

Five-Year Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan for the Long Island Sound Study



Inspiring Collaboration and Action to Restore and Protect Long Island Sound

Five Year Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan for the Long Island Sound Study

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All photos were provided by LISS, unless otherwise noted. Front cover image: Youth from Rocking the Boat, a Bronx environmental organization, ride a student-built boat on the Bronx River. (Photo by Joaquin Cotten, Rocking the Boat) Back cover image: People enjoy a sunset along the shores of Old Saybrook, Connecticut. (Photo by Judy Preston)

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Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee gather at Pleasant Beach in Bridgeport, CT. (Photo by Judy Preston)

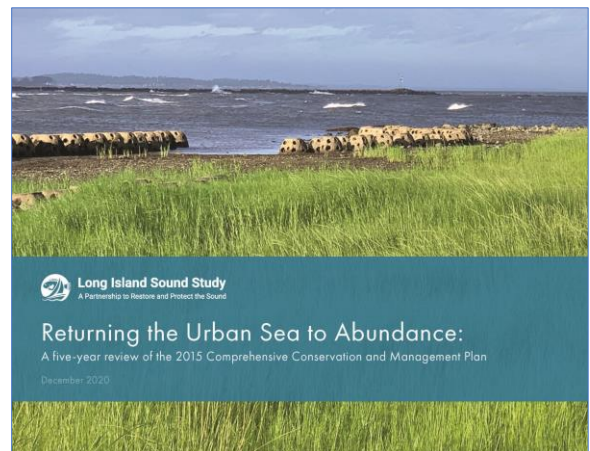
Introduction

Overview

The Long Island Sound Study (LISS), established in 1985, is a federally authorized and funded partnership of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the states of Connecticut and New York, and multiple federal, state, and local agencies, academic institutions, and stakeholders, including environmental groups and businesses, working together to restore and protect the Sound, which Congress designated as an estuary of national significance through the National Estuary Program (NEP).

LISS is guided by the mission, goals, and strategies of its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), originally written in 1994, substantially revised in 2015, and again updated in 2020. The CCMP's collaborative actions to restore and manage Long Island Sound are implemented through four focal themes: 1) Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds, 2) Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife, 3) Sustainable and Resilient Communities, and 4) Sound Science and Inclusive Management.

A Communications Plan developed in the 1990s for LISS has been coordinated and implemented by a Communications Team of LISS full time equivalent (FTE) staff employed by partner organizations: NEIWPCC¹ (1 FTE), Connecticut Sea Grant² (1 FTE), and New York Sea Grant³ (2 FTE).



The CCMP guides the activities of LISS and its partners.

¹ NEIWPCC: <https://neiwpcc.org/>

² Connecticut Sea Grant: <https://seagrants.uconn.edu/>

³ New York Sea Grant: <https://www.seagrants.sunysb.edu/>

Between 2017 and 2021, the LISS annual budget increased by nearly 900%, providing new opportunities for significant progress in implementing the CCMP. The strategies and management actions adopted in the 2015 CCMP, combined with increased federal funding for the program, have significantly expanded the number and complexity of restoration initiatives conducted by LISS partners.

It has become clear that accomplishing an effort of the scale set out in the CCMP also requires a new, enhanced, and coordinated Sound-wide Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan (“COE Plan”) with measurable objectives and additional resources sufficient to implement the work. Put simply, achieving the CCMP goals requires effective efforts to increase public awareness and understanding of the progress made to date in restoring and protecting the Sound, to provide timely and accurate information regarding the challenges that remain, and to inspire individual and community stewardship actions.

This COE Plan sets out the overarching vision and goals to do so, as well as the objectives, actions, and resources needed to succeed. Implementing the COE Plan will increase the impact of communications, outreach, and engagement efforts by guiding LISS and its partners in this endeavor and help ensure the effective use of resources.

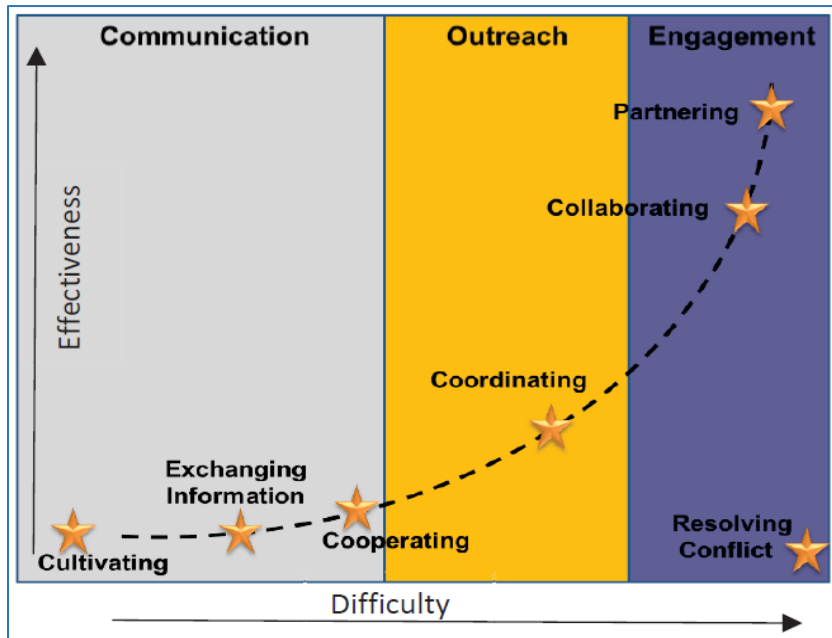
The COE Plan sets out to align and coordinate Communication, Outreach, and Engagement efforts of LISS staff and partners over five years. The Plan provides clear goals, actions, and metrics designed to enhance engagement among LISS’s current – and prospective – partners, enabling them to work in a more coordinated manner, better leverage their respective skills, and expand reach to individuals, organizations, and communities throughout the Sound watershed.

The COE Matrix, beginning on page 17, presents the Plan in a table format that aligns each goal’s objectives with recommended actions for accomplishing LISS COE efforts. An overview of the Plan development process and its contents can be found in an Executive Summary in **Appendix A**. Plan Development Phases undertaken by Marstel-Day (“the MD Team”) are depicted and further described in **Figure 5: Research Phase** and **Figure 6: Plan Development Phase** in **Appendix B**.

Why Communications, Outreach, and Engagement?

Accomplishing the ambitious aspirations of the Plan requires completing and strengthening steps along the communications-outreach-engagement continuum (**Figure 1**). The COE spectrum begins with communications activities, which typically involve one-way information distribution and publication efforts, whether broadcast to the general public or groups, which can lead to moderately effective outcomes. Next on the continuum are outreach activities – which typically require greater coordination and time, and lead to more effective outcomes. Finally come engagement activities – requiring more difficult collaboration and partnering efforts that can lead to the most effective outcomes for securing the active support of individuals and communities in support of shared interests and goals.

Figure 1: The COE Continuum



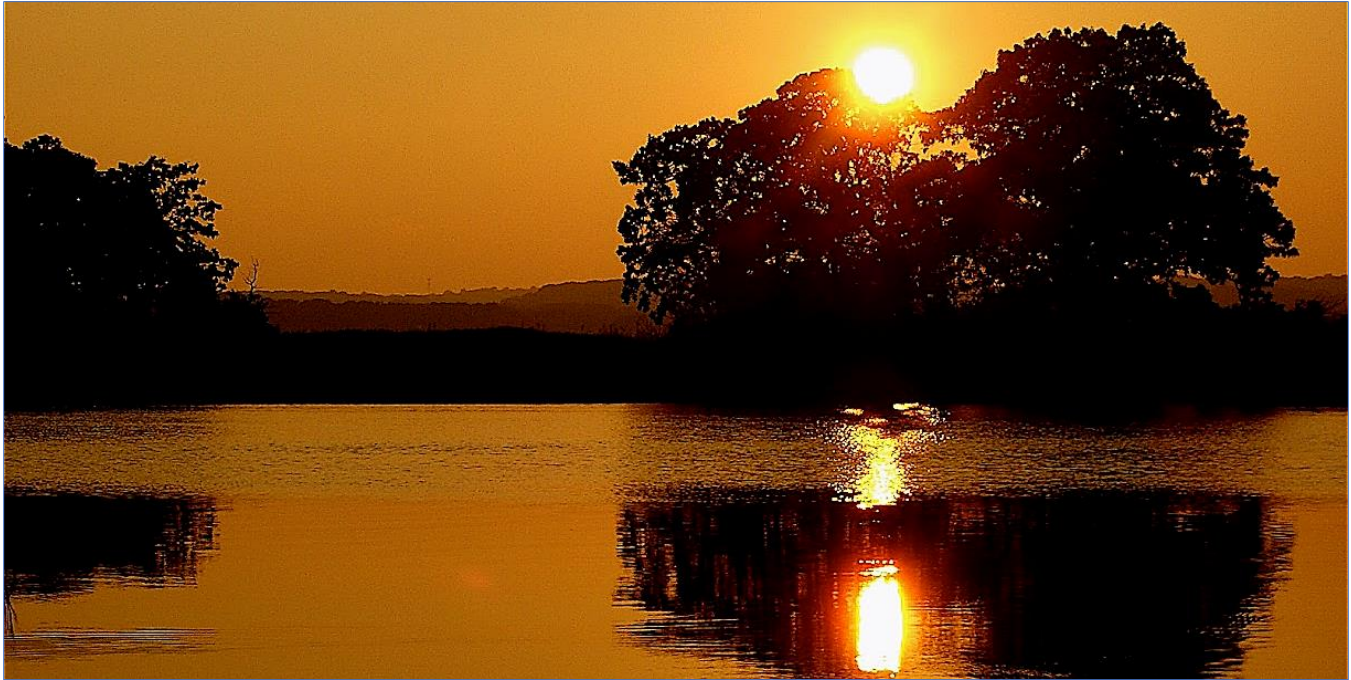
Definitions for the three elements of the COE continuum are described in the Glossary in **Appendix C**.

LISS Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ)

LISS embraces and is actively working to incorporate the values of DEIJ into its work. This includes efforts to enhance community and personal actions to sustain and enhance the health and resilience of the Sound; to identify communications, outreach, and engagement actions that will enhance LISS’s environmental justice efforts; and ultimately to achieve deeper and wider collaboration with disadvantaged communities across Long Island Sound.



LISS and its partners are working to ensure equitable access to, and enjoyment of, the Sound’s resources. At left, children plant a garden for migratory bird habitat at their school in Connecticut. At right, children in New York hold LISS “Protect Our Wildlife” stickers. (Photos by Audubon CT and Lillit Genovesi)



The Sound's beautiful views, such as this sunset at Great Island in Old Lyme, CT, can inspire people to take action and support the Sound's restoration. (Photo by Judy Preston)

COE Plan Vision, Goals, Key Themes, and Assumptions

The following summarizes the key elements of the Plan that will drive the actions, metrics, and targets for the next five years. The methodology describing how these elements were developed is described in **Appendix B**.

COE Plan Vision Statement

The Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan successfully shapes and inspires a deeper and wider collaboration across the full diversity of Sound communities in support of the Long Island Sound Study's mission to conserve, restore, and sustain the Sound and its magnificent aquatic and shoreline resources.

COE Plan Key Themes

The overarching vision and goal of the COE Plan is to aid the LISS Communications Team and its partners in its communications, outreach, and engagement on behalf of the LISS partnership and its efforts for conserving, restoring, and sustaining the Sound's resources. In support of that, the COE Plan contains four key themes (**Table 1**), each of which is aligned to one of the four themes and goals of the CCMP. These themes are intended to provide LISS and its – current and new – partners with key terms of reference that can be used to communicate with, reach out to, and engage individuals, groups, and communities across the diverse Sound region.

Table 1: Alignment of COE Plan Key Themes with CCMP Themes and Goals

COE Plan Key Theme	CCMP Theme and Goal
<i>Individual and community actions to protect the Sound's water quality benefit every resident and community in the Sound watershed and preserve the Sound and its resources for our future.</i>	Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds – Improve water quality by reducing contaminant and nutrient loads from the land and the waters impacting Long Island Sound.
<i>By acting to secure a healthy, productive, and resilient Sound ecology, individuals can both enhance wildlife and its habitat as well as bring significant quality of life benefits to themselves and their communities.</i>	Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife – Restore and protect the Sound's ecological balance in a healthy, productive, and resilient state for the benefit of both people and the natural environment.
<i>By providing timely, accurate, and accessible information on the Sound and how Sound residents can benefit from its resources, individuals and organizations will become more engaged with the Sound, better appreciate its resources, and be further inspired to protect it and its resources.</i>	Sustainable and Resilient Communities – Support vibrant, informed, and engaged communities that use, appreciate, and help protect Long Island Sound.
<i>Timely delivery of accurate and accessible information on conditions affecting the Sound to its diverse residents, communities, and policy makers can support the public and intergovernmental collaboration necessary to conserve, protect, and improve the Sound's resources for the benefit of people and the natural environment.</i>	Sound Science and Inclusive Management – Manage Long Island Sound using sound science and cross-jurisdictional governance that is inclusive, adaptive, innovative, and accountable.

COE Plan Goals

Goal 1: Increase the public's awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of Long Island Sound and the challenges ahead to ensure its health and resilience by celebrating restoration successes and program accomplishments, and by delivering information that is accessible to the Sound's diverse communities.

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for individuals to engage as environmental stewards in their communities and to promote actions needed to ensure the health and resilience of their local watersheds and Long Island Sound.

Goal 3: Broaden and increase active commitment of all Long Island Sound communities in support of policies, programs, and projects to improve the health and resilience of the Sound and ensure equitable access to its resources.

