

Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting
Thursday, March 13, 2025, **Meeting Summary**

Welcome, Updates, and Voting

- **Nancy Seligson** (CAC NY co-chair) kicked off the meeting at 9:10am with over 70 attendees, including representatives from 24 CAC member organizations.
- **David Miller** moved to approve the last meeting's summary; **Maureen Murphy** seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- **Andrew Ely** introduced [the Alliance for Mystic River Watershed](#) and its director **Maggie Favretti** as a candidate for CAC membership. Holly made a motion to approve the Alliance as the latest member of the CAC, Andrew Ely seconded. The group voted unanimously to welcome Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed as a CAC member.
- Nancy announced this is the last CAC meeting for **Francine Gordon** and **Mark Tedesco** and thanked them for their service and work.
 - Francine is going to Columbia to begin her master's in environmental policy, and Mark Tedesco is retiring from the EPA after 35 years of service as the director of the EPA LISS Office. Nancy noted Mark's partnership and respect for the CAC. CAC members shared words of well-wishes and gratitude to both, and Mark gave a few words, congratulating Francine, and stating his deep appreciation for the CAC.
- Nancy and **Holly Drinkuth** (CAC CT co-chair, The Nature Conservancy) reviewed proposed amendments to the CAC Bylaws.
 - A CAC Ad Hoc subcommittee reviewed the bylaws regarding leadership roles in the CAC. A letter with amendments was circulated to CAC members 30 days prior to the meeting. Subcommittee member **Sarah Crosby** presented the proposed changes, which included an addition of up to 4 vice-chairs (2 from each state), each with a 3-year-turn, to establish a group who would share leadership responsibilities and could succeed in the role of co-chair. Additionally, the letter outlined the role of those vice chairs, and the staggered-term format to ensure continuity among them. Three consecutive 3-year terms were proposed for both co-chairs and vice chairs. Maureen Murphy and **Denise Stranko** clarified that staggering the terms would allow vice chairs to run for co-chair, but a vice-chair does not have run for the co-chair position. Andrew Ely added that it is also meant to bring together different expertises working in leadership.
 - Discussion:
 - What happens if a member of the CAC must leave before their term expires? A special election will be held.
 - Will changes be made to the document addressing the edits discussed? Yes, the group agreed to vote on the proposed bylaws and policy changes with amendments.
 - Were there any changes to the chairs and their roles? No, just the term limits.
 - Sarah Crosby moved to have a vote to accept the proposed bylaws and policy changes with amendments. Andrew Ely seconded. Members did a recorded vote in the chat. Motion passed unanimously. *Action: Make required edits to the bylaws and policies, post online and circulate to the CAC.*

- Nancy asked members to inform the co-chairs if they're interested in seeking the vice chair position or nominating a candidate. **Megan Granato** (Town of Groton) expressed interest. *Vice-chair elections will be held during the CAC meeting on June 12, 2025.*
- Nancy explained the nominating committee consists of volunteer CAC members. CAC members are asked to self-nominate for the vice chair positions, and to volunteer for the nominating committee. Interested members should reach out to the CAC co-chairs.

LISS Updates

Robert Burg presented updates on the Public Perception Survey conducted last year, under supervision of CT Sea Grant.

- The report is not yet final but will be presented to the project team in the coming weeks, after which it will be approved by CTSG and published on the LISS website. Robert noted the findings can be used for education programming, behavior change campaigns, etc.

Mark Tedesco and **Nikki Tachiki** shared some CCMP updates.

- The EPA team is busy working with New Directions consultants and shepherding the new CCMP to approval. Mark believes it will be approved. The federal budget proposal of a FY25 Continuing Resolution through September 30, 2025 funds the LISS at \$40 million.
- Nikki shared a timeline of the CCMP approval process:
 - On Jan 16, 2025, the Management Committee approved the draft CCMP language.
 - Jan 20 the President signed an Executive Order (EO) to terminate all DEI and EJ offices and positions, program, grants, etc. The EPA LISS office changed the CCMP text to be consistent with this order.
 - On Feb 10, LISS held a meeting with the [LISS Executive Committee](#) who endorsed the text changes and approved holding a [Policy Committee](#).
 - On Feb 11, the EPA team briefed their new Region 2 Regional Administrator (RA) Mark Martucci and specifically asked him to comment on the land acknowledgement included in the CCMP. RA Martucci received approval from EPA headquarters for the revised CCMP with the land acknowledgment removed. At the time of this CAC meeting, EPA R1 did not have a politically appointed RA.
 - On March 20 the Policy Committee will review and approve the CCMP. The CCMP draft has been shared with the Policy Committee and will be shared with the whole CAC and Management conference following Policy Committee approval.
- Nikki listed the CCMP changes:
 - Following EPA guidance, the land acknowledgement was removed and the CCMP text was revised to align with Clean Water Act Section 119 language, which defines distressed communities and assistance. References to underserved communities were removed to comply with the EOs.
 - CCMP Objectives were updated to a SMART framework instead of the original SMARTIE (S=Specific, M = Measurable, A = Achievable, R = Relevant , T = Time-bound, I = Inclusive, E = Equitable).
 - The CCMP text was aligned with the language in the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act (PRAE Act), which directs National Estuary Programs (NEPs) to develop

CCMPs that address the effects of recurring extreme weather events, including the identification and assessment of vulnerabilities to the estuary, and the development of adaptation strategies. All references to “climate change” were removed to comply with the EOs.

