/27, 9:30am-11:30am
        - Western CT, Milford Point - 2/27, 2:00pm-4:00pm
    - NY
        - Nassau County, Port Washington Public Library - 3/2, 3:00pm-7:00pm
        - Suffolk County, Stony Brook University Innovation and Discovery Center - 3/5, 9:30am-11:30am
        - NYC, CUNY Graduate Center - 3/10, 1:00pm-3:00pm
        - Westchester County, Elmsford, 3/13, 9:30am-11:30am
- Phase 2: Compound Flood Model Framework Applications
    - Long Island, NY
        - Dynamic coupling of MODFLOW and SWMM to model compound flooding in urban areas with gaining sewers (Greenport, NY) - paper submitted to journal and is in USGS colleague review

        - Simulation of groundwater - coastal processes near Port Jefferson, NY, using a coupled model framework - Preprint/USGS SIR will be submitted to USGS colleague review Feb 2026
    - New Haven, CT
        - Compound Flooding from coastal and pluvial processes in New Haven, CT, Long Island Sound, Using super-fast Inundations of CoastS (SFINCS) - paper will be submitted to USGS colleague review Feb 2026
- Phase 2: Compound Flood Model Framework Applications - Takeaways
    - Dynamic coupling of MODFLOW and SWMM to model compound flooding in urban areas with gaining sewers (Greenport, NY) - Paper submitted to journal and is in USGS colleague review
        - Takeaways
            - New publicly available tool that dynamically couples models
            - Compilation of distinct data sets required (sewer characteristics, water use, wastewater/sewer flow, depth to water table)
    - Simulation of groundwater - coastal processes near Port Jefferson, NY, using a coupled model framework - Preprint/USGS SIR will be submitted to USGS colleague review
        - Takeaways
            - Local stakeholder engagement guided data collection efforts for assessing flood drivers
            - Significant differences in water level when including tidal level information
    - Compound FLooding from coastal and pluvial processes in New Haven, CT, Long Island Sound, using super-fast Inundations of CoastS (SFINCS) - paper will be submitted to USGS colleague review in Feb 2026
        - Takeaways
            - Expanding "definition" of compounding to include antecedent soil information - still in review
- **Questions**
    - Megan Granato: Will you be sharing these studies in more detail during the regional events?
        - Reports will be publicly available, but workshops will focus on the mapper
    - How to assess areas behind seawalls for ponding and flooding that may be disjointed from the coast
        - Using studies, like those in phase 2, there are examples of how to use the tool in situations like this
        - Any area with ponding will show up on the Phase 1 mapper.

        - Shapefiles can be imported temporarily that could be compared with the ponding layer (topographical depression analysis)
    - Paul Stacey: Just wondering about the sensitivity of MODFLOW and SWMM to detect effects of drought and subsurface drainage by storm sewers, landscape and culvert sizes in a way to guide specific management actions.
        - The groundwater table will adjust for drought conditions and the dynamics between SWMM and MODFLOW will also adjust

Long Island Sound River Restoration Network - Megan Lung, Save the Sound

- Crossings Prioritization App
    - Training/Demonstration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg5tpYTNtSA
- Where Roads Meet Rivers: Introducing the LIS Crossing Prioritization Network Video
- Restoration Network
    - Working to advance stream barrier removal projects
    - Accomplished by:
        - Identifying and addressing bottlenecks in concert with federal agency partners, and policymakers
        - Building regional capacity for management of stream barrier removal work
        - Sharing knowledge and openly collaborating to identify, develop, and advance stream barrier removal projects
        - Producing educational resources to help property owners and the public better understand barrier removal
        - Cultivating a mindset of abundance and interdependence
    - Actions on Road-Stream Crossings (RSX)
        - Closing Data Gaps with RSX
            - CT and NY Progress
                - Close the data gap with systemic funding years- make the tool more effective and broadly used
            - Supporting municipalities with understanding of best practices, resilient in all sense, flooding and passage
                - Stream Smart Trainings based off of USFS Stream Simulation Training
- Upcoming Municipal Convenivings
    - Two convenings this year in May
        - CT - May 28, Full Day (COGs, RRN staff, state agency, other partners), Housatonic Community College
        - NY - Early May - Full Day (Counties, RRN staff, state agency, other partners)