Goal 4: Increase coordination among LISS partner agencies, committees, and work groups to expand the reach and impact of communications, outreach, and engagement to enhance collaboration with communities and individuals throughout the Sound.

Goal 5: Effectively manage and adapt the Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan by tracking ongoing efforts and addressing new challenges and opportunities, with practices that are accountable, inclusive, and innovative.

Narratives of Plan Goals with Key Assumptions

The MD Team worked closely with LISS to collaboratively create a set of goals for the COE Plan that lays out a clear direction for the LISS Communications Team and LISS partners. The goals were created to set out the desired results and outcomes for the COE Plan. The following includes brief narratives that outline why each Goal is important. The key assumptions within each goal narrative are statements that helped to guide the creation of the objectives, actions, and other plan content under each goal. These key assumptions were developed from conversations with LISS staff and partners, from content examined during the literature review, and from the MD Team's knowledge and experience related to effective COE.

Goal 1: Increase the public's awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of Long Island Sound and the challenges ahead to ensure its health and resilience by celebrating restoration successes and program accomplishments, and by delivering information that is accessible to the Sound's diverse communities.

Since its founding in 1985, the LISS and its partners have made significant, measurable strides at monitoring and improving water quality in the Sound, with an emphasis on reducing nitrogen loads to manage hypoxia. For example, the summertime hypoxic dead zone, which occurs when eutrophication causes the de-oxygenation of coastal waters (which can cause fish and other wildlife to die or scatter), has declined by 65 percent in the Sound from the mid-1990s to the current period.⁴ The LISS and partner organizations have also restored more than 2,000 acres of habitat in the Connecticut and New York portions of the Long Island Sound watershed and restored more than 400 river miles of migratory corridors for anadromous fish passage. In addition, the LISS has conducted considerable public involvement and education efforts to highlight the work on nitrogen reduction, habitat restoration, sustainable communities, and other programs and projects that benefit the Sound. These efforts have included conferences and workshops, volunteer stewardship events, protection and progress reports on the Sound's health, and website and social media content, among many other COE efforts.

Despite this progress, public audiences often report they are not aware of these improvements or hold perceptions that Long Island Sound health has declined. LISS is working to secure a contractor to conduct a survey to assess the status of public perception. Results of this study, in conjunction with the recommended actions outlined in the COE Plan, will allow the LISS Communications Team to set metric targets, track progress, and identify COE priorities.



Increasing the public's awareness and appreciation of the Sound will lead to more personal actions to protect and enhance the ecosystem and the watershed. This includes youth organizations like scout troops cleaning up beaches (photo on left) and people swapping plastic bags for reusable ones (photo on right, courtesy of NYSDEC).

⁴ LISS Ecosystem Targets: <https://longislandsoundstudy.net/our-vision-and-plan/liss-ecosystem-targets-and-supporting-indicators/>

Key Assumptions – Goal 1:

- Assumption 1 – Science-based data and analyses shared openly and accessibly with the public and officials will support both effective decision-making and increased community willingness to take actions to enhance and protect the Sound, helping to make its communities more resilient.
- Assumption 2 – Stories about LISS program and community successes taking place to restore and manage the Sound will inspire more individuals and communities to lead or be a more active part of the effort to enhance and protect the Sound, helping to make its communities more resilient.
- Assumption 3 – When individuals know more about the benefits a healthier Sound can provide them and their communities, they will be more willing to take personal actions and support community actions to protect and enhance the ecosystem and their local watershed.
- Assumption 4 – The decline in local news coverage and an increased distrust in institutions requires the communications, outreach, and engagement effort to find effective pathways and trusted spokespersons to provide individuals and communities the information they need for effective decision-making and inspiration to work to enhance and protect the Sound, helping to make its communities more resilient.
- Assumption 5 – Reaching out to and promoting the stories of diverse and disadvantaged communities will increase awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the Sound among new audiences.

Goal 2. Expand opportunities for individuals to engage as environmental stewards in local watersheds and Long Island Sound.

With nearly nine million individuals living in the Long Island Sound watershed, the opportunities for personal stewardship of the Sound's resources are vast. However, given the many day-to-day cares and responsibilities people face, it is only for a small portion of the population that taking action for the Sound is likely at or near the top of their to-do list. LISS sees the opportunity to work more closely with individuals across the Sound to ensure that they are aware of the challenges and opportunities that exist within the Sound and their watershed and thereby undertake actions to ensure the health and resilience the Sound. To paraphrase a statement made by the EPA,⁵ environmental stewardship offers great potential for solving some of the more challenging issues in the Sound and it can help galvanize collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders.

Environmental behavior change is complex and requires understanding multiple social drivers as well as technical skills and experience. Research shows that even when someone is knowledgeable and aware of how to protect the environment, they still may not take actions they know are beneficial. Awareness and good intentions are not enough to make more than the easiest of behavior changes. LISS will need to make a concerted effort in the ways they communicate, reach out to, and engage with individuals to develop strong connections between people and the Sound. Developing feelings of responsibility, ownership, and pride are strongly connected to one's willingness to take positive actions for the environment. Identifying and helping people overcome any barriers to inconvenience can also help them act on the good intentions they already have. Identifying "Champions for the Sound" – individuals who can model ideal behaviors and act as inspiration for others to take real action – will be a critical task, as will expanding collaboration with disadvantaged communities and working with and recognizing champions within those communities.

⁵ Everyday Choices: <https://archive.epa.gov/stewardship/web/pdf/rpt2admin.pdf>

Key Assumptions for Goal 2:

- Assumption 1 – Increasing awareness of positive environmental behaviors that benefit people and the Sound’s resources, increases the likelihood individuals will make positive changes in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities.
- Assumption 2 – Sharing examples of easily manageable individual actions that conserve, restore, and sustain the Sound undertaken by others can inspire behavior change and create new individual champions for the Sound.
- Assumption 3 – Community-based individuals and leaders, including from within disadvantaged communities, can best help LISS identify the issues and actions that will lead to increased community engagement and willingness to change behaviors to benefit the Sound.
- Assumption 4 – Publicizing and supporting community-originated events and on-the-ground activities that provide opportunities for personal action to support efforts to enhance and protect their local watershed and the Sound can create additional champions for the Sound.
- Assumption 5 – Partnering with, and providing support for, groups and leaders in disadvantaged communities to develop community-based events and on-the-ground activities that encourage individual actions that protect the Sound can attract and build a broader, more diverse set of individual champions for the Sound.
- Assumption 6 – Partnering with, and providing support for, local schools, school organizations, student groups, and educators can help to inspire the next generation of local watershed and Sound champions and generate and identify actions that families can undertake to conserve, restore, and sustain their watershed and the Sound.



Learning about Long Island Sound increases the likelihood that individuals will make positive changes to conserve, restore, and sustain the Sound. For example, efforts for participatory science water quality monitoring in the Bronx (photo on left) and teacher trainings (photo on right) help to inspire future generations of Sound champions.

Goal 3: Broaden and increase active commitment of all Long Island Sound communities in support of policies, programs, and projects to improve the health and resilience of the Sound and ensure equitable access to its resources.

People make choices that are not always based on conscious or even rational thought processes, often influenced by community or group affiliations and social norms. In addition to being moved by rational appeals, we are also emotional, influenced by the actions and appeals of those with whom we identify or empathize. In a time of conflicting claims, public doubt about scientific facts and risks, individuals look for transparent and trustworthy information. LISS will need to engage at both the individual and community level to build trust through transparency that will inspire positive actions for the ecological health of the Sound.

Reaching out to and collaborating with key leaders in communities and organizations across the watershed, particularly in disadvantaged communities, will help to promote desired actions and create a ripple effect throughout the Sound, leading to larger levels of change than could be achieved at the individual level alone. Working in collaboration with these community leaders will identify issues that have stalled collaboration in the past and uncover issues, aspirations, and concerns – even grievances – that can be addressed in favor of the Sound and the community. These will be win-win solutions that help to accomplish much more than LISS could do without the collaboration. Through outreach and engagement with community leaders and groups, supported by the delivery of targeted, accessible, and appropriate communications under Goal 3, group and community actions can enhance the health and resilience of the Sound, and further inspire the individual actions primarily addressed in Goal 2.



Building trust with the Sound's diverse communities depends on regular, transparent communications, outreach, and engagement. This includes outreach to religious organizations, such as the Futures Fund grant supported event at the SUNY Maritime College (photo on left, courtesy of NFWF), and poster contests for youth such as the "Be a Good Egg" initiative of Audubon New York (photo on right, courtesy of Audubon NY).

Key Assumptions for Goal 3:

- Assumption 1 – Regular communications and outreach to and sustained engagement with municipal leaders and staff will lead to community policies, plans, and actions that support LISS objectives to improve the health and resilience of the Sound.
- Assumption 2 – Regular, transparent communications and outreach to and sustained engagement with the Sound’s diverse communities will build trust and expand the identification and implementation of opportunities for community actions in support of LISS objectives that improve the health and resilience of the Sound.
- Assumption 3 – Identifying and supporting community-based leaders who are willing to identify, hone, and carry messages that support accurate, current, and fact-based information about the ecological health and resilience of the Sound and their watershed to their respective communities is critical to expanding the perspective of the LISS as an honest, trustworthy broker of information.
- Assumption 4 – Regular communications and outreach to and sustained engagement with faith-based organizations, social organizations, business organizations, trade groups, cultural organizations, and other community-based institutions can broaden and diversify spokespersons for the Sound and expand local ownership of policies, plans, and actions to improve the ecological health and resilience of the Sound.
- Assumption 5 – Placing LISS-generated or shared information in community newspapers, on radio stations and community service television stations serving diverse and non-English language communities, on community bulletin boards, and on the websites of an expanded and diversifying set of LISS communication partners will enhance community ownership of policies, plans, and actions in support of LISS objectives to improve the health and resilience of the Sound and of their respective communities.
- Assumption 6 – Sustained engagement with leaders in disadvantaged communities to identify their respective communities’ issues, interests, and concerns can build trust and understanding between LISS and those communities, lead to expanded collaboration on LISS objectives to improve the health and resilience of the Sound and provide examples of working and trusting relationships that will enhance the ability of LISS to work successfully in similar communities throughout the Sound.
- Assumption 7 – Sustained communications, outreach, and engagement with a wide variety of Sound organizations will expand reach and promote individual behavior changes that improve the health and resilience of the Sound and its diverse habitats and wildlife communities.

Goal 4: Increase coordination among LISS partners, committees, and work groups to expand the reach and impact of communications, outreach, and engagement and enhance collaboration with communities and individuals throughout the Sound.

LISS partners and stakeholders include many governmental agencies, NGOs, academics, industry representatives, and others who are committed to protecting and restoring the health and resilience of Long Island Sound. Many participating organizations conduct formal and informal COE activities or develop products – some in concert with the LISS, and some on their own. When LISS organizations work together to advance a common mission, set of goals and objectives, and consistent messages, it can significantly amplify and strengthen understanding, as well as expanding reach. Therefore, coordination among all current partners on COE, as well as bringing new partners into the effort, is a high priority of the Plan.

Goal 4 establishes the objectives and related COE actions for the LISS to undertake over the next five years to create a more coordinated approach to COE across all LISS partner and stakeholder entities, while also expanding the partnership to include new organizations, resulting in stronger and broader collaboration that leads to additional actions to restore and protect the health and resilience of the Sound.

Key Assumptions for Goal 4:

- Assumption 1 – More closely aligned efforts among LISS and its partners to communicate and expand reach will engage more individuals and diverse communities in efforts that improve the health and resilience of the Sound.
- Assumption 2 – Both formal and informal commitments to forward, share, and otherwise disseminate LISS and partner information across the partnership will enhance the reach of LISS in achieving the CCMP vision, themes, and goals.
- Assumption 3 – By closely coordinating on communications, outreach, and engagement, LISS and its current and future partners can better share the science and other information with communities and individuals that will help enhance and expand the ongoing successes and better meet the continuing challenges of enhancing and protecting the Sound and making its communities more resilient.



LISS and its partners have the opportunity to collaborate on communications, outreach, and engagement efforts to achieve the goals of the CCMP through groups like the Citizens Advisory Committee (photo on left) and one-on-one engagement such as through a Mentor Teacher training program (photo on right).

- Assumption 4 – The LISS Communications Team is best positioned on behalf of the partnership to play the central and coordinating role in a more closely aligned communications, outreach, and engagement effort among LISS and its partners, including in the re-establishment, management, and increased diversification of the dormant Public Involvement and Education (or some similar new or renamed) Work Group.
- Assumption 5 – A more closely aligned effort among LISS and its partners in communications, outreach, and engagement will raise the visibility, reach, and authority of important fact-based information, while elevating new voices speaking on behalf of the Sound to promote broader individual and community-based activities.
- Assumption 6 – Resources will need to be provided to the LISS Communications Team to address this expanded workload in execution of the coordinated communications, outreach, and engagement effort.

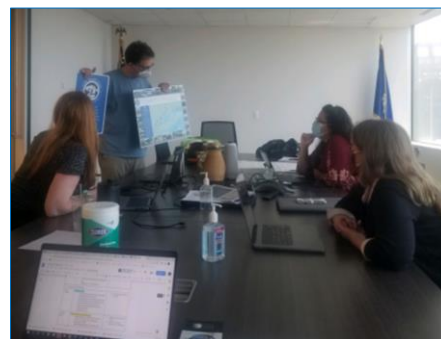
Goal 5: Effectively manage and adapt the Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan by tracking ongoing efforts and addressing new challenges and opportunities, with practices that are accountable, inclusive, and innovative.

