![Long Island Sound Study — A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound](logo)

Long Island Sound Study
Meet the QA Team

Hosted by Esther Nelson & Bessie Wright

February 9, 2023

Meet the QA Team - Hosted by EPA's Long Island Sound Office

Meet the QA Team Session 1:
Date: : Thursday, February 9, 2023
Time: 2 – 4pm

Meet the QA Team Session 2:
Date: Tuesday, February 14, 2023
Time: 2 – 4pm

Thanks to support from:

EPA Long Island Sound Office
EPA Region 1 QA staff
EPA Region 2 QA staff
GDIT (EPA QA Contractor)
NFWF Futures Fund

EPA is hosting a ***Meet the QA Team*** session series for the Long Island Sound Study Partnership. The sessions are intended to put a face on the QA review process within EPA and to enhance transparency and efficiency from start to finish.

The first session is for all recipients who submit Quality Assurance Projects Plans (QAPPs); the second session will discuss some QAPP/QA experiences from grantees. Both sessions include breakout groups facilitated by QA staff where recipients can ask specific questions regarding their projects.

Long Island Sound Study
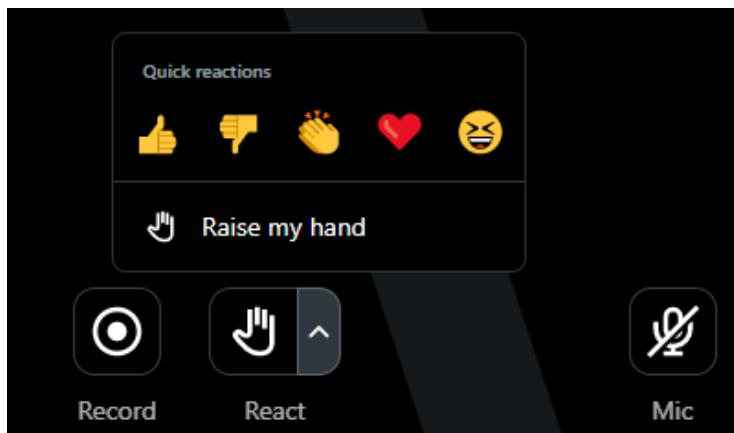A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound
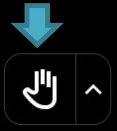
Have you attended a previous LISS "Meet the QA Team?"

Raise your hand if you have attended previously

Raise Hand via the React Icon
bottom-left screen

A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

The **Long Island Sound Study** is a cooperative effort involving researchers, regulators, user groups and other concerned organizations and individuals. These people are working together to protect and improve the health of the Sound.

https://longislandsoundstudy.net/

https://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/contact-us/core-program-staff-2/

Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan

- Original 1994 CCMP was revised in 2015 and updated in 2020

- **Four major themes:**
  - Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds
  - Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife
  - Sustainable and Resilient Communities
  - Sound Science and Inclusive Management

- **To achieve the goals of each theme**
  - 20 Ecosystem Targets and Supporting Indicators
    - Set measurable targets of restoration by 2035
  - 136 Implementation Actions
    - Action plan to be updated every five years

Long Island Sound Study
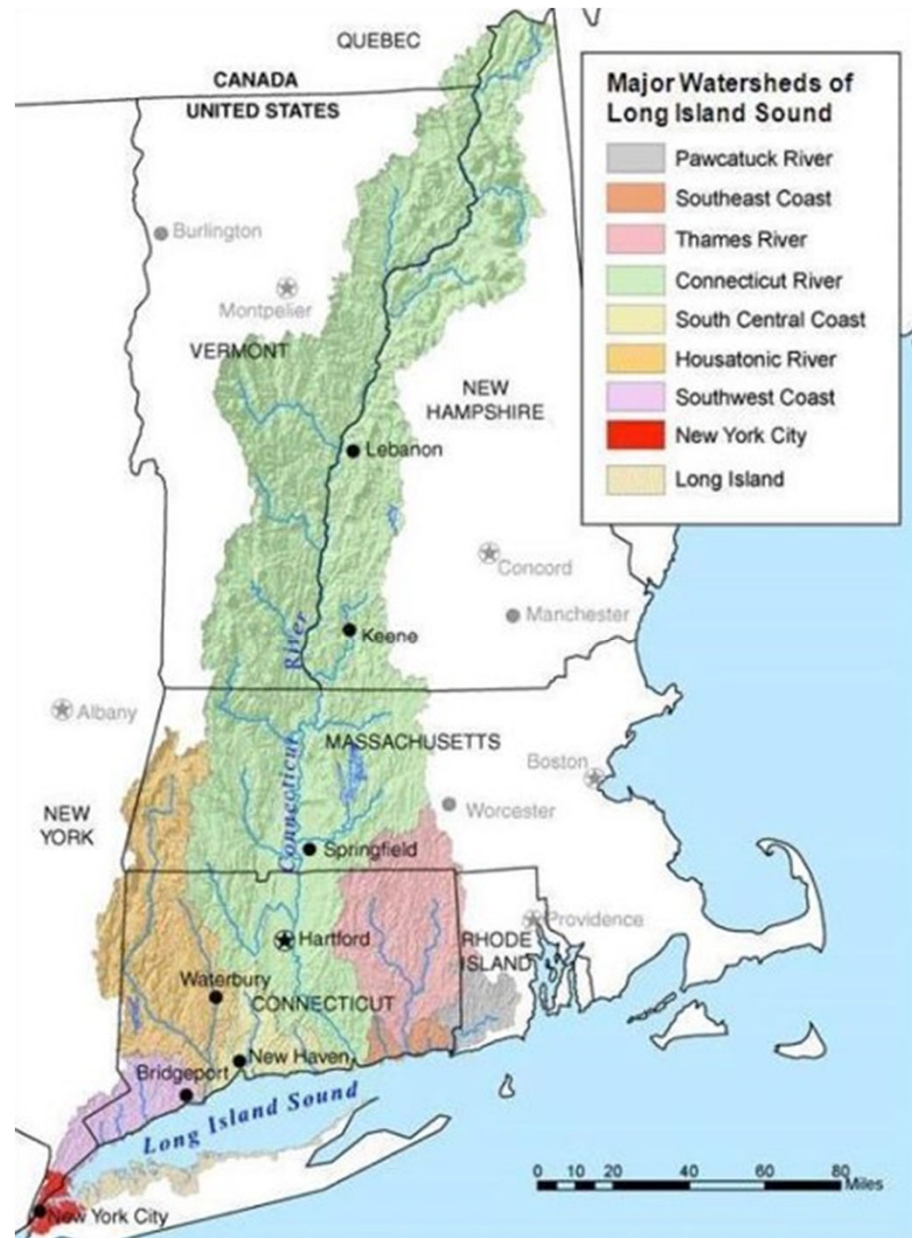
Long Island Sound Watersheds

