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Winter 2025



Flowers bloom at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford, Connecticut. Photo by The Friends of Harkness.

Transitions mark a shift from one state or condition to another. A snowflake landing in your hand melts from a delicate frozen speck into a tiny drop of water. Lush green vegetation fades to brown and brittle as the sun retreats behind winter skies. The Spring Equinox, which took place on March 20, symbolizes renewal—a fresh start as winter gives way to spring, cold yields to warmth, and budding grasses and flowers take their place.

According to [The Old Farmer's Almanac](#), New York and Connecticut can expect a warm and wet spring. Just as nature transforms with the seasons, people experience transitions every day. Some are small, like taking a different route to work, and others can be more significant, unfolding gradually over time like planning for the future.

In this issue of *Sound Matters*, we explore progress, development, and a major transition within the Long Island Sound Study program with the retirement of Mark Tedesco, Director of EPA's Long Island Sound Office.

Anya Grondalski

NEIWPCC Information Officer

Long Island Sound Study Science Communicator

LISS NEWS

35 Years of Dedication to Long Island Sound



On November 1, 2024, I announced that after 38 years with EPA, 35 of which were dedicated to Long Island Sound, I would be retiring in spring 2025. What still seemed distant and abstract then, now seems imminent and real. In my farewell communication in an official capacity, I feel duty bound to provide my subjective perspective on the past four decades in the form of four observations that I hope have some utility for those starting or continuing their commitment to a healthier, more abundant Long Island Sound. — *Mark Tedesco, Director of EPA Long Island Sound Office*

[Read Tedesco's farewell letter here.](#)

Shaping the Future of Long Island Sound: The Conservation and Management Plan, Then and Now



Engagement session attendees share their feedback on the draft plan. The session was hosted by Alley Pond Environmental Center in Queens, New York. *LISS Photo*

The Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan is the blueprint for federal, state, and local governments, research universities, community organizations, and environmental groups to follow in developing projects to restore and protect the Sound. The Long Island Sound Study developed its first CCMP in 1994, and replaced it with a slimmed down, but still comprehensive plan in 2015. This year the Study's partners are working on a major revision that is intended to carry the program's actions through 2035. [Read more on what to expect in the new plan](#), and how you can keep informed on its development in our Latest News.

Student Symposium Helps Nurture Budding Marine Scientists



Sofia Roberts, a senior at The Sound School in New Haven, was one of the presenters of her group's poster. *Photo by Judy Benson/CTSG.*

On March 14, The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk transformed into a hub of student-driven marine science as 350 elementary, middle, and high school students gathered for the first Long Island Sound Schools Network Symposium. Through detailed posters, students presented their research on topics like non-point source pollution, invasive species, and coastal cleanups. The event, supported by Connecticut Sea Grant and Mercy University, pro-

vided a platform for students to exchange ideas and bring awareness to the environmental issues impacting Long Island Sound. [Read more in this Sound Spotlight.](#)

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

New Sustainable and Resilient Communities Extension Professional Joins Team Expanding Program Outreach to the Bronx and Queens



In January, the Sustainable and Resilient Communities Team welcomed its sixth extension professional, Benjamin Goldberg, who will assist communities in the Bronx and Queens. Originally from the Washington, D.C., area, Goldberg holds a bachelor's degree in literary studies from Middlebury College in Vermont and a master's degree in city and regional planning from Rutgers University.

[Read more about Goldberg in Latest News.](#)

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Can Kelp Help Plants Grow?



From late winter to early spring, cold waters in Long Island Sound create the perfect environment for long dark-brown and green lasagna-shaped seaweed strands to thrive. Attached to a rocky seabed or flowing from a stretch of rope suspended

Kelp at harvest. *Photo courtesy of National Fish and Wildlife.*

between buoys is sugar kelp, *Saccharina Latissima*. Its ribbon-like strands can grow as long as twenty feet or more providing habitat for juvenile fish and small invertebrates.

A multi-year pilot study on Long Island, launched in spring 2020, is investigating the potential of sugar kelp as a fertilizer amendment. Part of LISS's Bioextraction Initiative, the research brings together scientists and agricultural specialists to assess whether sugar kelp can be cultivated, harvested, processed, and utilized to enhance both water quality and local farming.

Read more about the study's progress at this [Sound Spotlight](#).

LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY NEWS BRIEFS

Sound Bytes

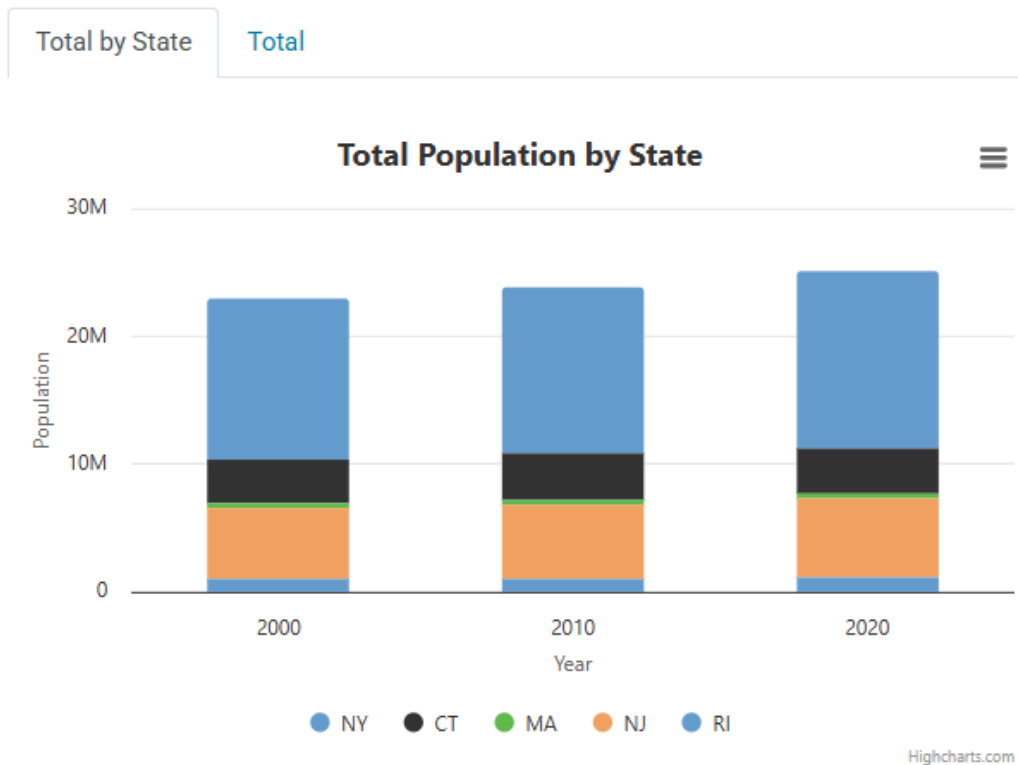
- **The Long Island Sound Policy Committee (EPA Regional Administrators, CT DEEP and NYSDEC Commissioners) met on March 20 to review and approve the final Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. The plan has been updated to comply with all executive orders and agency policies. The plan will move forward with final design and layout for a public release estimated by late June.**
- **Volunteers Needed to Monitor Local Streams! Spring is here, which means its river herring monitoring season. Every year, river herring and eels make their way upstream and Seatuck is looking for volunteers to spot them. Attend a free virtual training on river herring monitoring on March 25 at 6:00 PM. [Learn more here](#).**
- **On March 25, the The Nature Conservancy and the Northeast Regional Ocean Council are hosting a Living Shorelines Training Workshop at the Audubon Center on Stratford Point from 9:00 AM–3:00 PM. [Register here to attend](#).**
- **SAVE THE DATE: The Sustainable and Resilient Communities Team is hosting its 2nd Annual Long Island Funding Workshop series. Workshops will take place March 27 in [Hauppauge, New](#)**

York, from 9:30 AM–2:30 PM and on March 31 in **New Haven, Connecticut**, from 10:00 AM–2:30 PM. Lunch will be provided.

- The Long Island Sound Study is hosting public meetings on the updated Long Island Sound Stewardship Strategy. The first public meeting occurred on March 18. More meetings are scheduled for April 24 and June 4. The Strategy aims to provide a framework in support of the 33 Stewardship Areas of the Initiative. The draft of the Strategy will be shared for public comment March 10–May 9. [Register for meetings here.](#)
- The 2025 Long Island Sound Water Quality Monitoring Program Sampling Calendar has been posted to the CT DEEP website. [View it here.](#) You can also check out the 2024 LIS Hypoxia Season Summary, which has been [published as an interactive web report here.](#)
- On April 21 from 9:00 AM–3:00 PM, Sacred Heart University is looking for volunteers to help fill and place shell bags and plant marsh grasses at the Stratford Point Living Shoreline project. Reach out to steel@shu.edu for more info.