The goals, objectives, and actions outlined within this Strategic COE Plan will be implemented over the course of the next five years by members of the LISS Communications Team, the many LISS work groups and committees, and existing and new partner organizations. Successful implementation of the Plan will require being able to assess and evaluate progress toward meeting each of the goals and making changes as needed. The LISS needs to be flexible in how it manages its COE efforts and be willing to adapt to changing demographics, new natural resource challenges, and advanced technologies.

Goal 5 establishes the objectives and related actions needed to adaptively manage this Strategic COE Plan over the next five years to be sure that the plan remains relevant to and useful for the many organizations and communities within the Sound watershed.

Key Assumptions for Goal 5:

- Assumption 1 – Regular reviews of Plan actions and adjustments to improve effectiveness will enhance the ability to achieve the CCMP’s vision, themes, and goals.
- Assumption 2 – Routine updating, and management of stakeholder lists will increase effective engagement with diverse communities and build greater awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the successes and needs associated with restoring and sustaining the Sound.



The COE Plan is a living document that should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it remains relevant. (Photo by Lillit Genovesi)

- Assumption 3 – Routine updating of media relations contacts will increase effective communications efforts to reach diverse communities and expand awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the successes and needs associated with restoring and sustaining the health and resilience of the Sound.
- Assumption 4 – To assure continuity of the ability of the LISS partnership’s strategic communications, outreach, and engagement effort beyond the Plan life, and to maintain consistency with the actions, strategies, and objectives of the CCMP, early development and approval of a follow-up Plan, including identification of adequate funding for implementation, will be critical.
- Assumption 5 – The ability of the LISS Communications Team to effectively manage the Plan as laid out will require prompt and sustained addition of resources to expand the Team’s ability to manage the coordinated strategic communications, outreach, and engagement effort.



Sunset near the New Haven, CT lighthouse. (Adobe stock image)



A foggy fall morning at Harbor Island Park in Mamaroneck, NY. (Photo by Lillit Genovesi)

COE Plan Matrix

Table 2 on page 19 is the Plan Matrix that aligns each goal’s objectives with recommended actions for achieving those objectives and the steps (i.e., actions) that should be taken over the five years of the Plan to enhance and expand the COE efforts of the LISS. In this way they provide a detailed plan for LISS and its partners to achieve each goal and objective of the COE Plan. The matrix format is intended to make it easier for those responsible to complete each action and track progress. The information is organized to:

- Identify each action (column 1)
- Characterize its projected impact (i.e., what is expected to happen once the action is implemented) (column 2)
- Identify the specific targeted audiences to whom the action is focused (column 3)
- Identify the suggested responsible parties (column 4) – those individuals and/or organizations that could take ownership for implementing the action and/or delegating responsibility to others to ensure the action is taken

Provide suggested metrics (column 5), whether qualitative and quantitative, for measuring progress on the action – some, time bound, others more open-ended. (An asterisk (*) denotes a metric that aligns with a related metric within the CCMP. While there are multiple metrics for each action that are suggested, it will be up to the discretion of the suggested responsible parties and the LISS COE Team to decide if some or all are doable within the timeframe of this Plan.)

Developing Targeted Metrics

In year 1, the LISS Communications Team will be developing targets from the suggested metrics outlined in the Plan Matrix. In general, the MD Team recommends that the aiming point for any quantitative metric is to develop a baseline by the end of Plan Year 1 from which to measure future-year progress, and then subsequently to aim for a steady increase (at least 25 percent) in each metric above the baseline for Years 2-5 of the Plan.

Talking Points

Talking points are a set of clear, easily remembered phrases that outline a key idea or topic and are used to keep a speaker on message when speaking to someone with little to no knowledge of the topic at hand. Sample talking points that were developed for this COE Plan drew significantly from information gained from interviews with LISS committees and workgroups undertaken by the MD Team. See **Appendix D** for a sample of illustrative talking points that LISS and its partners could use to advance the goals, objectives, and actions of this COE Plan with internal and external stakeholders.

LISS work groups and staff will tailor talking points and other materials to engage different audiences and meet the intended purposes of this Plan.



Winter marsh at Great Island in Old Lyme, CT. (Photo by Judy Preston)

Table 2: Plan Actions Matrix

Goal 1. Increase the public's awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of Long Island Sound and the challenges ahead to ensure its health and resilience by celebrating restoration successes and program accomplishments, and by delivering information that is accessible to the Sound's diverse communities.				
Goal 1 Objectives 1.1 – Increase the number and diversity of people aware of the economic, cultural, and ecological value of the Sound. 1.2 – Increase support for restoration and protection by sharing inspiring stories of individuals and communities making strides to enhance the Sound. 1.3 – Develop a media toolkit and generate new and/or share existing fact- and science-based information with relevant partners, government officials, and agencies. 1.4 – Engage key media outlets (broadcast, print, and social) and build relationships with them to enable the timely release of information, success stories, and needs. 1.5 – Secure media engagement resources to work across media outlets.				
Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
1.1 Develop Engaging Materials. Communicate existing and emerging science, success stories, and personal experiences related to the Sound. Consistently develop multi-media communications materials that increase awareness and understanding of the Sound and build support for restoration and protection of its resources. 1.1.a. Identify and develop priority communications materials (e.g., videos, infographics, StoryMaps, photos, and podcasts) to increase knowledge and awareness of the Sound. 1.1.b Develop COE Toolkit in Plan Year 1, including a set presentation/info deck, a press contact list, an external stakeholder list, a social media plan, FAQs list, recent press releases, videos, podcasts, issue papers/fact sheets, and feedback forms, among other items. 1.1.c. Share COE Toolkit with partners and stakeholders through training and collaborative meetings. 1.1.d. Track stakeholder communications through LISS and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) reporting and track % population with increased awareness and knowledge about the Sound through LISS public perception survey (conducted at least every 5 years).	More complete and intentional integration of COE during the lifecycle of LISS initiatives, resulting in more wide-reaching contact and effects.	Long Island Sound residents Disadvantaged communities Public and elected officials Partner organizations Media professionals Businesses related to the Sound Sound and estuary user groups	Lead: LISS Communications Team With: COE WG and LISS staff	# of new communications, outreach, and engagement materials developed by LISS % of LISS projects that include a COE Plan communications component in each Plan year % of population with increased awareness and knowledge about the Sound*

Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
<p>1.2 Expand Representation and Inclusivity. Promote, amplify, and center voices and stories of diverse individuals and communities. Intentionally foster and enhance inclusive representation, translation, and accessibility in COE materials and delivery.</p> <p>1.2.a. Conduct at least two roundtable discussions per year with target audience representatives, in coordination with SRC and EJ work groups, to learn about and celebrate work by diverse individuals and how LISS can support and expand these efforts.</p> <p>1.2.b. Use new knowledge and information gained to inform current and future LISS activities.</p> <p>1.2.c. Track through LISS Communications Team, COE WG, and other work group reports.</p>	<p>Demonstrates authenticity of commitment; expands community awareness and engagement; builds trust; identifies new opportunities; increases representation and community ownership.</p>	<p>Long Island Sound residents</p> <p>Disadvantaged communities</p> <p>Public and elected officials</p> <p>Partner organizations</p> <p>Affinity groups</p> <p>Businesses related to the Sound</p> <p>Sound and estuary user groups</p> <p>Media professionals</p>	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team in coordination with EJ WG and SRC WG</p> <p>With: LISS staff and work groups</p>	<p># of new stories in the media developed by LISS and partners that showcase diverse individuals and communities, including recreational user groups and affinity groups</p> <p># of round tables conducted / target audiences consulted</p> <p># of new targeted communications, outreach, and engagement materials developed by LISS and its partners in multiple languages, including English and Spanish*</p>
<p>1.3 Create Daily Digital and Traditional Media Presence. Disseminate key updates on the health of the Sound and management efforts via the LISS website, social media, e-newsletter, and factsheets, and routinely deliver to print and broadcast media (including radio public service announcements and local cable TV channels) and other communications, outreach, and engagement delivery mechanisms.</p> <p>1.3.a. Identify select print, broadcast, and social media outlets to help reach key audiences.</p> <p>1.3.b. Establish communication and media benchmarks no later than 10 months after Plan is finalized, then track progress annually.</p> <p>1.3.c. Ensure LISS website, social media channels, and other digital presence are updated and maintained on a regular basis.</p> <p>1.3.d. Track digital and traditional media presence through website analytics, social media engagement, and media monitoring.</p>	<p>Establishes LISS as a trusted source of critical data and information about the health of the Sound.</p> <p>Improves reach through multiple communications and media outlets.</p>	<p>Long Island Sound residents</p> <p>Disadvantaged communities</p> <p>Public officials</p> <p>Elected officials</p> <p>Partner organizations</p> <p>Sound and estuary user groups</p> <p>Media professionals</p>	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team in coordination with COE Work Group</p> <p>With: LISS staff, work groups, and committees</p>	<p># of newsletters or other communications products to targeted audiences, such as the scientific community, volunteers, and trade groups</p> <p># of new web pages and updated web pages for the general public</p> <p># of media outlets sharing LISS and partner developed stories</p> <p>% increase in size of email list maintained for broad and targeted distribution of COE materials to Sound stakeholders</p> <p>% increase in media stories, including beneficial and constructive media stories about the Sound appearing in local, regional, and national media markets</p> <p>% increase in web users</p> <p>% increase in social media followers, engagement rate, shares, webpage visits, etc.*</p> <p>% increase in partner organizations sharing the messaging with their networks</p> <p>% increase in new partner organizations from disadvantaged communities sharing the messaging with their networks and providing messaging to LISS</p> <p># of success stories from the upper Sound watershed's water quality and ecological improvement projects that provide tangible benefits both to inland communities and ecosystems and to overall Long Island Sound</p>

Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
<p>1.4. Maintain and Expand In-Person and Printed Communication Formats. Include methods of communications that do not rely on the internet or social media such as in-person events, one-on-one discussions, posters, flyers, billboards, interpretative signage, and other print materials, where appropriate.</p> <p>1.4.a. Track metrics through LISS and NFWF reporting.</p>	Increases access to information and stories about the health and value of Long Island Sound through additional communication approaches.	Long Island Sound residents Disadvantaged communities Public and elected officials Partner organizations Affinity groups Businesses related to the Sound Sound and estuary user groups	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team in coordination with COE Work Group</p> <p>With: LISS staff and work groups and LISS partners, including NFWF</p>	# of new print materials developed and distributed in each Plan year* # of in-person events that promote the Sound organized by LISS and its partners in each Plan year # of projects producing/disseminating materials through Futures Fund grants # of audiences reached
<p>1.5 Identify and Secure Resources to Enhance Communications Efforts.</p> <p>1.5.a. Identify resource and capacity needs.</p> <p>1.5.b. Acquire additional staff resources (via hire, contract support, or delegation from a LISS partner agency) to support enhanced communications work.</p> <p>1.5.c. Train team members in both social media campaign management and print and broadcast media campaign management.</p>	Enables the achievement of goals and objectives, which will create substantially expanded production, coordination, and engagement.	LISS Management Committee Partner organizations	<p>Lead: LISS Implementation Team</p> <p>With: LISS leadership, LISS Communications Team, and work groups</p>	Staffing or otherwise resourcing in each Plan year to secure additional capacity to manage enhanced social media and print/broadcast efforts as set out in the Resourcing section of this Plan. # of trainings and professional development activities provided to team members in each Plan year

Goal 2. Expand opportunities for individuals to engage as environmental stewards in their communities and to promote actions needed to ensure the health and resilience of their local watersheds and Long Island Sound.

- Goal 2 Objectives**
- 2.1 – Increase the number and diversity of participants involved in environmental stewardship activities working to conserve, restore, and sustain their watershed and the Sound.
 - 2.2 – Increase the number and diversity of communities in which LISS collaborates / funds on-the-ground volunteer activities.
 - 2.3 – Attract and generate more champions, including young people, for environmental stewardship by promoting ongoing work and public engagement activities in the Sound’s diverse communities.
 - 2.4 – Develop and incorporate behavior change strategies into communications, outreach, and engagement materials/products.
 - 2.5 – Expand collaboration with community groups, including among underrepresented populations, to identify and promote messages and approaches that will lead to the adoption of individual behavior changes.
 - 2.6 – Secure financial and staff resources to track progress of LISS stewardship and behavior change efforts.

Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
<p>2.1 Expand and Promote Long Island Sound Stewardship and Events. Facilitate on the ground stewardship action through existing and new programs, events, and collaboration with community and affinity groups.</p> <p>2.1.a. Regularly work with the leadership of organizational and community leaders, especially those with underrepresented populations, to identify priorities, needs, and new opportunities for collaboration and to establish trust with the communities they serve.</p> <p>2.1.b. Track engagement through LISS and NFWF reporting.</p>	Expands community ownership and connections; helps increase relevance and trust with new and existing partners, communities, and audiences.	Disadvantaged communities Faith-based communities Tribes and Indian Nations Community organizers Local NGOs Elected officials Recreational user groups Trade groups Long Island Sound residents and businesses	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team</p> <p>With: EJWG, SRC staff, and CAC members</p>	# of new affinity and community group leaders engaged # of collaborative community engagement meetings # of programs, events, funded, supported, etc. # of new individuals engaged # and diversity of organizations engaged* # of volunteers participating in stewardship programs or events organized by LISS and/or its partners*

Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
<p>2.2. Develop and Share LISS Behavior Change Strategy. With LISS work groups, develop and share stewardship and behavior change strategies, campaigns and materials in multiple formats and languages to promote actions that protect, improve, and make sustainable use of Long Island Sound watershed.</p> <p>2.2.a. Track strategy outputs and metrics through LISS and NFWF grant reporting.</p>	Helps secure a watershed-wide understanding of the shared roles, responsibilities, and lifestyle changes necessary to achieve the vision and goals of a healthy Sound.	<p>Long Island Sound residents, and businesses</p> <p>Recreational user groups</p>	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team with COE WG</p> <p>With: LISS staff, work groups, and NFWF</p>	<p># of behavior change strategies, messages, and materials created, distributed, and referenced*</p> <p># of behavior change campaigns developed / distributed</p> <p># of individuals reached</p> <p>% of above who commit to changing behaviors that lead to environmental improvements*</p>
<p>2.3 Increase Awareness and Appreciation of LISS Stewardship Sites and Areas including the CT National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). With LISS work groups, develop and distribute materials in multiple formats and languages and promote access and engagement at state and local beaches, parks, boat launch ramps, parking/viewing, and fishing areas including inland and disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>2.3.a. Track metrics through LISS and NFWF reporting, surveys, and other social science work.</p>	Creates an opportunity to publicize the geographic extent of the Sound watershed and the local benefits of protecting inland waters that contribute to it so that all watershed residents feel invested in its health.	<p>Long Island Sound residents</p> <p>Disadvantaged communities</p> <p>Faith-based communities</p> <p>Tribes and Indian Nations</p> <p>Recreational user groups</p> <p>Affinity groups</p> <p>LISS stewardship managers</p>	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team with HRS staff and EJ WG</p> <p>With: LISS staff, work groups and committees</p>	<p># people using/accessing Sound resources</p> <p># of materials, signs, posts, etc.</p> <p># of new COE materials related to outdoor recreation and access developed in Spanish and other languages in Plan year 2 and each succeeding year after Plan implementation</p> <p>% increase in public awareness of the Sound (as assessed by surveys) *</p>
<p>2.4 Engage and Promote Youth Programs. Expand opportunities for students and young people to participate in hands-on-learning about the Sound through classroom and informal activities.</p>	Inspires and engages the next generation of Sound stewards.	<p>Formal and non-formal educators</p> <p>Pre-K to 12 schools</p> <p>Postsecondary education institutions</p> <p>Formal and non-formal students</p>	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team with COE WG</p> <p>With: LISS partners and CAC members with ties to academic community</p>	<p># of students/youth participating</p> <p># of schools and/or formal and nonformal educators engaged</p> <p># of education projects, programs, or events occurring in each Plan year*</p> <p># of programs and projects funded</p> <p># of curricula developed and supported</p>
<p>2.5 Identify and Secure Behavior Change Expertise Resources. Acquire additional staff resources (via hire, contract support, or delegation from a LISS partner agency).</p> <p>2.5a Identify resource and capacity needs.</p> <p>2.5.b. Acquire staff capacity (via hire, contract support, or delegation from a LISS partner agency) to accomplish increased behavior change and related communications efforts.</p> <p>2.5.c. Conduct trainings of team members and partners to effectively deliver actions in Goal 2.</p>	Brings new expertise to bear on the key COE Plan effort to inspire individual behavior change on behalf of LISS goals.	<p>LISS Management Committee</p> <p>Partner organizations</p>	<p>Lead: LISS Implementation Team</p> <p>With: LISS leadership and LISS Communications Team</p>	<p>Staffing or otherwise resourcing in each Plan year to secure additional capacity to effectively identify and communicate behavior change information, as set out in the Resource Needs section of the Plan.</p> <p># of trainings and professional development activities provided to team members in each Plan year</p>

Goal 3. Broaden and increase active commitment of all Long Island Sound communities in support of policies, programs, and projects to improve the health and resilience of the Sound and ensure equitable access to its resources.				
Goal 3 Objectives 3.1 – Enhance current and build new communication, outreach, engagement, and collaboration pathways throughout the Sound’s diverse communities by encouraging and supporting active involvement of new environmental leaders. 3.2 – Support the capacity of and encourage collaboration with small, community-based organizations, particularly those in disadvantaged communities, to participate in LISS communications, outreach, and engagement projects, programs, and campaigns. 3.3 – Increase municipal and community participation in policies, practices, and projects that enhance the health and resilience of the Sound and its watershed. 3.4 – Increase the number and variety of businesses and user groups providing leadership and rallying public support for taking care of the Sound. 3.5 – Secure financial and staff resources needed to accomplish and sustain collaboration with new and existing communities.				
Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
3.1 Organize and Hold Community Conversations to Inform Collaboration Opportunities. Connect with key activists, community leaders, and other audiences to learn about their concerns and interests related to the health of the Sound and its resources, their community resilience needs, and the best approaches for working together. 3.1.a. By year 2, identify approach and timing for community conversations, in coordination with EJ and SRC work groups, to build regular engagement with at least 10 new organizational leaders by year 2 and at least 25 by year 5. 3.1.b. Track through Communications Team, COE WG, and other work group reports.	Demonstrates authenticity of LISS commitment; expands community awareness and engagement; builds trust through transparency; helps LISS identify needs and new opportunities; expands community ownership and builds relationships with people who have environmental or social and cultural stake in Sound outcomes.	Disadvantaged communities Community organizers Faith-based communities User groups Educators/academia Businesses Elected and appointed officials Municipal staff	Lead: COE WG with EJWG and SRC WG and extension staff With: CAC members and other relevant LISS partners	# of conversations or meetings held # and diversity of individuals and organizations that participate in these conversations*
3.2 Increase Collaboration with Sound Stakeholder Communities, Groups, and Networks. Using input from community conversations (Action 3.1), LISS work groups, and partners, develop and support new and existing outreach and engagement projects and campaigns. 3.2.a. Track and measure outputs and metrics through LISS and NFWF reporting, surveys, and other assessment methods.	Expands community ownership and connections; helps ensure disadvantaged communities have equitable access to the Sound and LISS resources; builds trust through transparency; builds new organizational leaders for the Sound.	Disadvantaged communities Faith-based communities Tribes and Indian Nations Public and elected officials Affinity and trade groups	Lead: COE WG With: LISS Implementation Team and CAC members Tracking Lead: LISS Communication staff	# of stakeholders and partners engaged # of projects, programs, and activities conducted by Sound partners and stakeholders # of people participating
3.3. Promote Policies and Practices that Support the Health of the Sound through Collaboration and Information Sharing. With LISS work groups, identify, develop, and distribute targeted communications, outreach, and engagement materials for municipalities and other stakeholder groups. Work with or support new and existing projects and programs that enhance community actions that support the CCMP. 3.3.a. Identify and develop an approach to support actions in upper watershed states and communities. 3.3.b. Track and measure engagement and effectiveness through SRC WG, LISS and NFWF reporting, surveys, and other methods.	Encourages planners, elected officials, and their professional staffs to support consistent, comprehensive land development and protection standards for waters and wetlands within the Sound watershed.	Public and elected officials Government agency staff Land use commissioners Regional planning agencies	Lead: LISS Communication Team and SRC staff With: COE WG, LISS Implementation Team, and CAC members	# of materials, programs, and projects that promote policies and practices # and diversity of municipalities that participate as defined through surveys or other means*

Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
<p>3.4 Support and Promote Public Access and Enjoyment of the Sound. Collaborate with agencies, municipalities, and nonprofits to support development of accessible materials, signs, information, programs, and events that increase awareness about and use of access points on Long Island Sound, including to underserved and disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>3.4.a. Work with LISS staff and work groups to incorporate community input about coastal access information, materials, and programs.</p> <p>3.4.b. Track through LISS and NFWF reporting, surveys, and other means.</p>	Engages communities in efforts to increase access to the Sound’s recreational and ecological resources.	Disadvantaged communities Community organizers Faith-based communities Sound and estuary user groups Government agencies Municipalities Nonprofits	<p>Lead: Communication Team with HRS and EJ WG staff</p> <p>With: NYSDEC and CT DEEP staff and input from LISS Implementation Team</p>	# of materials developed and disseminated # of resource programs developed or conducted # of recreation programs shared or developed
<p>3.5 Promote Trainings and Workshops. Work with and through work groups, conservation and other local and community partners, and municipalities to develop, publicize and promote regional outreach and training programs.</p> <p>3.5.a Track trainings and education events, participants, and knowledge gained through LISS and NFWF reports, COE WG, and other work group reports.</p>	Provides interactive forums for outreach and engagement in ways that benefit the Sound and communities. Programs are a source of information to share more broadly with community groups and other municipalities.	Long Island Sound residents LISS partner organizations Business community Public and elected officials Conservation organizations Sound and estuary user groups	<p>Lead: LISS Communication Team</p> <p>With: LISS Implementation Team and SRC WG</p>	# of trainings/education events developed or conducted by LISS and/or partners # of stakeholders conducting trainings/education events # of training/education event participants % of participants reporting increased knowledge (via survey results)*
<p>Action 3.6 – Identify and Secure Resources to Enhance Community Outreach and Engagement Efforts.</p> <p>3.6a. Identify resource and capacity needs.</p> <p>3.6.b. Acquire staff capacity (via hire, contract support, or delegation from a LISS partner agency) to accomplish enhanced community engagement and coordination.</p> <p>3.6.c. Conduct trainings of team members and partners to effectively deliver actions in Goal 3.</p>	Will enable the key goal of outreach and engagement with municipalities and community groups to secure their collaboration and potential partnership on actions to protect and restore the Sound.	Disadvantaged communities Community organizers Faith-based communities Sound and estuary user groups Government agencies Municipalities Nonprofits Conservation organizations	<p>Lead: LISS Implementation Team</p> <p>With: LISS leadership, work groups, and LISS Communications Team</p>	Staffing or otherwise resourcing in each Plan year to secure additional capacity to manage enhanced community outreach and engagement, as set out in the Resourcing section of this Plan

Goal 4. Increase coordination among LISS partner agencies, committees, and work groups to expand the reach and impact of communications, outreach, and engagement and enhance collaboration with communities and individuals throughout the Sound.				
Goal 4 Objectives 4.1 – Embed communications, outreach, and engagement in each project and program of the LISS work groups and committees. 4.2 – Secure formal and informal agency and community partners' commitments and facilitate coordinated strategic communications, outreach, and engagement planning and execution. 4.3 – Secure information and support from LISS work groups and committees to enhance current and to build new communications, outreach, engagement, and collaboration pathways. 4.4 – Secure active involvement from disadvantaged communities and underrepresented organizations in the LISS Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Work Group. 4.5 – Update LISS website and social media platforms to accommodate broader distribution of LISS and partner messaging in the coordinated communications, outreach, and engagement effort. 4.6 – Secure financial and staff resources needed to support the LISS Communications Team to undertake the development and coordination responsibilities of this coordinated strategic communications, outreach, and engagement effort.				
Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
4.1 Increase LISS Partner Collaboration. Develop a collaborative COE Work Group and secure commitments from partner agencies and organizations to develop, coordinate and implement LISS messaging and COE activities. 4.1.a. Rename Public Information and Education (PIE) Work Group and reengage its members and new stakeholders as the COE WG. 4.1.b. Agree on and establish operating guidelines for the mode and frequency of meetings, "roundtables," information sharing, and points of contact for COE WG collaboration. 4.1.b. Track through LISS Communication Team and COE WG reporting.	Provides a forum for coordinating the COE effort; integrates more partners, thus amplifying LISS messages to secure a broader audience. Helps to prioritize goals, actions, and gaps and identify the individuals and organizations who will lead specific COE initiatives each year.	Federal, state, and local government agencies Public and elected officials Conservation organizations Businesses related to the Sound Sound and estuary user groups	Lead: LISS Communication Team With: LISS Implementation Team staff, work groups, and partners	# of COE WG members and willing partners contributing to the unified/coordinated LISS COE effort
4.2 Initiate a Unified/Coordinated COE Effort. With COE WG members, among LISS work groups and committees, and with LISS agency and non-government partners collaboratively develop COE strategies, campaigns, messages, and a media strategy for traditional and social media outlets. 4.2.a. Develop annual Work Plans with prioritized actions. Identify role(s) and establish a lead agency and/or organization for priority COE initiatives. 4.2.b. Conduct COE-related trainings to increase understanding of and participation in LISS COE initiatives. 4.2.c. Track through LISS reporting.	Enhances cohesive Sound-wide messaging and will help prioritize goals, actions, and gaps and identify the individuals and organizations who will lead specific COE initiatives each year.	Partner organizations	Lead: COE WG With: LISS Communications Team staff	Coordinated COE effort and media strategy and Annual Work Plan developed # of COE-related trainings conducted # of individuals and organizations participating in trainings) # of COE WG members and partners actively engaged/leading LISS COE initiatives
4.3 Increase COE Work Group Diversity and Inclusion. Ensure COE WG and sub work groups are inclusive and welcoming to individuals and groups with diverse experiences, backgrounds, cultures, and skills to ensure balanced representation, participation, and perspectives in COE initiatives. 4.3.a. Track through LISS reporting.	Expands community ownership and connections; helps ensure inclusive and effective coordination of COE messages and initiatives; expands perspectives, reduces stereotyping, and leverages capacity.	Disadvantaged communities Faith-based communities Community organizers Tribes and Indian Nations Trade and industry groups Business community	Lead: COE WG With: EJWG, LISS staff, NEIWPPC and Sea Grant extension staff	# of new members on the COE WG and sub work groups in Plan year 2 and each succeeding Plan year* # diverse groups, cultures, affinity groups and sectors, etc. engaged and represented in COE WG represented # of community/cultural awareness and learning opportunities for LISS stakeholders conducted

Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
<p>4.4 Identify and secure staff resources to effectuate implementation of the coordination and collaboration objectives, and committees necessary to the COE Plan’s success.</p> <p>4.4.a. Identify resource and capacity needs.</p> <p>4.4.b. Acquire staff capacity (via hire, contract support, or delegation from a LISS partner agency) for COE Plan coordination and collaboration among current and new LISS partners, working groups, and committees to accomplish Goal 4 objectives.</p>	Will enable the Communications Team Lead to take on the necessary activities to effectively coordinate among LISS partners and LISS committees and work groups by providing back fill for some current duties and augment for the broad coordination effort.	LISS Management Committee Partner organizations	<p>Lead: LISS Implementation Team</p> <p>With: LISS leadership and LISS Communications Team</p>	Staffing or otherwise resourcing in each Plan year to secure additional capacity to manage enhanced coordination effort, as identified in the Resourcing section of this Plan
<p>Goal 5. Effectively manage and adapt the Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan by tracking ongoing efforts and addressing new challenges and opportunities, with practices that are accountable, inclusive, and innovative.</p> <p>Goal 5 Objectives</p> <p>5.1 – Conduct initial review of progress under the COE Plan and recommend the amendment or addition of goals, objectives, actions, and metrics.</p> <p>5.2 – Maintain up-to-date stakeholder and media relations contacts for effective communications, outreach, and engagement across the Sound.</p> <p>5.3 – Conduct a midterm review of the COE Plan progress and recommend the amendment or addition of goals, objectives, actions, responsibilities, and metrics to the Steering Committee as appropriate.</p> <p>5.4 – Convene, coordinate, and/or participate in a working session with the other National Estuary Programs’ communications leaders, staff, and partners to share and receive updated information regarding perceived best practices and communications, outreach, engagement, and collaboration successes and difficulties.</p> <p>5.5 – Prepare an update to or development of a follow-up to the Strategic Plan, with a goal of securing Management Committee buy-in to the new or updated five-year plan by the end of year five of the COE Plan.</p> <p>5.6 – Secure financial and staff resources necessary to effectively manage and adapt the Strategic Plan through year 5.</p>				
Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
<p>5.1 Report, Review, and Adapt the COE Plan. Coordinate and conduct regular reviews of COE Plan performance with CCMP progress reporting and updates to work groups and committees as appropriate.</p> <p>5.1.a. Review progress and develop a follow-up COE Plan in Year five.</p> <p>5.1.b. Track through LISS reporting.</p>	Reviewing progress helps identify issues and allows improvements to be made that inform more effective COE outcomes.	LISS Management Committee	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team</p> <p>With: LISS Implementation Team and input from CAC</p>	<p>Regular reviews and work reports conducted</p> <p>Plan adjustments made as needed</p> <p>Plan update completed by third quarter of Plan year five</p>
<p>5.2 Incorporate Research and Social Science Findings. Evaluate Public Perception Survey findings and other relevant social science. Assess brand recognition including the program name and messages, among target audiences.</p> <p>5.2.a. Evaluate Public Perception Survey findings and other relevant social science. Assess brand recognition including the program name and messages, among target audiences.</p> <p>5.2.b. Regularly exchange COE best practices and lessons learned with other large ecosystem-focused programs, including - National Estuary Programs (NEPs).</p> <p>5.2.c. Track through LISS and NFWF reporting.</p>	Knowing the current state of public perceptions about the Sound and LISS can help direct future actions that better engage individuals and change behaviors.	Internal LISS management and partners General public	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team</p> <p>With: COE WG and Sea Grant extension staff</p>	<p>% change in public perceptions on the state of the Sound in 2022 plan versus previous versions</p> <p># of tested messages adopted</p> <p># of campaigns developed or adjusted based on social science</p> <p>% increase in LISS and Sound brand recognition in years 3 and 5 of the Plan</p> <p># of information exchange / learning sessions with other NEPs or large programs</p>

Actions	Impact	Target Audience(s)	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Metrics
<p>5.3 Maintain Stakeholder and Media Lists. Develop, refine, and coordinate existing LISS stakeholder list with other LISS work groups and committees, incorporating new groups identified by Marstel-Day.</p> <p>5.3.a. Identify potential new stakeholders across multiple sectors including government, education, cultural, and civic organizations in coordination with LISS work groups.</p> <p>5.3.b. Establish a process for maintaining and updating the LISS stakeholder and media list.</p>	Continuously increases the email list; maintains its accuracy; helps expand reach of LISS in sending key messages to groups and individuals; assists in placement of press releases and newsworthy items of importance to LISS vision and themes.	<p>LISS residents and businesses</p> <p>Public and elected officials</p> <p>Community organizations throughout diverse Sound communities</p> <p>Media contacts</p> <p>LISS work group and committee members</p>	<p>Lead: LISS Communications Team</p> <p>With: LISS staff and partner agencies and organizations</p>	<p># of new stakeholders</p> <p>% of stakeholders meaningfully engaged</p> <p># of new media contacts</p> <p>% increase in stories shared</p>
<p>5.4 Develop and Prioritize Annual Budgets. Secure timely and sustained resources and capacity (i.e., staff, contractors, etc.) needed for execution of the Plan over its five-year life and outline the resources necessary for follow-up Plan execution. Develop and update budgets annually.</p> <p>5.4.a. Identify resource and capacity needs.</p> <p>5.4.b. Acquire staff capacity (via hire, contract support, or delegation from a LISS partner agency) to accomplish goals and objectives of the Plan.</p> <p>5.4.c. Track through LISS reporting.</p>	Enables execution of the Plan actions necessary to achieve its goals and objectives. Increasing COE capacity will allow for better sharing of the ecological and recreational value and management needs of the Sound.	Internal LISS management and partners	<p>Lead: LISS Implementation Team</p> <p>With support from: LISS leadership and staff, LISS Communications Team, work groups, and committees</p>	<p>FTEs (staff or contractors increased to meet resource needs) – target TBD in year 1</p> <p>Addition technical support (web design, social media, graphic design)</p> <p>\$75,000 to \$150,000 funding for capacity building efforts</p> <p>\$ spent on COE initiatives or projects</p>



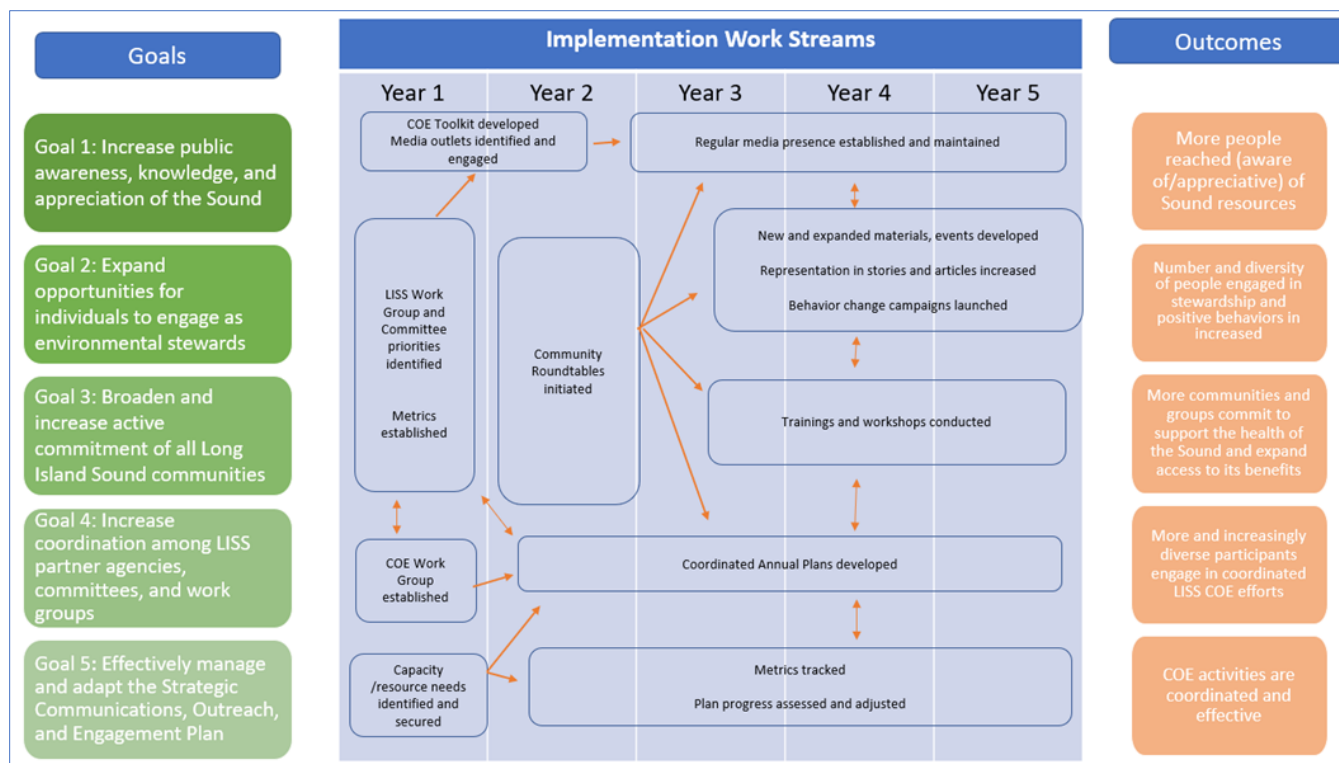
Two men enjoying fishing along a breakwall near Charles Island in Milford, CT. (Photo by Judy Preston)

Implementation: Resource and Capacity Requirements, Timeline, and Related Program Recommendations

Resource and Capacity Requirements

This section consolidates and sets out the recommended resources (skills, functions, and expertise), capacity (personnel and time), and financial resources needed to carry out the COE Plan and effectively accomplish the work and projects identified in the objectives under all five goals. The matrix setting out the actions under all five goals establishes actions and the suggested metrics for measuring their progress, including time bounding for their execution, where possible. This time bounding is intended to establish a prioritization for implementation. This prioritization reflects for the first year the current resources available to the LISS Communications Team and assumes the acquisition of the resources called for in this section by the start of the second Plan year. Without the timely provision of those resources, undertaking the actions necessary to achieve the COE Plan's objectives and secure its goals will not be feasible for the LISS Communications Team on the timeline articulated. A five-year implementation timeline (**Figure 2: Implementation Timeline for Five Years of COE Plan**, below) and resource chart (**Table 3**) are included to further define and layout the efforts that will occur in each Plan year and the personnel resources needed for successful completion.

Figure 2: Implementation Timeline for Five Years of COE Plan



Existing LISS Core Staff Capacity and COE Roles and Activities

In 2022, the LISS Communications Team, primarily responsible for COE activities was composed of the following Core Staff and partners:

- One Communications Coordinator from NEIWPCC
- Two Outreach Coordinators from NY Sea Grant (one focused on New York City and the Western Basin and the other on the rest of the NY watershed)
- One Outreach Coordinator from CT Sea Grant

Each of these positions is funded through CWA funds from the EPA. The Team is also supported by an EPA Region 1 Program Coordinator, as well as through contracts with a web developer and graphic designer. The LISS Communications Team is responsible for dissemination of all COE information, materials, and activities developed by the LISS and it works with partner organizations to share and distribute these Sound-related COE efforts.

Five additional LISS Core Staff were hired in 2021 to coordinate key CCMP actions of the Sustainable and Resilient Communities (SRC) theme, including researching municipalities that are considering or in the process of developing climate resiliency plans and meeting with them to share relevant resources developed by LISS and its partners.

Required Functions, Skills, and Expertise by Goal

As required in the project's scope of work, the MD Team conducted research to identify personnel capacity and financial resources needed to execute the COE Plan, and they determined that current capacity is inadequate. Whether acquired through new hires, contractors, and/or shared resources with partner agencies or organizations – additional capacity, skills, and expertise are needed to accomplish the expanded COE framework outlined in this Plan. The following recommendations for additional personnel resources will help LISS implement each of the Plan goals and associated objectives and actions. As noted in the objectives for Goal 5, forward planning and development of a follow-up Plan is necessary to maintain continuity of identified (and, in some cases, yet to be identified) activities.

These resource requirements can be clarified and agreed on through the LISS Implementation Team and met either through new hires, contract support, or the delegation of staff from partner agencies and/or shifting current core staff responsibilities to support the LISS Communications Team as best suits the overall execution of the LISS program.

To implement Goal 1, two to three FTEs dedicated to traditional and social media communications, tracking overall analytics, expanding efforts to develop and promote stories in disadvantaged communities, overseeing website management, and developing graphics arts/videography and other materials are required. LISS should maintain flexibility to determine which skills and expertise should be contracted or hired as needed, for example when developing sophisticated video productions.

To implement Goal 2, four total FTEs are recommended, including at least one FTE dedicated to coordinating and overseeing behavior change efforts, communications materials, and outreach to motivate residents of the watershed to take action for the Sound – indeed to inspire them to become champions for the Sound.

To implement Goal 3, in addition to support from SRC Sea Grant extension professionals, one to two FTEs dedicated to environmental justice community engagement – preferably one working in New York and one in Connecticut – are needed to build the collaborative relationships and sustained engagement with community groups and their members. While one FTE could divide their time between work in New York and Connecticut, it would be preferable to have one person for each state to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and stakeholders that are unique to the communities. Being closer to the communities in each state reduces travel time and supports strong trust and understanding with those with whom they engage by being more readily available. The LISS Implementation Team should evaluate current SRC extension professional roles and emerging opportunities through the LISS EJ Request for Application to determine and fill potential gaps. It may be also advantageous



Video and podcasts are engaging ways to communicate with different audiences. Here, Judy Preston, retired CT Sea Grant communications coordinator, reaches out to gardeners in her Gardening for Good radio show.