Many partners!!

...many QAPPs

QA is a Team effort!

USEPA

Long Island Sound Study
A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

Carol Lynes
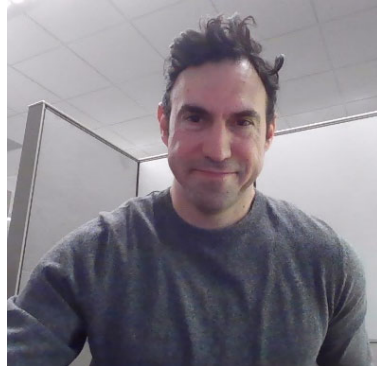
Brian Hulme

Emily Nering

Lawrence Martin
Mustafa Mustafa
Kai Tang
Omer Sohail

Supriya Rao
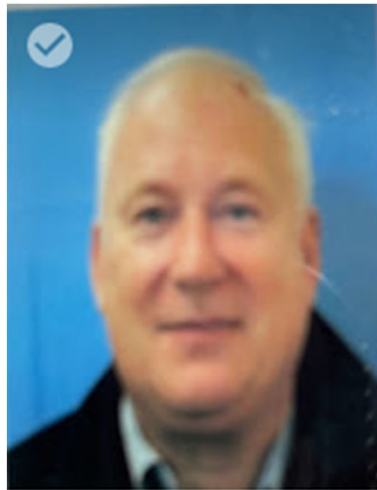
Erwin Smieszek

Sieglinde Pylypchuk

Meet the R1 QA Team

Bryan Hogan

Anthony Pepe

Nora Conlon
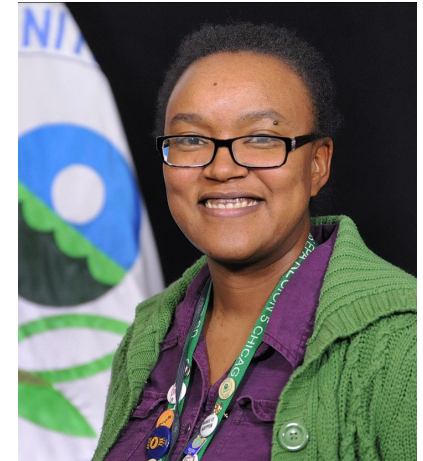
Lilly Simmons

Jessica Iverson

Emily Ambeliotis

Elise McNally

EPA & the Quality Program

EPA is subject to the **Environmental Information Quality Policy***
(CIO2105.2, July 2022)

*A directive consistent with national and international consensus standards

The policy affirms EPA's commitment to:

- Applying quality principles and practices to environmental information and technology

- Utilizing environmental information that is of known and documented quality, scientifically valid, legally defensible, and appropriate for the intended use

Quality Program: Scope

Environmental programs encompass **Environmental Information Operations** by or for EPA:

➢ **Environmental Information**
- Collected
- Produced
- Evaluated
- Used

➢ **Environmental Technology**
- Designed
- Constructed
- Operated
- Applied

Why is this important to you?

- Quality Policy applies to EPA and to **you** by extension through "extramural agreements"

  grants, cooperative agreements, interagency agreements, contracts

EPA Quality Documents

Environmental Information Quality Procedure (CIO2105-P-01.2, July 2022)

- Details Quality Policy implementation

- Describes documentation requirements:

  - **Quality programs** → *Quality Management Plans (QMPs)*

  - **Environmental information operations** → *Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs)*

QMPs

- Both Region 1 & Region 2 have QMPs

- Brand new QMP Standard (CIO2105-S-01.0, January 2023)

- Both regions reserve QMP requirement to on-going assistance agreement recipients

  - **the states, interstates and select additional organizations.**

Have you previously written a QAPP?