- Westchester Stream Barrier Inventory Project
    - Funded by NFWF and the Alexander Center for Ecological Action at Save the Sound
- Westchester County Case Study
    - Westchester County Home to almost 1 million people and is immediately north of NYC
    - 80 miles of major tributaries to the LIS
    - Overlaid with 1,886 miles of roadway
    - Opportunities to reconnect people to the environment through discussions about the rivers
    - Disruption of ecosystem services can also affect humans (water quality, erosion, flooding)
    - Prioritizing urban streams alongside other ecosystems
    - Westchester Stream Barrier Inventory Project Outcomes
        - Field work to assess 331 road-stream crossings and low head dams absent from NYS dam inventory
        - Risk of failure based on secondary data field indicators
        - Regional prioritization tool in ArcGIS Online
        - Dam Reconnaissance Study on one structure
            - Sediment Quality testing
            - Water Quality Monitoring
- North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) helps to improve aquatic connectivity
- Crossing Prioritization Tool for the Long Island Sound in New York
    - Covers the LIS portion of Westchester County, Nassau County, and Suffolk County
    - Builds off a prior method developed by The Nature Conservancy in Suffolk County
    - Composite score composed of four categories: Ecological, Resilience, Transportation, and Infrastructure
    - Meant to be a resources for partners to match projects with potential funding sources
- Using the tool
    - An example of the Playland Parkway Crossing was shared

- Tidal Scoring Breakdowns

Ecological Benefit (1-5)	Transportation Benefit (1-5)
E1. Salt Marsh Complex Size E2. Salt Marsh Size Upstream E3. Degree of Tidal Restriction and AOP E4. Vegetation Score	T1. Road Functional Classification T2. Evacuation Route
Resilience Benefit (1-5)	**Infrastructure Condition Benefit (1-5)**
R1. Risk of Sea-Level Rise Inundation of Road R2. Risk of Storm Surge Inundation of Road R3. Heavy Rainfall Flood Risk within the Watershed *R4. Area of Potential Tidal Marsh Advancement US of Restriction*	I1. Structural Condition I2. Partner Priority I3. Risk of High Water – Lack of Clearance I4. Erosion Classification

- Non-tidal scoring breakdowns

Ecological Benefit (1-5)	Transportation Benefit (1-5)
E1. River Size E2. Length of River Reconnected E3. Number of Downstream Barriers E4. Aquatic Organism Passage	T1. Road Functional Classification T2. Evacuation Route
Resilience Benefit (1-5)	**Infrastructure Condition Benefit (1-5)**
R1. Risk of Sea-Level Rise Inundation of Road R2. Risk of Storm Surge Inundation of Road R3. Heavy Rainfall Flood Risk within the Watershed	I1. Structural Condition I2. Partner Priority

- Slight Scoring Differences
    - Suffolk County data came first in 2017-2019
    - Nassau County data in 2022
    - Westchester County Data in 2024
    - Partner Priority (and getting municipalities to answer) can influence score
- What's Next
    - Demonstration webinars
    - Save the Sound's YouTube Demonstration
    - No additions to the tool (for now)
    - May explore expansion of tool into CT with a funding source
- In the event that there are missing crossings, send an email to mlung@savethesound.org

- **Questions**
    - Kate Knight: I am curious-for ecological benefit scoring. Did you consider the biological score, specifically I am asking from the perspective of thinking about fish passage/habitat connectivity in general? Is that a consideration for the potential upgrade?
        - NAACC is not species specific and while focused on aquatic organisms can be more general (could include turtles)
        - If you go into the tools, you can select a dot and find the "Survey ID", which can be searched in the NAACC database to get more information (substrate, etc)

LIS Coastal Restoration Coalition - Vicky O'Neill CT/NY CRC Chair and Domenic Romanello, The Maritime Aquarium