Having someone well-versed in behavior change science could help inspire individuals and communities to become champions for the Sound. Here a Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk educator encourages personal behavior change through the "Keeping the Sound Healthy" program. (Photo courtesy of Maritime Aquarium)

to contract with one or more translators to be able to prepare and publish COE materials in languages other than English and to develop materials for the hearing impaired and for those with visual limitations.

Implementation of the Plan Goals 4 and 5 is a shared responsibility of the LISS Implementation Team staff. One additional FTE is needed to support these two goals, including coordination and facilitation of COE WG meetings and activities to increase collaboration, effectively assessing results and tracking progress toward Plan goals and objectives, and managing the extensive stakeholder and media lists this Plan envisions.

Table 3, on the next page, shows the existing LISS COE complement, the additional resources need for full Plan implementation, and the required functions, skills, and expertise needed to achieve each of the five Plan goals.

As noted below, the LISS Communications Team currently contracts with a web designer and graphic designer to work on ongoing and special projects. Contractual support is currently included in the annual communications budget. This Plan contemplates increasing that to account for the uptick in design requirements to execute the COE Plan above the current baseline of activity.

As noted below, the LISS recently partnered with NY and CT Sea Grants to add five FTEs for targeted outreach to advance implementation of CCMP Sustainable and Resilient Communities (SRC) theme objectives. Although these roles do not include a communications focus, their outreach and engagement efforts contribute to the COE Plan goals, requiring dedicated coordination and collaboration. The relationship between LISS and Sea Grants has existed since the 1990s and is funded by the EPA with Clean Water Act (CWA) funds.

We would also note that the EPA and other partner agencies could further support LISS through detailees during periods of surge activity, providing temporary assistance for COE work when workloads are heavy or until a stable solution can be found, if sustained workloads warrant additional staff resources.



Deep and lasting engagement that builds champions for the Sound requires personal interactions and connections between LISS staff and Sound stakeholders. This includes shoreline cleanups such as one organized in Queens with NYC and Westchester Outreach Coordinator Lillit Genovesi (bottom left corner of photo on left) and kelp research done by SoundWaters in Greenwich, CT. (Photo on right, courtesy of SoundWaters)

Table 3: COE Plan Implementation Resource Recommendations

Goal	Required Functions, Skills and Expertise	2022 LISS Capacity	Total Recommended Capacity for Full Plan Implementation
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Expertise (including marketing and/or promotion) Print and Broadcast Media Expertise Social Media Expertise Website Design and Management Expertise Graphic Design Expertise Videography Expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FTE Communications Coordinator Annual contracts with web designer and graphic designer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2–3 FTE for expanded communications and coordination efforts
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Outreach Expertise Social Science, Behavior Change Expertise Environmental Justice Expertise Youth Programming/Education Expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 FTE Sea Grant Outreach Coordinators in NY 1 FTE Sea Grant Outreach Coordinator in CT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 FTE Sea Grant Outreach Coordinators 1 FTE behavior change expert
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Engagement Expertise Policy Expertise Environmental Justice Expertise Translation Expertise Technical Guidance and Trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Sea Grant Extension Professionals in NY 2 Sea Grant Extension Professionals in CT EJWG Co-Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Sea Grant Extension Professionals 1–2 FTE EJ Community Engagement Coordinator(s) Potential additional support from part-time translator(s)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation and Meeting Management Expertise Coordination and Tracking Expertise Program Development, Planning, and Execution Expertise 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> .75 FTE to expand and coordinate with work groups and committees on COE efforts
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation and Planning Expertise Database Management Expertise Program Development, Planning, and Execution Expertise Monitoring and Tracking Expertise Staff, Contracts, and Budget Management 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> .25 FTE to support Plan implementation, tracking, and adaptation

Additional Funding Needed

In 2017, funding for the LISS began a steep upward climb, rather than the gentle ups and downs the program had experienced in the past. This climb continued into 2021, when an estimated 3.3 percent of LISS's \$31 million budget went to COE efforts (roughly \$930,000), with the majority dedicated to outreach, planning, and assessment, rather than communications specifically. Given the expanded COE opportunities suggested through the goals, objectives, and actions in this Plan, which are designed to significantly enhance individual and community actions and other support of the LISS CCMP vision, themes and goals, additional funding would be well invested across the COE spectrum of products. Such additional resources for hiring, contracting, and partnering to support the COE Plan would protect existing investments and would help secure community and individual support for the health and resilience of the Sound.

- Assuming the hiring or contracting of five FTEs outlined in the staffing section at a high-mid to senior level would require between \$125,000 – \$150,000 per FTE per year, the above recommendations is estimated to cost \$625,000 – \$750,000 per year.
- Additional support for increased technical support for web design, social media design, and graphic design is estimated at between \$50,000 – \$100,000 per year.
- To also provide a minimally meaningful level of funding for capacity building to better enable community-based organizations that are identified in Objective 3.2 to support this effort, it is estimated this would require \$75,000 – \$150,000 per year.

Estimated FTE costs: \$850,000 – \$1,000,000 per year, roughly a doubling of the current program level funding.

The decision to develop a new COE Plan recognized that critical aspects of the success of the LISS CCMP can only be achieved by securing increased active engagement of individuals and communities in support of the CCMP goals. This COE Plan is designed to measurably achieve that requirement and, in doing so, it would be a very efficient use of the finite resources available to the LISS program. Put differently, without funding the necessary effort to communicate with, reach out to, and engage individuals and communities effectively, LISS will not be addressing sufficiently a large and critical aspect of its program requirement. While other program elements are worthy and important, executing an effective COE Plan is also critical in kind and in scale.

Recommended Revision to Communications Placement within Organizational Chart

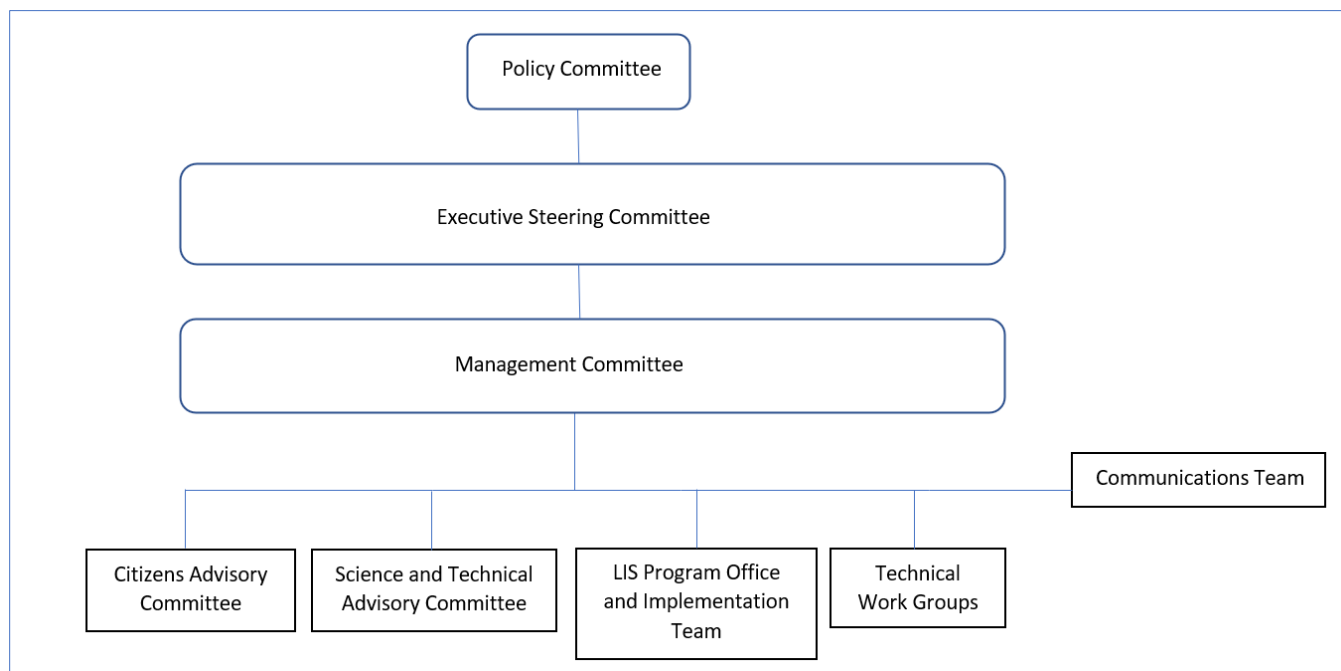
During discussions with members of the LISS Communications Team staff, they suggested that changes to the way the Communications Team sits within LISS could help with coordination and communications flow across the organization and up and down the chain of command. One of these changes, nesting the LISS Communications Team within the Program Office to show its connections to all the LISS work groups, was made in 2022 – see **Figure 3**. In addition, the Communications Team suggests additional connections with the CAC and the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). This could be accomplished through the proposed organization chart shown in **Figure 4**, where the Communications Team is located outside of the Program Office so that it can work with all committees, work groups, and LISS staff on advancing COE efforts. This was thought to be especially important given the objective to “[e]mbed communications, outreach, and engagement in each project and program of the LISS work groups and committees.” (see Objective 4.1)

Establishing links between the Communications Team, STAC, CAC, and other committees and work groups will allow for better flow of information and communication and collaboration across LISS, helping to reduce/avoid COE duplication of efforts and maximize the efficient use of financial and staffing resources.

Figure 3: Revised LISS Program Organizational Chart (April 2022)



Figure 4: Proposed LISS Communications Team Program Alignment



Renaming Communication Team and PIE Work Group

Members of the LISS Communications Team are working to re-establish the Public Involvement and Education (PIE) Technical Work Group after several years of inactivity. The purpose of this technical work group is to inform the public about the health of the Sound and the work of LISS and its partners to restore and protect the Sound, and to engage citizens to join in effort to restore and protect the Sound, through individual behavior change that leads to improved environmental practices, and volunteering in outreach, participatory community science, and habitat restoration projects. Reconstitution and engagement of this work group is an excellent way in which LISS can enhance its strategic COE efforts and help to implement the goals, objectives, and actions of this COE Plan. Therefore, it is recommended that the work group re-commence activities but undergo its own renaming, or rebranding, becoming the Communications, Outreach, and Engagement (COE) Work Group, to strengthen the connections between the work group and the focus of this Plan. The public will still be involved and educated through the efforts of this work group and the LISS Communications Team, but greater emphasis will be placed on building the trusted relationships with current and new partners that can lead to the collaboration with LISS necessary to achieve the goals of the COE Plan to impact individual behavior and expand community ownership of efforts to enhance the health and resilience of the Sound.

Relatedly the Plan recommends the LISS Communications Team should be renamed the LISS Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Team, otherwise known as the LISS COE Team.

Explore Rebranding Long Island Sound Study

To enhance the Plan and the ability of LISS to welcome and engage with Sound communities and the public, it is recommended that the partnership evaluate changing its name from the Long Island Sound Study to the Long Island Sound Estuary Partnership (LISEP). Such a change may increase understanding among the non-academic or less technically oriented resident by removing the word “Study” and would more accurately characterize the sweep of the organization’s effort, which is far beyond simply undertaking or funding studies. The Plan envisions enhancing collaboration and partnerships throughout the Sound between LISS and Sound residents and communities. Rebranding to support that vision would be an effective augment to the COE Plan’s actions, but consideration should first be made among the partners and stakeholders about the inherent value in keeping a long-familiar name. Because there could be substantial COE Plan benefits to a rebranding, the Plan encourages LISS to undertake an examination of such a rebranding effort.



A flock of least sandpipers search for food along a Long Island Sound shore. (Photo by Judy Preston)

Conclusion

Based on six months of review and analysis of the current LISS COE effort, including significant interviews with key individuals involved in the work, the LISS committees and work groups, other stakeholders, and key participants in other national estuary program COE efforts, and by analyzing the results of surveys sent to current LISS partners and newly identified stakeholders in Sound communities, the MD Team and the LISS Communications Team prepared a COE Plan capable of achieving the stated scope for developing the Plan to:

- Expertly and strategically communicate with the public regarding Sound restoration efforts.
- Reach out to and engage individuals, community groups, user groups, agencies, public and elected officials, and current and new partners to enhance engagement from a wide variety of partners and stakeholders – such as elected and agency officials at all levels of government, businesses, and civic society, as well as individual citizen stewards and recreationists – across a large geographic area.
- Identify, prioritize, and advance communications strategies, messages, and channels that measurably increase the willingness of key target audiences to take individual or collective actions that advance implementation of the CCMP goals, change individual or community behaviors, and/or take actions that support improved health and resilience of the Sound.

The challenges of effectively communicating with, reaching out to, and engaging with widely diverse communities of nine million residents throughout the Sound region – located along its shores and aligned with its many watersheds and embayments – is significant. This COE Plan proposes to build upon the already demonstrated and well-regarded efforts of the LISS Communications Team and expand that work along the COE continuum more substantially into the outreach and engagement elements of that continuum. The COE Plan is based on the understanding that achieving the goals of enabling individuals to change behavior and to convince communities to embrace protecting and enhancing the health and resilience of the Sound will require this expanded – in scale and type – effort.

Accordingly, its vision statement, goals, objectives, and actions are all geared toward assisting the current – and, as called for, expanded – LISS Communications Team to successfully make this transition, undertake execution of the COE Plan, and secure the resources needed to do so. With all of that accomplished, the COE Plan will well serve the LISS effort to protect and enhance the health and resilience of the Sound and its magnificent resources.

Appendices

Appendices follow on the succeeding pages.