Raise your hand if you have previously written a QAPP

Raise Hand via the React Icon
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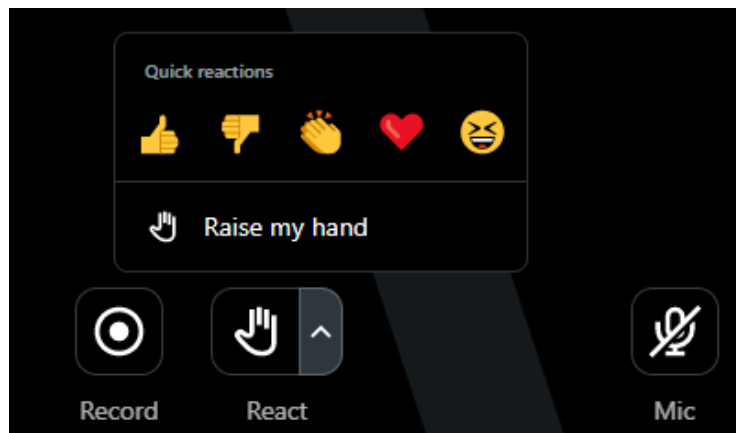
QAPPs for Projects

Environmental Information Operations aka environmental data collection activities

Key Requirements

- Use a systematic planning process
- Document in a QAPP
- QAPPs are tailored to the needs of the project
- Reviewed and approved by EPA before data collection begins

EPA Requirements/Guidance documents provide content details

- EPA QA/R-5 Requirements for QAPPs
- EPA QA/G-5 Guidance for QAPPs

Why do we require QAPPs?

Projects benefit from planning and QAPPs are plans!

Planning helps ensure appropriate selection:

- Samples
- Data sources
- Temporal/Spatial Conditions
- Analyses
- Tools
- Models
- Condition indices

Planning helps ensure collection of:

- enough data
- the right data
- data of sufficient quality to meet the project goals

Why do we require QAPPs?

- Capturing the plan in the QAPP provides connection between what the workplan says and how the work will be accomplished

- It gets the project team and the EPA on the same page

- Makes you consider how your project decisions will be supported – Provides Confidence!

Remember:

It is <u>not</u> about the document. It is about the project outcomes that protect human health and the environment upon which life depends! It's really about **Long Island Sound**!

How to Get Your QAPP Reviewed

- **Follow your grant process**
- **Work with your funding organization**
- **Work with your project officer**
  - R1/R2? They will let you know

- **Key Elements**
  - Include planning in your schedule
  - Follow the guidance
  - Match workplan to the QAPP
  - Provide <u>enough</u> details
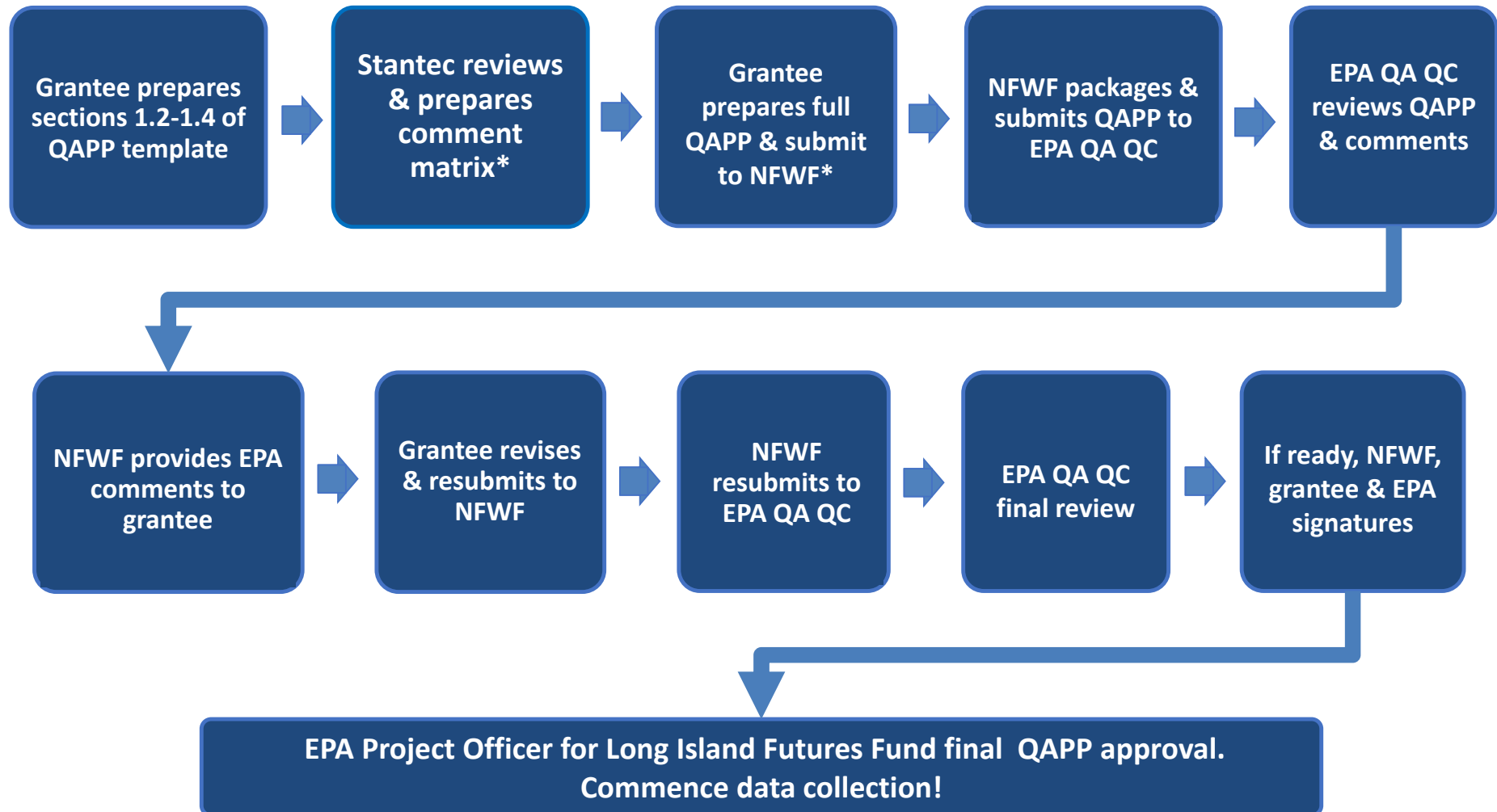 - Think about your outcomes from the start