FOCUS ON LISS INDICATORS

Population Within 50-mile Buffer of Long Island Sound



(Chart/Long Island Sound Study Ecosystem Target and Supporting Indicators presentation)

The Long Island Sound Study Ecosystem Targets and Supporting Indicators microsite tracks indicators that measure the health of the Sound and whether the Study is meeting management targets to help achieve restoration goals. In each issue of Sound Matters we highlight the latest trends in one of the indicators or targets.

The population within the 50-mile radius is 25,098,628, an increase of about 1.3 million people from 2010 to 2020, which is nearly double the increase seen from 2000 to 2010 (700,000 people). Populations increased across all five states with the most significant growth in New York where the population grew by 6% as compared to 2010 census reporting. The overall US population increased by 7.4% to 331.4 million people, with the majority of growth occurring in the southern and western parts of the country. The Long Island Sound region remains one of the most densely populated areas in the US. About 7.5 percent of the US population lives within the 50-mile radius.

Densely populated areas near the coast can put stress on coastal bodies of water such as Long Island Sound. This indicator recognizes that pollution discharges into the Sound from sources such as stormwater runoff, wastewater treatment plants, and air deposits ultimately come

from humans. The indicator tracks people who live within a one hour drive of the Sound, including those who live just outside the watershed boundaries but might commute back and forth into the watershed. The indicator also shows the millions of people who are close by the Sound to appreciate its resources with activities such as fishing, boating, and swimming.

[View the population indicator.](#)

SPECIAL PROJECT FEATURE

New Population and Demographic Story Map Explores the Long Island Sound Watershed



In December 2024, UConn CLEAR, in partnership with the Long Island Sound Study, published a story map tool that explores the land and people in the Long Island Sound Watershed. From Canada down to the northern coast of Long Island, the watershed is a vastly diverse area populated by nearly 9 million people and characterized by farms, forests, urban centers, beaches, marshes and more.

Dive into a comprehensive view of land cover, population, and demographic data across the watershed, and discover the stories of real people from nine watershed communities. Each story highlights the unique connections we share with the environment, showing how our occupa-

tions, hobbies, and daily interactions in our own backyards shape the health of Long Island Sound.

- [Click here to explore the Long Island Sound Watershed map](#)
- [Catch up on a webinar demoing the tool here](#)

SOUND FACT

Sound Ideas for Clean Water



For guidance on how to install a rain barrel, [click here](#) or find more [Sound Ideas](#) for curbing stormwater runoff in your yard and garden.

- **Opt for native plants in your gardening and landscaping.** Native plants require little to no chemical fertilizers and have long root systems that store and filter water. They are adapted to live in local conditions, support the local ecosystem, and stay put. You can view some examples of Long Island Sound natives in our series [Flora on the Sound](#).
- **Install rain gardens to reduce the amount of water flowing over your yard and into the street.** Rain gardens allow stormwater runoff to soak into the ground naturally. This process filters out pollutants that are carried with the rainwater that washes off your lawn, rooftop, and driveway. Rain gardens come in many sizes and are easy to build and maintain!
- **Leave a vegetated buffer if you live near a stream, river, or pond.** Plant trees and shrubs next to waterways. Riparian (or vegetated) buffers not only improve water quality and increase bank stabilization, but they also provide habitat for wildlife. For more information, read the Connecticut Sea Grant Planting Guide for Riparian Sites. Create a habitat in YOUR backyard. By providing food, water, cover and a place for wildlife to raise their young—and by incorporating sustainable gardening practices—you help wildlife.

Visit the LISS [media center](#) to see all of our Sound Facts.

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Contact the Editor

Anya Grondalski
NEIWPCC Information Officer
Long Island Sound Study Science
Communicator
info@longislandsoundstudy.net

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**Long Island Sound Study | EPA Long Island Sound Office
888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT 06904-2152
Phone: (203) 977-1541**