A. Executive Summary

Background

A coordinated Communications Plan was developed in the 1990s for the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) and is currently conducted by a Communications Team of four LISS staff employed by partner organizations NEIWPCC (1), Connecticut Sea Grant (1), and New York Sea Grant (2). The strategies and management actions adopted in the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP), combined with increased federal funding for the program, has significantly expanded the number and complexity of restoration initiatives conducted by LISS partners. It has become clear that accomplishing an effort of this scale requires a new, coordinated Sound-wide Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan (“COE Plan”) with measurable objectives and additional resources sufficient to implement the new COE Plan. Implementing the COE Plan will maximize the impact of communications, outreach, and engagement efforts by guiding LISS and its partners in this endeavor and help ensure the effective use of resources.

In 2020, the LISS Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)⁶ – responsible for providing guidance and communicating goals of the CCMP to public audiences – recommended increased investment in LISS communications, including development of a five-year strategic communications plan.

NEIWPCC, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut (TNC), secured LISS funding to develop a new, coordinated strategic communications plan to “inform, educate, and engage a wide set of stakeholders and the nearly nine million residents who live in the Long Island Sound watershed.”

In April 2021, NEIWPCC released a request for bids for the development of a five-year Strategic Communications Plan for the Long Island Sound. The scope of work called for establishing a framework for LISS staff, key partners, and stakeholders to:

- Communicate with the public expertly and strategically regarding Sound restoration efforts.
- Enhance engagement from a wide variety of partners and stakeholders—elected and agency officials, business and civic society, individual citizen stewards and recreationists—across a large geographic area.
- Identify, prioritize, and advance communication strategies, messages, and channels that measurably increase the willingness of key target audiences to take individual or collective actions that advance implementation of the CCMP goals, change individual or community behaviors, and/or take actions that support improved health and resilience of the Sound.

Marstel-Day, LLC (“the MD Team”) was selected to develop the Plan and work collaboratively with the ad hoc LISS Communications Planning Team comprised of LISS communications and outreach staff, TNC staff, and an EPA Region 1 Program Coordinator.

⁶ Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee: <https://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/committees/citizens-advisory-committee/>

Scope

The scope of work calls for a plan that establishes a framework for LISS staff, key partners, and stakeholders to:

- Expertly and strategically communicate with the public regarding Sound restoration efforts.
- Reach out to and engage individuals, community groups, user groups, agencies, public and elected officials, and current and new partners to enhance engagement from a wide variety of partners and stakeholders – such as elected and agency officials at all levels of government, businesses, and civic society, as well as individual citizen stewards and recreationists – across a large geographic area.
- Identify, prioritize, and advance communications strategies, messages, and channels that measurably increase the willingness of key target audiences to take individual or collective actions that advance implementation of the CCMP goals, change individual or community behaviors, and/or take actions that support improved health and resilience of the Sound.

Scope-Required Plan Components

The following scope language sets forth the key elements of the COE Plan:

- Vision statement
- Target audiences
- Suggested on-the-ground and outreach initiatives, together with appropriate communications and outreach channels (referred to collectively in this report as “actions”)
- Key messages
- Progress metrics to achieve the Vision over the five years of the Plan
- Estimated staff and financial resources for plan implementation and coordination, and a proposed timeline
- Executive summary highlighting the components of the Plan

To these scope elements was added an additional component, “responsible parties,” to make clear which organization, group, team, or individual should have the responsibility to implement a particular action.

Methodology

The COE Plan was developed following an analysis of the information reviewed and received from interviews and the survey during the Research Phase of the project. For example, key messages and talking points developed for the Plan drew significantly from interviews with LISS committees and workgroups undertaken by the MD Team.

Special emphasis was placed on the initial development of the Vision and a set of Goals. The MD Team worked collaboratively with the LISS Communications Team and then the Steering Committee to secure buy-in to these foundational elements of the COE Plan. Following receipt of Steering Committee concurrence with the Vision and Goals drafts, the MD Team continued to work collaboratively with the LISS Communications Team to refine key assumptions, objectives, actions, and metrics for the COE Plan. A more detailed look at the methodology can be found in **Appendix B** of this Plan.

Outcomes

The following summarizes key outcomes derived from results of the project's Research Phase and the collaborative development of the COE Plan between the MD Team and the LISS Communications Team, with inputs at key points by the Steering Committee.

COE Plan – Vision

The Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan successfully shapes and inspires a deeper and wider collaboration across the full diversity of Sound communities in support of the Long Island Sound Study's mission to conserve, restore, and sustain the Sound and its magnificent aquatic and shoreline resources.

COE Plan – Key Themes

Table 4: Alignment of COE Plan Key Themes with CCMP Themes and Goals

COE Plan Key Theme	CCMP Theme and Goal
<i>Individual and community actions to protect the Sound's water quality benefit every resident and community in the Sound watershed and preserve the Sound and its resources for our future.</i>	Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds – Improve water quality by reducing contaminant and nutrient loads from the land and the waters impacting Long Island Sound.
<i>By acting to secure a healthy, productive, and resilient Sound ecology, individuals can both enhance wildlife and its habitat as well as bring significant quality of life benefits to themselves and their communities.</i>	Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife – Restore and protect the Sound's ecological balance in a healthy, productive, and resilient state for the benefit of both people and the natural environment.
<i>By providing timely, accurate, and accessible information on the Sound and how Sound residents can benefit from its resources, individuals and organizations will become more engaged with the Sound, better appreciate its resources, and be further inspired to protect it and its resources.</i>	Sustainable and Resilient Communities – Support vibrant, informed, and engaged communities that use, appreciate, and help protect Long Island Sound.
<i>Timely delivery of accurate and accessible information on conditions affecting the Sound to its diverse residents, communities, and policy makers can support the public and intergovernmental collaboration necessary to conserve, protect, and improve the Sound's resources for the benefit of people and the natural environment.</i>	Sound Science and Inclusive Management – Manage Long Island Sound using sound science and cross-jurisdictional governance that is inclusive, adaptive, innovative, and accountable.

COE Plan – Goals

Goal 1: Increase the public’s awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of Long Island Sound and the challenges ahead to ensure its health and resilience by celebrating restoration successes and program accomplishments, and by delivering information that is accessible to the Sound’s diverse communities.

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for individuals to engage as environmental stewards in their communities and to promote actions needed to ensure the health and resilience of their local watersheds and Long Island Sound.

Goal 3: Broaden and increase active commitment of all Long Island Sound communities in support of policies, programs, and projects to improve the health and resilience of the Sound and ensure equitable access to its resources.

Goal 4: Increase coordination among LISS partner agencies, committees, and work groups to expand the reach and impact of communications, outreach, and engagement to enhance collaboration with communities and individuals throughout the Sound.

Goal 5: Effectively manage and adapt the Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan by tracking ongoing efforts and addressing new challenges and opportunities, with practices that are accountable, inclusive, and innovative.

COE Plan – Assumptions, Objectives, Actions and Metrics

Each COE goal identifies key assumptions and attainable and measurable objectives. Presented in matrix format are associated actions, their intended impact, connection to CCMP themes (and each of these theme’s associated goal), target audience(s) and example talking point(s), the suggested responsible group, committee, or individual(s) (by position) to execute the action, and the target metrics to measure achievement toward each objective. The metrics also provide a timeline for execution of each action, both the initial completion of an action and the timeline on which it might recur, when appropriate.

Implementation and Required Resources

As called for in the scope of work, the Resourcing section of this COE Plan identifies the type and scale of resources necessary for achieving the COE Plan’s goals and objectives.

Additional funding resources would be well invested across the COE spectrum as set out below. The range of proposed resource investments in the COE Plan is between \$850,000 and \$1,000,000 per year, an approximate doubling of the current program.

- The costs of hiring or contracting of five full-time equivalents (FTEs) at a high-mid to senior level would require between \$125,000 – \$150,000 per FTE per year, for a total estimated \$625,000 – \$750,000 per year.
- Increased technical support for web design, social media design, graphic design, and video production is estimated at between \$50,000 – \$100,000 per year.
- Providing a minimally meaningful level of funding for capacity building to better enable community-based organizations that are identified in Objective 3.2 to support this effort is estimated to require \$75,000 – \$150,000 per year.

B. Methodology

Plan development was conducted in two phases: A Research Phase (see **Figure 5: Research Phase**), which ran from July through December 2021, and a Plan Development Phase (see **Figure 6: Plan Development Phase**), which commenced in December 2021 and ran through June 2022.

Part 1 – Research Phase

Media Monitoring

The MD Team’s media monitoring began in the Research Phase and continued through the Plan Development Phase. It was used to help identify stakeholders and organizations of influence, provide situational awareness to MD and the LISS Communications Team, support the analyses and recommendations for the COE Plan, and help gather a larger pool of information than could be gleaned from static reports and websites. The MD Team worked with the LISS Communications Team to develop a list of search terms and key words to find articles, press releases, and other content relevant to the Sound, LISS, and its partner organizations. Initially a monthly report was planned, with summaries of all key content also delivered to the LISS Communications Team. However, given the large number of articles and the timeliness and relevance of the information, the LISS Communications Team requested the material be delivered in a twice-monthly report, after the first report was delivered, and the MD Team honored that request.

Literature Review

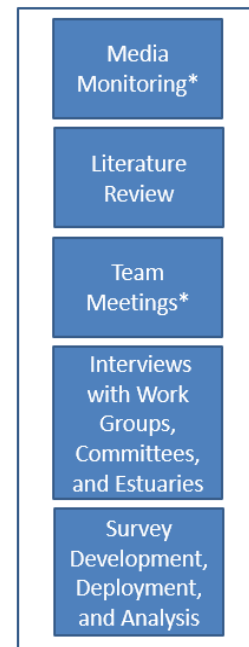
The documents listed in **Appendix E (Reference Materials)** were reviewed for content relevant to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities in Long Island Sound, how LISS and the LISS Communications Team works, the forms of COE it currently produces, and how other estuary programs across the country undertake COE. This research was used to identify potential best management practices applicable to the LISS effort that could inform development of the COE Plan that would enable the LISS Communications Team and its partners to continue to build a stronger, more coordinated COE effort and inspire individuals, organizations, and communities to take action to improve the health and resilience of the Sound.

Along with the literature review, the MD Team visited numerous, relevant websites to learn more about the Sound, LISS, and potential new stakeholder groups, among other topics. These included websites related to public beach access, municipal resilience and climate adaptation plans, coastal management, local zoning and land use planning, DEIJ resources, and COE products (e.g., e-newsletters, videos, StoryMaps, infographics, etc.) developed by other organizations in the watershed.

Bi-weekly Virtual Meetings between the LISS Communications and MD Teams

The MD and LISS Communications Teams met virtually every other week to discuss progress during the research phase, which allowed for the MD Team to share information and receive input, perspective, and insight from the LISS Communications Team members. This aided in the refinement of interview questions, provided an opportunity to review the results of the stakeholder surveys and interviews, and provided ideas for new material

Figure 5: Research Phase



to inform the Plan’s development. These meetings continued through the Plan Development Phase as well, allowing the MD Team to gain insight from the LISS COE professionals’ experiences, get feedback on draft plan content, and ensure that milestones were achievable. Agendas for the meetings were developed collaboratively, with minutes shared with all participants afterward.

Estuary Program Discussions – Long Island Sound Partners and Other Estuary Programs

The LISS Communications Team provided the MD Team with a detailed database/multi-tab spreadsheet of contact information for stakeholder entities and individuals from across the Sound. Informed with this list, the MD Team held discussions with representatives from Save the Sound and the CT and NY Sea Grant programs. During these 30- to 60-minute conversations, participants were asked about the COE products they produce; how many full-time equivalent (FTE) staff and financial resources are devoted to COE efforts on Sound issues; what challenges and needs related to COE they have; how they work with partners to accomplish their COE goals; and how they engage disadvantaged communities. In addition, they were invited to offer any suggestions they might have for the LISS Communications Team on ways to enhance their current COE initiatives.

The MD Team also participated in 30- to 60-minute virtual presentations and discussions with representatives of the following LISS committees and work groups to ask them about the forms of COE that they produce; how they work with the LISS Communications Team; and what they would like to see within the Strategic COE Plan under development.

- Water Quality Monitoring Work Group
- Environmental Justice Work Group
- Habitat and Stewardship Work Group
- Sustainable and Resilient Communities Work Group
- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Science and Technical Advisory Committee
- Implementation Team
- Executive Steering Committee

In addition, the MD Team conducted interviews with leaders and partners in a number of other significant national estuary programs. Securing information on how estuary programs across the country handle their COE efforts, their successes and challenges in the COE arena, including in engaging with disadvantaged communities, and their identification of what they thought were their best practices, provided vital insights to support the COE Plan development and generally corroborated information and ideas received from the interviews with LISS partners. The MD Team held virtual discussions with individuals from organizations involved in the programs as set out in **Table 5**, below.

Table 5: Estuary Programs Interview List

Estuary Program	Organizations Participating
Chesapeake Bay Program	Chesapeake Bay Commission, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Chesapeake Bay Trust
San Francisco Estuary Program	San Francisco Estuary Partnership, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, California Coastal Conservancy
Puget Sound Program	Puget Sound Partnership, U.S. EPA Region 10
Delaware Bay Program	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary
Lake Champlain Basin Program	Lake Champlain Basin Program
Hudson River Estuary Program	NYN Department of Environment and Conservation
NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program	Hudson River Foundation

The input from the estuary program discussions was developed into a cross estuary program matrix that provided a comparison across some key indicators of COE activities, which was shared with the LISS Communications Team and the estuary program participants, with the purpose of improving each program's COE work in the future. A condensed version of the matrix, which highlights some of the more important resourcing and challenge related topics, is included in **Table 6** below.