Discrete WQ Monitoring projects & the Water Quality Exchange (WQX)

Uploading your discrete WQ data to WQX is a <u>condition</u> of your award

- **Setting up an Account:**
  - https://cdx.epa.gov/contactus.asp

- **Resources:**
  - https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data-upload-wqx

- **WQX Template Forms:**
  - https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-exchange-web-template-files

- **LISS is working on Quick Drops, keep an eye out for announcements related to its completion!**

Grantee prepares sections 1.2-1.4 of QAPP template → Stantec reviews & prepares comment matrix* → Grantee prepares full QAPP & submit to NFWF* → NFWF packages & submits QAPP to EPA QA QC → EPA QA QC reviews QAPP & comments

NFWF provides EPA comments to grantee → Grantee revises & resubmits to NFWF → NFWF resubmits to EPA QA QC → EPA QA QC final review → If ready, NFWF, grantee & EPA signatures

EPA Project Officer for Long Island Futures Fund final QAPP approval. Commence data collection!

- **Consultations available. QAPP info: nfwf.org/programs/long-island-sound-futures-fund/quality-assurance-project-plan-development-guidance**

R1 & R2 EPA QAPP Roles

R1/R2 Project Officer (PO) - The primary contact for grant-related activities including QAPP.

R1/R2 QA Reviewer (QAO) - Responsible for quality assurance and technical review of QAPP.

Both must approve the submitted QAPP. For projects reviewed in R1 by signing the **QAPP signature page, and for projects reviewed by R2 via **signed EPA Approval Form** *before* environmental information collection and sampling can begin.**

QAPP EPA Tracking Metrics

Regional/National Metrics

- Goal <u><</u>**120** days to approval (total time in *EPA and Grantee hands*)
- Goal <u><</u>**60** days to approval (total time in *EPA hands*)

LSASD Metrics (Region 2)

- Goal <u><</u> **2** *rounds* of review prior to approval of the QAPP

- EPA's Lean Management System (ELMS) – Gathers and reports national/regional data to increase efficiency.

- EPA R2 uses Microsoft SharePoint to track all the review requests, timelines, reviewer, status, approvals, etc.

EPA Region 2 internal review and tracking process

- **PO submits QAPP to AWQAT → Team member accepts QAPP and begins review → Submits to Team Leader for review → QAPP with Comments returned to grantee → Grantee revises and resubmits → EPA QAO reviews (First Round) → EPA QAO signs EPA Approval Form, or sends back for additional revisions (Second Round)**
- **The clock is running at each step for you and us!**

QA Document Tracking ☆ > WD/WMB/LISO

Document Type	Title	File Number	Task Status	Submitter	Reviewer
QAPP	Planning to Enhance Coasta...	2022-10	Approved	Wright, Bessie	Supriya Rao
QAPP	Planning to Enhance Coasta...	2022-10	Needs Revision	Wright, Bessie	GDIT
QAPP	Installation of Nitrogen Re...	2022-02	Approved	Wright, Bessie	Esther Nelson
QAPP	Be a Good Egg:...	2022-01	Approved	Wright, Bessie	Hulme, Brian

What to Expect During QAPP Review

What to Expect Upon Approval

Both must approve the submitted QAPP **via signed EPA Approval Form *before* environmental information collection and sampling can begin.**

EPA QAO Digital Signature

EPA PO Digital Signature

**EPA Region 2 specific

U.S. EPA REGION 2 - QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN APPROVAL FORM

PROJECT INFORMATION

Quality Assurance Officer: _____

Project Officer or Project Mgr.: _____

Title of Quality Assurance Project Plan: _____

Assistance Agreement or Contract #: _____

QA File Number: _____

REGIONAL QA MANAGER OR DELEGATED APPROVER

Approved ☐   Conditionally Approved* ☐

* Conditional Approval may be provided when there are unresolved comments that do not impact the data collection or the quality of the data and where the project has a small window of opportunity to collect such data. Conditional Approval expires 30 days from the signature date. If updated quality documentation (QD) is not provided by the expiration date or another due date is not agreed upon by EPA, then the QD will be considered delinquent.