- Why Build a Coastal Restoration Coalition?
    - A number of organizations are working to protect and restore the coast and this coalition works to avoid organizational silo-ing and allow groups to come together to address coastal concerns
    - Started with a meeting in December 2023 with 8 organizations who then applied to the Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative and they then started officially meeting in December 2024
- Members
    - Audubon CT, NY
    - Citizens Campaign for the Environment
    - CT National Estuarine Research Reserve
    - Ducks Unlimited
    - The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk
    - The Nature Conservancy
    - Save the Sound
    - SoundWaters
- Missions
    - Advancing resilience of coastlines together
- Accomplishments
    - Stage 1: Launch Coalition (Sept 2024)
        - Kick-off celebration, In-person Workshops, Bi-weekly meetings
    - Stage 2: Identify Priorities and Set Goals
        - Missions Statement, 3-year plan, Metrics of Success
    - Stage 3: Build Shared Capacity to Reach Goals
        - Shared Expertise List, Shared project list, Map of Active Projects
- Priorities

    - Coastal Restoration
    - Applied Research and Monitoring
    - Education and outreach
    - Advocacy
- Priority 1: Coastal Restoration
    - Goals
        - Maintain project list and map for coastal restoration in NY/CT
        - Design and implement collaborative restoration projects
        - Share resources, expertise, and experience
- Priority 2: Applied Research and Monitoring
    - Goals
        - Identify gaps in data that hinder regional coastal restoration success
        - Identify restoration projects in need of monitoring
        - Define priority metrics and preferred protocols for monitoring
        - Design and implement collaborative applied research projects
        - Share resources, expertise, and experience
- Priority 3: Education and outreach
    - Goals
        - Amplify public engagement opportunities
        - Facilitate shared learning about coastal conservation and restoration efforts around LIS
- Priority 4: Advocacy
    - Goals
        - Review federal, state, and local policy conditions
        - Advocate for adequate federal and local funding sources
        - Develop shared position statements to unify collective voice
- Desired Outcome
    - Regional coordination between coastal restoration practitioners to increase the efficiency, pace, quality, and scale of restoration around the Long Island Sound
- Initial Progress
    - Branding and logo
    - LIS Coastal Plant Initiative Investigation
    - Coastal Resilience Policy White Papers for decision makers
    - Position Statements
    - Collaboration on projects (Cockenoe Island, Ragged Rock and Great Island, Wading River Marsh)
    - Grant Applications
- Next Steps

    - Website to host public resources
        - Year 1 Deliverables
        - Index for Restoration in LIS
        - Coastal Plant Species One-pagers
        - Education statements for policymakers/lobbyists
    - Presentations at conferences/technical meetings
    - LIS Partnership SRC and THAW Work Group Stakeholder events to engage practitioners in the production of shared tools for doing restoration work better and faster
    - Shared tools may include:
        - Coastal Restoration Prioritization Framework/Database
        - Geospatial Guide
        - Pipeline Report
- Discussion
    - What are ways the coalition can leverage their work
    - Are there resources the CRC should be aware of?
    - Interested in hearing about the future of CRC work?
- Questions
    - Samarra Scantlebury: How does this fit in when municipalities reach out to consultants for coastal restoration projects? Could the CRC fit in?
        - CRC could be tapped in to assist on projects, but their priorities are focused on the issues they've compiled internally
        - CRC meets twice a month and others can join to discuss additional projects
    - Kate Knight: I think there is an opportunity to partner with the USFW/Norwalk Maritime Aquarium/UCONN project to do Sentinel Salt Marsh Health Network. Have you explored this connection yet?
        - There are early stages of work towards this, but hasn't been introduced to CRC yet. Domenic noted he could share more information as requested Domenic: dromanello@maritimeaquarium.org
        - Vicky: victoria.oneill@audubon.org
    - Paul Stacey: Restoration doesn't necessarily mean creating additional acreage, sometimes it can mean holding onto what exists. What is the current status of acreage?
        - There have been efforts to regain areas that have been lost, but with sea level rise and coastal infrastructure, many marshes are unable to drain and with consistent inundation are being lost. CRC will work together to try and be more competitive on larger projects and work quickly.