- LIS EPA staff made a deliberate choice to align the CCMP language with the governing statutes and what the program is tasked to do.

Discussion:

- EPA staff were asked if they think the CCMP’s intent remains the same. In Nikki’s opinion, yes. Mark noted the current text refers to extreme weather effects and a changing climate, and the actions in the plan include long term planning for extreme weather events. ‘Climate impacts’ and ‘climate resiliency’ are used repeatedly in the plan. He also emphasized that the plan continues to commit to broad engagement and deep involvement of communities, which is core to program operations. “We’re delighted to have the Mohegan Tribe join the Management Committee. We’re going to continue that work and the plan doesn’t step away from that”.
- While commending the LISS EPA’s staff work in these difficult circumstances, several CAC members expressed strong disapproval and concern over the removal of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and climate change from the CCMP. CAC members requested to see the changes in writing. (Find them outlined above).
- The group had a lengthy discussion over the CAC’s role and the next steps to respond to these changes, highlighting the importance of speaking out, and the potential for a “slippery slope” on free speech, disruptions in efforts for inclusion of diverse communities and work towards climate change. Some individuals supported the CAC voicing disapproval while others noted the importance of final approval of the CCMP, the program’s current bipartisan support and the need for reauthorization of the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act. The group agreed to task the CAC Policy Subcommittee with further discussion of the issue and recommending an approach. *Action: Policy subcommittee to reconvene to discuss and recommend an approach for CCMP response from the CAC.*
- Can the language be overwritten by executive order? Can the CCMP be amended later if circumstances change? Mark said that a program can decide to revise its CCMP on any schedule it wishes, even though the requirement is at least every 10 years. There is a history of NEPs adding agreements to their CCMPs in between revisions.

Maggie Cozens and Lillit Genovesi covered the CCMP signing event and the Anniversary.

- The 40th Anniversary and signing event will take place on June 20th at the Jay Heritage Center in Rye, NY and there is a limited capacity for attendees. The event planning team will have further guidance once the Policy Committee meets to approve the CCMP.
- LISS officially turns 40 years old on August 15, and the Informed and Engaged Public Work Group is looking for CAC groups interested in organizing LIS-related events in August, especially around that weekend! Interested folks can reach out to Lilli Genovesi (lg543@cornell.edu) and Maggie Cozens (margaret.cozens@uconn.edu).

Anya Grondalski covered LISS Communications Updates.

- The LISS Instagram account is nearing 2k followers! That is a “micro-influencer” level, which typically focuses on a specific niche and/or are regarded as a topic specialist.
- ‘Shares’ are down in Q2, but Anya has been posting less given the fast-changing situation.
- She encouraged folks to share events they’d like to amplify. Folks who want their posts amplified can reach out to **Erica Casper** at erica.casper@uconn.edu.
- Anya and partners from UConn CLEAR will be hosting a webinar on March 20 to go over the new [Long Island Sound Population StoryMap](#). View the webinar recording [here](#).

Presentation: NRCS Subaqueous Soil Survey presented by **Jacob Isleib**, USDA

- The Natural Resources Conservation Service has facilitated the Soil Survey since the 1890’s. CT data was collected and published on Oct 1, 2024, and the team of about approximately 30 staff plan to conduct soil/data collection in NY this season, then lab analysis (agreement with UConn Geosciences and URI Soil Science). A basemap agreement with NOAA will be used for shore mapping.
- Jacob did a live demo of how to access the data: search “Web Soil survey” > Green Start Button > use icons to Zoom In on your desired interest > Use one of the AOI buttons to choose the specific area from your screen.
- USDA also has publicly available points and lab data, but there is currently no public platform to access it. USDA also has updated the soil summary types (soil catena chart) and Soil Interpretation Manuscripts. Anyone interested in the data can reach out to Jacob at jacob.isleib@usda.gov. Find more information in the presentation attached.

Presentation: Ecological forecasting in LIS: What’s Possible and How Do We Get There?