Comments:

_____
Signature EPA QA Officer

_____
Signature EPA PO or PM

REVIEW SUMMARY:
A review was conducted on the above referenced Quality Assurance Project Plan. The subject QAPP was reviewed for conformance with the *EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans* (EPA QA/R-5), EPA/240/B-01/003, March 2001; USEPA Region 2 Guidance for the Development of QAPPs for Environmental Monitoring Projects, April 2004 and other EPA QAPP guidance documents as appropriate.

This approval form documents EPA's decision of approval or conditional approval* for the aforementioned QAPP. After the QAPP is approved by EPA via this approval form, obtain the required signatures from your organization on the QAPP Title/Signature page. Send the signed QAPP to the EPA Project Officer and others on the QAPP distribution list within the timeframe stipulated in the AA terms and conditions.

EPA R2 QAPP Approval Form 5/9/2022

EPA R2 QAPP Roles and Responsibilities for Review and Approval - Non-Brownfields - Grantee

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT RECIPIENT	• Understand and accept the requirement to have an approved QAPP in place prior to the start of environmental data collection/use. • Acquire the knowledge and training necessary to develop a QAPP. Go to www.epa.gov/quality for EPA QAPP requirements and guidance. For additional assistance, request a planning meeting with EPA. • Prepare a QAPP in accordance with the applicable EPA guidance. • Submit a draft QAPP to the responsible EPA Project Officer in a timely fashion, in accordance with the Terms & Conditions of your Assistance Agreement (AA). Do not begin environmental sampling/monitoring before the QAPP is approved. • Address EPA's comments and re-submit to the EPA Project Officer with a copy to the QAO, usually within 15 days. • After the QAPP is approved by EPA via approval form, obtain required signatures from your organization. Send the signed QAPP to the EPA Project Officer and others on the QAPP distribution list within the timeframe stipulated in the AA terms and conditions. • Ensure that the QAPP is implemented as approved. • For multi-year projects, review QAPP annually and amend/revise. Consult EPA QA. • Notify EPA and others on the distribution list when there are changes to the QAPP.

QAPP Roles and Responsibilities for Review and Approval - Non-Brownfields – EPA PO

EPA R2 PROJECT OFFICER (PO)	- Liaison between the assistance agreement recipient (AAR), the EPA QAO and the EPA grants office. - Assure that the AAR complies with the EPA policy regarding the need for an approved QAPP for environmental information, data collection/use projects. - Submit the QAPP Review Request to the EPA QAPP review team via SharePoint within 2 days of receipt at LSASD-MAB QA Document Review Request for all program grants except brownfields and pollution prevention (P2) QAPPs. - Review the draft QAPP concurrently to ascertain that it meets the requirements of the project's scope of work and the needs of the EPA program. - Ensure the QAO's comments or questions are addressed by the AAR in a timely manner, usually within 15 days. - Upon receipt of the QAPP approval form, electronically sign and return the form to the EPA QAO.

QAPP Roles and Responsibilities for Review and Approval - Non-Brownfields – EPA QAO

EPA R2 QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER (QAO)

- Turn around review of the initial QAPP submittal within 30 days from the date the document is received by the EPA Project Officer.
- Provide comments that are relevant and clearly written.
- Ensure that the EPA QA supervisor has time to review the comments. Work with him/her to address any comments, concerns or edits.
- Send comments to the EPA Project Officer and to the AAR.
- Turn around the review of a revised QAPP within 13 days from EPA's receipt.
- Once ready for approval, notify the EPA Project Officer and the AAR to finalize and provide a clean final copy of the document to the Project Officer and QAO.
- QAO prepares and signs the QAPP approval form; sends it to the EPA Project Officer for electronic signature and return; then sends the signed approval form to all parties.
- Throughout the review and approval process, update the QAPP Process flow board and the Share Point tracking system. Upload the final version of the QAPP with completed approval form to SharePoint.

QAPP Review and Approval Process Flow

QAPP Review and Approval Process for Non-Brownfields Grants

Not approved

| QAPP Received by EPA PO | → | QAPP submitted to EPA QAO via SharePoint | → | QAPP reviewed by EPA QAO | → | QAPP comments prepared | → | QAPP comments peer reviewed | → | Final QAPP comments sent to EPA PO and Grantee | → | QAPP revised by Grantee and resubmitted to EPA PO |

Approved

| QAPP Approval Form prepared and signed by EPA QAO | → | Form sent to EPA PO for signature | → | Form electronically signed by EPA PO and returned to EPA QAO | → | Form uploaded to SP by EPA QAO | → | Signed form sent to EPA PO and Grantee |

Tips and Reminders

- **Assistance Agreement Recipients are permitted to communicate directly with EPA QAO's about QAPP Issues**
  - Must copy PO on written communication
  - Must summarize verbal communication and share with PO