SRC Updates - Sara Powell and Sara Schaefer-Brown

- 4th Annual SRC Workshop Recap
    - 238 unique registrants
    - 95 new decision-makers engaged
    - 3 sessions were held over 2 days
        - Resilience 101 (174 registrants, 101 attendees)
        - Using Nature-Based Solutions for Resilience (177 registrants, 89 attendees)
            - Panel of regional experts
        - LIS Resilience Planning Support Program (147 registrants, 74 attendees)
            - Awardees and shared their experience with the program
- SRC Plans for 2026
    - Past Years
        - Funding workshops in Spring
        - Long Island Resilience Forums/ Resilience Field Trips in the Fall
        - Annual Workshop virtual in early December
        - SRC Workgroup meetings: February, May, August, November
    - Proposed Changes for 2026
        - Funding workshops in Spring
        - Long Island Resilience Forums/Resilience Field Trips in the Fall
        - Annual Workshop **in-person** in November
            - One day TBD between 11/17-20, possibly in NYC
            - Likely will still have a virtual component as well
            - The goal will be to have more opportunities for collaboration and discussion at the in-person event
        - SRC Workgroup meetings: February, **June 2, September 15, December 8**
- Upcoming USGS Workshops
    - **February 27** - Eastern CT (AM), Western CT (PM)
    - **March 2** - Nassau County
    - **March 3** - Suffolk County
    - **March 10** - NYC
    - **March 13** - Westchester County
- LIS Resilience Planning Support Program
    - Round 2 (FY24) - Projects started in Fall 2025
        - ~$1 million to 16 communities - 7 in CT and 9 in NY
        - Two additional projects in CT were funded after the original press release was shared and an additional press release with the two projects will be out soon
        - Round 2 project types
            - **5** Vulnerability Assessments/Resilience Plans
            - **2** Watershed Plans

- **2** Natural Resource Inventories
- **3** Community Engagement/Strategic Plans
- **4** Conceptual Design Plans for stormwater management, green infrastructure, shoreline adaptation, public access pathways, and stream restoration projects

- Round 3 - released December 1, 2025 | Up to $1.5 million available
  - There have been changes to the application process:

    Step 1: Initial Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) *(opened December 1, 2025)*

    ➔ 29 submitted/re-submitted Expressions of Interest

    Step 2: RFEI & Meeting Evaluation *(mid-December 2025 - early February 2026)*

    ➔ SRC Team held meetings with each applicant to confirm they met initial criteria

    Step 3: Detailed Application *(due February 27, 2026)*

    ➔ Applicants who met the criteria were sent Detailed Applications to fill out

    Step 4: Application Evaluation *(March 2026)*

    ➔ SRC Team will review the applications and select Candidates to include in RFPs that will be issued through Cornell & UConn in late Spring 2026

Work Group Updates

- Paul Stacey: True sustainability and resilience requires more space to be left for nature. Have efforts been put towards Plans of Conservation and Development to allow for nature to be prioritized?
  - Deb Abibou: There has been incorporation of resilience and climate impacts into POCDs. At a previous meeting, the idea of updating and integrating coastal plans into POCDs was mentioned, and we're beginning to see interest in aligning these with POCDs as well. There are also upcoming requirements to map culverts. SRC programs can help to incorporate these elements, but keep in mind that the outcomes of this work reflects town needs.
  - Sylvain De Guise: Some of the supported projects look at watershed plans, natural resources inventory, green infrastructure etc., and so this allows the PSP program to go deeper into the connections between humans and nature and go beyond the town level.
  - David Kozak: Some communities have the capacity to address coastal resource plans, but many do not, which may mean the state could take the lead. CT is very behind other New England States. Could relate back to the River Restoration Network or Coastal Restoration Coalition

Wrap-Up - Sylvain De Guise

Adjourned at 2:53pm