Presented by **Craig Tobias**, CT NERR

- Ecological forecasting aims to better understand how ecological resources will look in 10, 20, and 50 years. Part of the motivation to embark on this effort was a comment that came out at a STAC meeting: *“can we please move beyond nitrogen and focus on things people actually care about?”* It is meant to support an Ecosystem-Based Management approach. Find more information in the presentation attached.
- Craig hopes the CAC can help with 2 things:
 - Helping determine priority end points (ocean acidification? eelgrass? forage fish?).
 - Helping to integrate social science aspects in these models through guidance, discussion, and considerations on behavior projections.
- Discussion:
 - Kate Knight: CTDEEP has a proposal for a scoping climate risk needs assessment project that might be worth partnering on to ID potential outputs. Craig encouraged her to reach out to him and Melissa Duvall.
 - Mark Tedesco noted that Melissa Duvall is currently at the meeting of a new living resources model evaluation working group working on how to integrate concerns about oyster management, sea grass, and seaweed (from a bioextraction perspective) into system-wide models.

- Paul Stacy noted how this is such a challenging thing to do because so many major issues, such as climate change, are so intractable. Craig noted that the first step towards action is getting actionable information.
- *Action: Share information about the modelling WG with the CAC and let them know how to participate.*

Policy Subcommittee Updates presented by **Adrienne Esposito** and **Denise Stranko**

- **Adrienne reported that** Christina Lizzo (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) will be working to fill Francine's position as CAC Member Coordinator.
- The policy subcommittee met with Senator Gillibrand's office. They were excited about the Restoration and Stewardship Act and frustrated that it did not pass last year. They have reintroduced it in the Senate, and Congressman LaLota and others have reintroduced it in the House.
- The policy subcommittee had a Zoom meeting with Congressman LaLota and staff to express the need to keep the current annual LISS funding at \$40 million dollars and the need to reauthorize the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act. Adrienne pointed out to the Congressman that his district voted 73% in favor of a funding referendum of an 8th of a penny to support clean water. LaLota was cognizant of this and Adrienne classified it as productive meeting.
- Adrienne thanked **Tripp Killin** and the **Funders Collaborative** for providing funds to support the 2025 CAC DC Trip. The trip is planned for the week of July 14th, and they will try to get meetings with the EPA as well as elected officials. CCE will begin organizing and asking for attendance. Adrienne asked people to be sure they can attend if they say they're coming because coordinating the trip is tough.
- The policy subcommittee is looking to get Republican sponsors for the LIS Restoration and Stewardship Act. Rep. Garbarino just signed on.
- Denise Stranko noted that FY25 appropriations is caught up in continuing resolutions.
- The President's proposed FY26 budget will be released soon. Denise noted that's where we would expect to see some programs cut. She flagged this as critical work for the policy subcommittee.
- Update on Plum Island: Both the House and Senate had bills in the works, but ultimately, they did not pass. Senator Blumenthal is introducing Senate bills 412 and 413, one to study Plum Island and the other to preserve Plum Island in perpetuity. The Preserve Plum Island Coalition is discussing how to handle it on the House side, with both LaLota and Representative Courtney expressing interest.
- NY Updates:
 - NY is allocating \$500 million dollars per year for infrastructure updates. Water NGO groups are now advocating for \$600 million, and the NY Senate put in \$700 million!
 - Suffolk County needs more work on nitrogen, so some of this funding is going into grants to replace septic systems with N-removing systems. They've also had successful conversations with the governor to increase homeowner grants from 10k to 20k for septic-system replacement grants.

- CT Updates:
 - It's a very busy time for the CT legislature right now so Denise shared just some of the latest. There are ongoing hearings to discuss the Riparian Buffer Bill, the Sewage Right to Know Act, and the Single-Use Plastics Bill. There is lots of community support for these bills.
 - They are currently “playing defense” on HR6249, a bill which limits the ability of people to get involved in agency decision-making in EJ-related issues (CEPA Bill). Lots of local groups doing “action alerts” to get community involved.
 - Committee voting soon on House Bill 5004, which includes a lot of good things including an update to the state Greenhouse Gases cap, living shorelines measures, etc.

Announcements

- The 2025 Summit Coastal Watershed will be held on March 27 in Bridgeport. The summit's theme is Collaborating to Advance Clean Water Solutions. Visit the summit webpage here: <https://long-island-sound-summit.mailchimpsites.com/>
- Save the Sound has released its **QuickDrops** tool where people can find all kinds of water quality data. [View the press release here.](#)
- The LISS EPA office is hosting a series of public meetings to introduce a draft Stewardship Strategy to support the Stewardship Initiative (33 designated Stewardship Areas). The strategy summarizes discussions with the site managers about their challenges, needs, and funding priorities. It also provides recommendations for the next steps forward to build a network. [Find more information here.](#)
- Mark Tedesco encouraged the CAC policy subcommittee to reach out to EPA if they have any questions!

Meeting adjourned at 12:10pm. The next meeting will be on **June 12, 2025 online.**