- **Use the EPA Guidance for Quality Assurance Project Plans - EPA QA/G-5, Chapter 2 as guidance when creating and reviewing your QAPP**
  - Follow numbering scheme
  - Don't skip elements
  - Read element descriptions to submit correct information

- **Each QAPP is assigned a File # (2023-XX)**

Tips and Reminders (Continued)

- **Submit QAPP as MS Word and use Track Changes for revisions directly into document.**

- **If you reference a document in your QAPP, submit it as an attachment, an appendix, or a hyperlink**

- **Submit revisions on-time (15 Days from receipt of comments)**

- **If there is a Signature Page, must still be completed and submitted after receive signed EPA Approval Form**

- **A final, "Clean Copy" will be provided upon approval**

- **QAPPs must be approved by both the EPA PO and EPA QAO via EPA Approval Form prior to the beginning the project**

R2 MAB QA Contacts

Sieglinde Pylypchuk, Acting Team Leader
Air and Water Quality Assurance Team
(212) 637-4133
Pylypchuk.sieglinde@epa.gov

Linda Mauel
Regional Quality Assurance Manager/SIO
(732) 321-4377
Mauel.Linda@epa.gov

Carol Lynes, Branch Chief
Monitoring and Assessment Branch
(732) 321-6760
Lynes.carol@epa.gov

AWQAT Team Members
Brian Hulme, Hulme.brian@epa.gov, 732-321-6744
Erwin Smieszek, Smieszek.Erwin@epa.gov, 732-321-6718
Kai Tang, Tang.Kai@epa.gov, 732-321-4364
Mustafa Mustafa, Mustafa.mustafa@epa.gov, 732-906-6881
Omer Sohail, Sohail.omer@epa.gov, 732-321-6785
Supriya Rao, Rao.Supriya@epa.gov, 732-321-4461
Emily Nering, Nering.emily@epa.gov, 732-321-6764
Larry Martin, Martin.lawrence.w@epa.gov, 732-321-6778

R1 EPA QAPP Roles

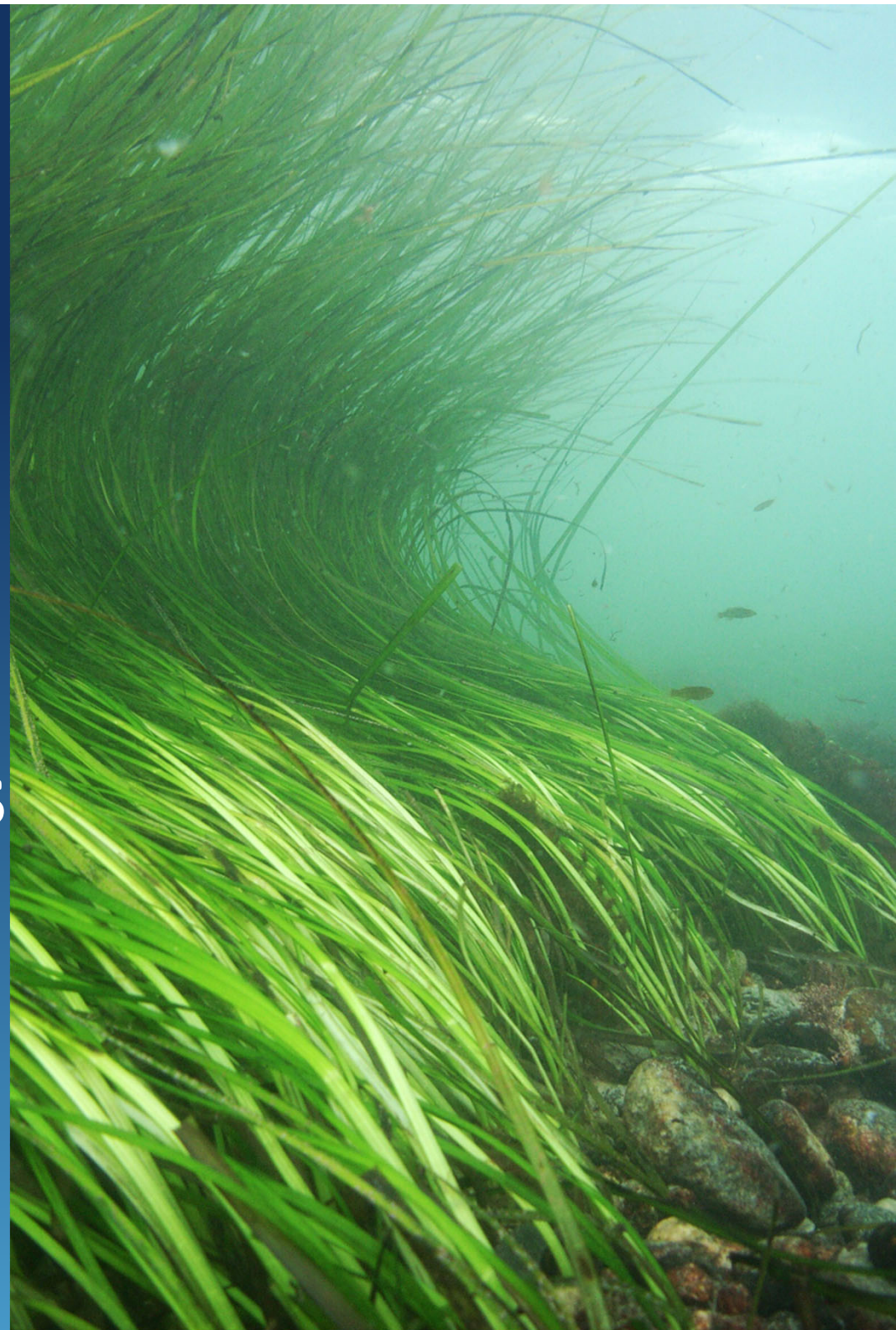**R1 Project Officer is the primary contact for grant-related activities including QAPP**

R1 QA Reviewer is responsible for quality assurance and technical review of QAPP

<u>Both</u> must approve QAPP before environmental information collection begins

R1 QAPP Submittal Process

Send the QAPP electronically **at least 60 days** before project begins

- To the project officer

- PO will forward to R1QAPPs@epa.gov

QA Branch Manager, Bryan Hogan, will assign a QA reviewer

- Expect email notification when reviewer is assigned

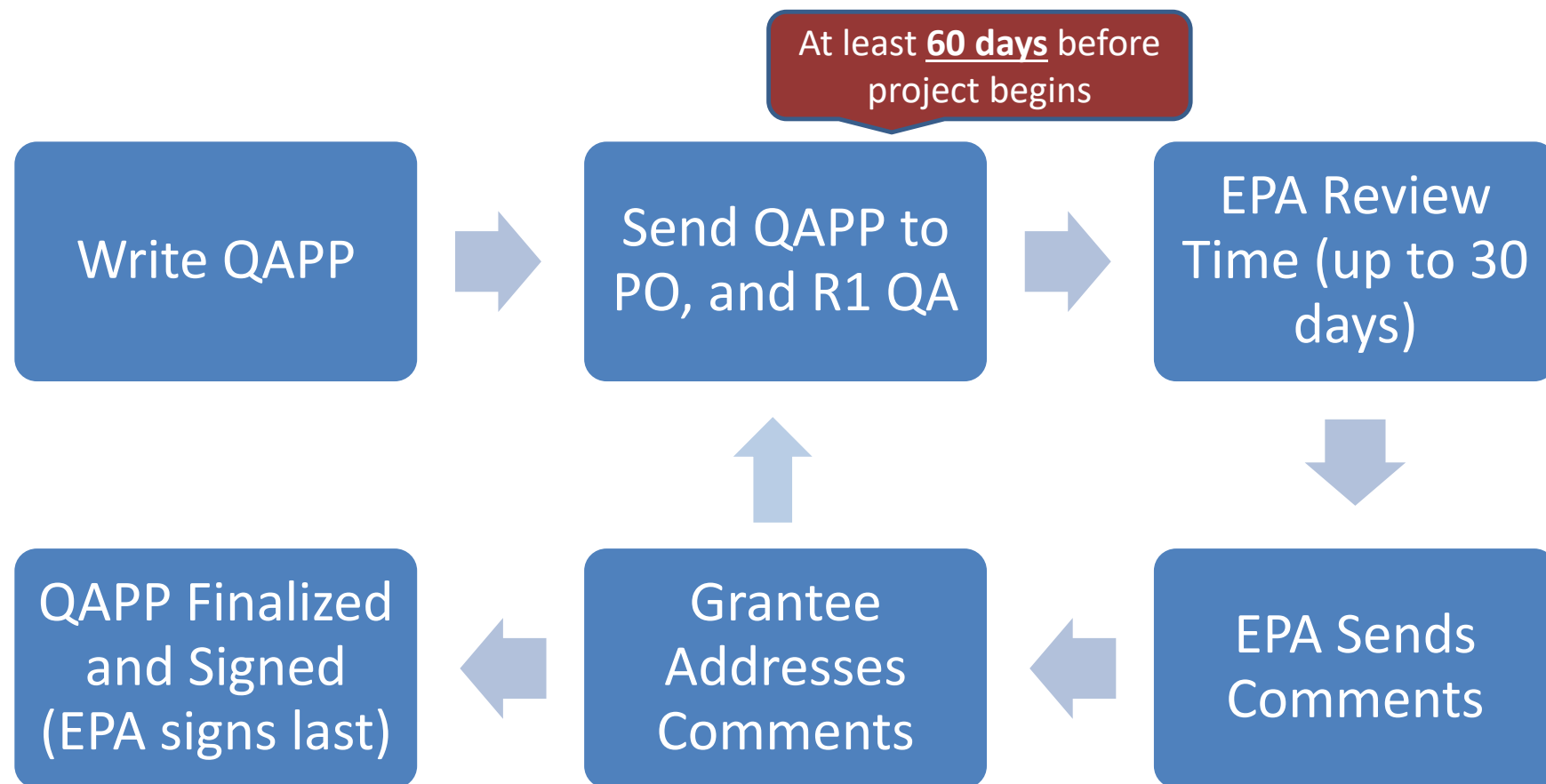Expect up to **30 days** for the **first review**. Plan ahead!*

*QAPP **must** be approved prior to starting work on the project.

Funding at risk if work commences before QAPP approval.

R1 QAPP Submittal Process

Long Island Sound Study
A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

At least **60 days** before project begins

Write QAPP → Send QAPP to PO, and R1 QA → EPA Review Time (up to 30 days)

QAPP Finalized and Signed (EPA signs last) ← Grantee Addresses Comments ← EPA Sends Comments

* EPA funded activities involving the collection, generation, compilation, analysis, evaluation and use of environmental data will be identified in the grant agreement as needing a QAPP

R1 QA Branch Contacts

QAB Manager:
Bryan Hogan hogan.bryan@epa.gov (or R1QAPPs@epa.gov)

Regional Quality Assurance Manager:
Anthony Pepe pepe.anthony@epa.gov

Quality Assurance Reviewers:
Nora Conlon conlon.nora@epa.gov
Lilly Simmons simmons.lilly@epa.gov
Jessica Iverson iverson.jessica@epa.gov
Emily Ambeliotis ambeliotis.emily@epa.gov
Elise McNally   mcnally.elise@epa.gov

R1 Resources

Contacts

- **R1QAPPS@epa.gov** (accesses QAB Manager)
- Assigned EPA QA Reviewer

Documents

- **EPA QA/R-5**

  EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) 2001 (reissued without change 2006)

- **EPA QA/G-5**

  EPA Guidance for Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) 2005

Links

- www.epa.gov/quality
- www.epa.gov/quality/R1
- https://www.epa.gov/quality/region-1-quality-systems-documents

Top 5 QA Review Stoppers

1. No attachments attached, no appendices included, no SOPs provided
   - Be sure your entire document is submitted for review

2. Unclear charts, tables, and maps
   - Give them a descriptive label, a number, and cite them in the text

3. Weblinks that don't work
   - Double and triple check your links to make sure EPA reviewers will have access

4. Incomplete title and approval page
   - Tell us the revision date, the grant number, the organization; give us space to sign;

5. No independent QA manager
   - Ensure the person checking the work is not the same one doing the work

Reminder - Part 2 is next Tuesday

Meet the QA Team - Session 2

Feb 14, 2023, 2:00 – 4:00 PM (America/New York)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

https://meet.goto.com/424606125

This session will feature presentations by grant recipients about their project, their QA experiences, and lessons learned. This will be followed up by a recap of the QA process and some QA guidance. Then another set of breakout groups.
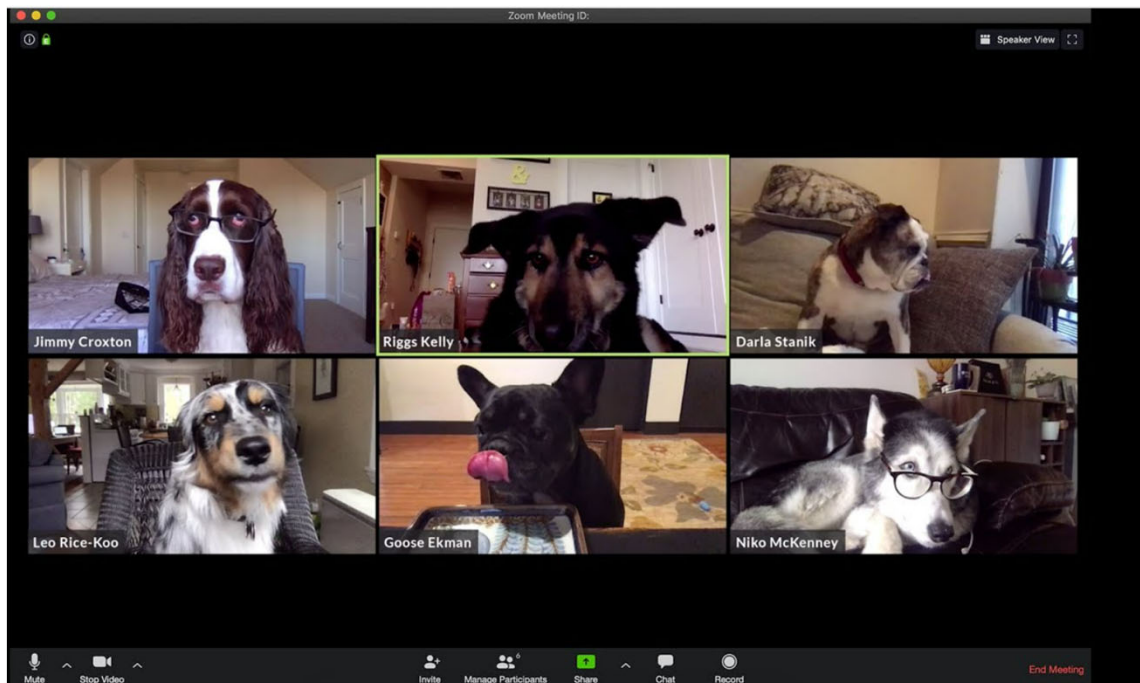
Guest speakers:

Save the Sound

Katie Friedman, New York Ecological Restoration Program Manager

University of Connecticut

Craig Tobias, Professor of Marine Sciences

And Now for Breakout Groups...

Introduce yourself:

1. Name & organization
2. QAPP experience
3. Project you're working on
4. What you like about holidays

Time to ask questions to help with your QAPP