Table 6: Cross Estuary Program Comparison

Estuary	# OF COE STAFF	% OF BUDGET FOR COE	COE WORK GROUP / COMMITTEE?	BIGGEST CHALLENGES
ESTUARY A	4 FTE	3-5% of overall budget	Yes	Lack of funding and other resources, loss of outreach staff person, communicating across the many organizations working in the estuary
ESTUARY B	1.5 FTE	15-20% of overall budget	No	Limited staff and funding, rely heavily on partners for outreach, need for marketing person and campaign

Estuary	# OF COE STAFF	% OF BUDGET FOR COE	COE WORK GROUP / COMMITTEE?	BIGGEST CHALLENGES
ESTUARY C	1 FTE (some university staff assist with COE on very PT basis)	Can't quantify, as outreach and engagement happen across nearly everyone and every effort. Much of the communications work is paid for by the parent organization, not the program, so again, hard to quantify. COE does far outweigh the science/research, however.	No	Being within a state agency limits the specific COE they can do. Need more collaboration across the estuary programs in the state/region. Need a champion in the US Senate to get consistent funding.
ESTUARY D	5 FT, 3 PT	31% of overall budget for education and outreach	Yes	Not enough funding to get all kids out on the estuary or in a research vessel
ESTUARY E	2 FTE now, in process of hiring communications person to bring to 3 FTE	Less than 10% of overall budget	No	Self-described small player in a big pool. Work hard not to take credit for the work of partner organizations that benefit their CCMP goals.
ESTUARY F	3 fully dedicated FTE, plus ~10% of total staff do some communications work	Less than 10% of overall budget	No	So much science, so many partners, so few internal staff to communicate it all (how to prioritize?)
ESTUARY G	Between 0.25 FTE and 1 FTE, depending on the organization interviewed	2-3% of overall budget	Yes	Inflexibility of funding source / need to remove funding constraints; staff have difficulty engaging communities / building trust; aligning regional planning with local EJ priorities; language and translation requirements

Once all the estuary program, committee and work group, and partner discussions were finished, the best management practices, suggestions, and lessons learned were compiled into a “Read-out on Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Observations and Areas of Need” document that was shared with the LISS Communications Team in December 2021. The read-out broke the observations into categories that included partnerships, media strategy, and behavior change; included a section on areas of need; and then highlighted the commonly recurring themes heard during multiple discussions. The read-out document, organizing the analyzed data from the Research Phase, was one of the key elements that informed the MD Team as it began to develop the outline, vision, and goals for the Strategic COE Plan, and later for the development of the COE Plan’s key assumptions, objectives, and actions.

Survey Development and Analysis

Through the literature and website review, internal and external discussions, and further research, the MD Team was able to add more than 250 new stakeholder names to the contact information database provided by the LISS Communications Team. These contacts will help the LISS Communications Team bring new, diverse partners to the LISS effort (particularly those from Sound user groups, faith-based organizations, youth and recreation organizations, and disadvantaged communities) and engage with new audiences across the Sound.

The revised and enhanced stakeholder database/spreadsheet was used to develop five surveys with quantitative and qualitative question sets that were tailored to each of the recipient categories, where appropriate, to obtain the most relevant and useful information. The groupings and the number of successful survey deliveries, and the percentage of survey submissions were:

- LISS Leadership and Core Team Members (32 deliveries; 72% submissions)
- Other Federal, State, and Local Agency Partners (54 deliveries; 15% submissions)
- Partner Non-Governmental Organizations (57 deliveries; 14% submissions)
- Partner Academics (30 deliveries; 20% submissions)
- New, Non-Partner Stakeholders (240 deliveries; 6% submissions)

While the number and type of questions that were asked in each of the surveys had some variation, generally the questions involved: what the survey respondent’s involvement and support of DEIJ efforts were; their knowledge of LISS and what it does; what they consider the most critical issues facing the Sound; and how individuals can be inspired to take actions to protect and restore the Sound. The results from each survey were compiled into a multi-tab spreadsheet and analyzed for observations that recurred, potential applications to the Strategic COE Plan, and frequency of agreement among the respondents. The spreadsheet was shared with the LISS Communications Team and the Steering Committee, along with a detailed presentation report-out of the findings and what they might mean for the COE Plan. The survey results were another key element that helped to inform the MD Team as it began to develop the elements of the COE Plan.

Part 2 – Plan Development Phase

Annotated Outline

Using information gathered during the Research Phase from the literature review, discussions, media monitoring, and survey results, the MD Team developed a draft annotated outline to kick start collaboration on the contents of the Strategic COE Plan and help retain focus throughout the Plan development process. The outline was refined and approved during the initial month of Phase 2 through discussions and collaboration with the LISS Communications Team. The annotated outline included details on the types of information that would be included in the final Plan, including specific content for the introduction, vision statement, sample goals, key assumptions, and objectives, and an example matrix for displaying the actions, roles, talking points, and metrics. The refined annotated outline was presented to the Steering Committee and received its concurrence.

Draft Vision Statement and Goals

Without a clear COE Plan Vision Statement or goals, LISS and its partners could lose focus over the course of the five-year Plan and become sidetracked on less effective activities. A well-crafted vision and goals provide clear direction and motivation to an organization's staff, partners, and stakeholders and is the foundation upon which a COE Plan must be based.

Because of the importance of getting the Vision Statement and goals right, the MD Team worked closely with the LISS Communications Team to collaboratively create a concise Vision Statement draft and a set of draft goals for the COE Plan that lays out a clear direction for the team and LISS partners. The goals were created to set out the desired results and outcomes for the COE Plan. The draft Vision Statement and goals were presented to and received concurrence from the Steering Committee, allowing the balance of the Plan development activities to get underway.

Draft Goal Objectives, Key Assumptions, and Actions

With the Vision Statement and goals approved, the Marstel-Day Team developed key assumptions and objectives for each goal. The key assumptions are statements that helped to guide the creation of the objectives, actions, and other plan content under each goal. The objectives are the measurable steps needed to achieve each of the five goals. Actions were then developed to achieve each objective. They were set out in a matrix that outlined the proposed action, its impact, its relationship to the CCMP themes and goals, its relationship to the goal's objective(s), target audiences, talking points, execution responsibility, and metrics for measuring progress. The metrics also provide a timeline for execution of each action, both the initial completion of an action and the timeline on which it might recur, when appropriate.

The LISS Communications Team were provided draft copies of this content as they were developed and collaborated with the Marstel-Day Team on finalizing this content.

Figure 6: Plan Development Phase



Preparation and Review of Plan Drafts

Each of the separate Plan pieces described above were then combined into a first working COE Plan draft and shared with the LISS Communications Team at the end of March 2022 for three weeks of review. Following receipt of LISS Communications Team comments, the MD Team prepared a revised draft of the COE Plan and provided it to the LISS Communications Team. This second draft version was also shared with the Steering Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee in mid-May. After several weeks to review, the MD Team received and adjudicated a final round of comments. Those adjudicated comments were included in a final COE Plan and provided to LISS for its records and implementation.

Stakeholder Identification and Tiering

The MD Team applied its well-developed methodology of setting out and tiering – to prioritize – stakeholders into one of three tiers:

1. those who can directly impact an issue through control of processes, regulations, or resources;
2. those who can bring substantial influence on tier 1 stakeholders through mobilizing pressure or publicity; and
3. those with a substantial interest in the issue(s) and a modest capacity for direct influence but motivation to engage.

Utilizing this type of tiering system will help the LISS Communications Team align what types of messages and materials will work best for each tier of stakeholders, understand the order in which information can best be delivered to affect behaviors and willingness to act on behalf of the health and well-being of the Sound, and prioritize the effort based on the goal or objective of the engagement. Stakeholder tiering for this project was provided to the LISS Communications Team in a separate resourcing document.

Presentation and Delivery of the Final COE Plan

At the end of June 2022, a final draft COE Plan, incorporating the adjudicated comments received in early June, was presented to the LISS Communications Team, the Steering Committee, and other relevant stakeholders for their approval. On July 21, the final plan was presented to the LISS Management Committee for their concurrence.

C. Glossary

Actions – Specific, measurable steps needed to be taken to achieve Plan goals and objectives.

Behavior change – Altering an individual's or group's habits for the long term.

Champion for the Sound – Individuals, organizations, and communities taking deliberate actions to protect and enhance the health and resilience of Long Island Sound.

Collaboration – The act of working with an individual or group to identify or create something that neither could do as well on their own. An example of collaboration is working with community organizers in disadvantaged communities at the earliest, and on every stage of development (conceptual plan, funding, identification of program lead(s), materials, date(s) and location(s), follow-up) for an interactive program that inspires community members in taking individual and/or community actions that benefit the Sound.

Communications – The one-way (generally) act of transferring information from one individual or group to another. An example of communications is a weekly or monthly newsletter sent to email recipients that includes short articles, photos, upcoming events, and other pieces of information. Another example is a press release about the results from a LISS funded scientific research project.

Community / Community-based – This can have one of two meanings. The first relates to a municipality (town, city, township, etc.) or neighborhood/housing development. The second relates to a group of people of a certain race, ethnicity, or other identifying feature.

Detailer – An employee of a federal government agency who is temporarily assigned to another position within another agency or organization, with the original agency typically paying the person's salary.

Disadvantaged community – A specific area and/or group of people who suffer from a disproportionate combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens.

Engagement – The two-way act of both listening and speaking with another individual or group to build connection and trust that will (hopefully) lead to collaboration and/or partnership. An example of engagement is meeting with faith-based leaders at one of their churches to listen to their concerns and proposed solutions as it relates to equal access to the Sound's resources and other environmental justice issues. Their input is taken without judgement and future actions are developed collaboratively. Another example is meeting one-on-one with industry leaders (e.g., anglers, aquaculturists, charter boat operators, etc.) to hear their concerns and potential needs from LISS to become better stewards of the Sound and then working with them to develop mutually supportable projects, programs, events, or policies.

Environmental justice – The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. [source: EPA]

Environmental stewards/stewardship – One who practices / the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices to enhance ecosystem resilience and human well-being. [source: NOAA]

Equitable – Fair, balanced, and impartial.

Estuary – An ecosystem, comprising both the biological and physical environment, that has developed in a region where rivers meet the sea and fresh-flowing river water mingles with tidal salt water to become brackish, or partly salty {source: NOAA}Goal – An overarching aim for the COE Plan that involves achieving a specific outcome.

Indian Nation – A federally recognized Indian Tribe. [source: Law Insider]

Key assumptions – These express the underlying beliefs and presumptions that the Marstel-Day team held as they developed each of the five Plan goals.

Key themes – These four themes are aligned to one of the four themes and goals of the CCMP and are intended to provide LISS and its – current and new – partners key terms of reference with which they can communicate with, reach out to, and engage individuals, groups, and communities throughout the diverse Sound region.

Long Island Sound resident – In the Goal matrix, this refers to individuals who live and/or work in shoreline or watershed communities.

Media monitoring – The review and analysis of traditional (newspaper, magazine) and social media sources and content for information that is pertinent to the Long Island Sound and to LISS. Relevant article summaries are compiled into a bi-monthly report and distributed to the client.

Metrics – The ways in which the progress of meeting the goals and objectives of the Plan will be measured.

Objectives – The measurable steps needed to achieve each of the five Plan goals.

Outreach – The act (one-way generally) of initially connecting an individual's or group's ideas or practices to the efforts of – i.e., reaching out to – other individuals, groups, or communities in a targeted manner. An example of outreach is using the results of the forthcoming Public Perceptions Study to tailor guidance and best practices information and tools (e.g., workshops, targeted social media effort, individual email or phone contact, door knocking campaign, etc.) to specific user groups in the Sound, like homeowners, shoppers, and beachgoers. Another example is researching municipalities that are considering or in the process of developing climate resiliency plans and meeting with them to share relevant resources developed by LISS and its partners.

Partners – An individual, organization, or community who works with LISS to protect and promote the health and resilience of the Long Island Sound.

Pathways – Means and methods used to communicate, outreach, and/or engage with an individual, group, or community, such as a social media platform or influencer.

Public and elected officials – In the Goal matrix, this refers to individuals who work for a government agency or municipality and/or participate in a volunteer commission or other civic engagement entity.

Resilience/Resilient – The ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances. [source: Center for Climate and Energy Solutions]

Sound and estuary user group – In the Goal matrix, this refers to one of the many organizations in the Sound with a specific recreation or industry focus, such as anglers, birders, commercial and recreational fishers, boaters, gardeners, the tourism industry, aquaculturists, etc.

Stakeholder – An individual, organization, or community with an interest or concern in the ongoing efforts of the LISS.

Stakeholder tiering – A proprietary method of prioritizing stakeholders into one of three tiers to help align messages and materials for each tier: (1) those who can directly impact an issue through control of processes, regulations, or resources; (2) those who can bring substantial influence on tier 1 stakeholders through mobilizing pressure or publicity; and (3) those with a substantial interest in the issue(s) but perhaps a modest capacity for direct influence but motivation to engage.

Sustainable/Sustainability – Something that balances the environment, equity, and the economy; meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. [source: UN World Commission on Environment and Development]

Underrepresented community – A group of people who self-identify as Black, African American, Hispanic, Latino, Pacific Islander, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, gay, lesbian, or gender non-binary / gender fluid.

Underserved community – A population or group of people who face additional barriers to the access and receipt of services and/or benefits from the Sound due to race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, geographic location, or another factor.

D. Sample Talking Points

Talking points are a set of clear, easily remembered phrases that outline a key idea or topic and are used to keep a speaker on message when speaking to someone with little to no knowledge of the topic at hand. The sample talking points listed below are organized by the Goal(s) in which they apply. These can be used by LISS and its partners to advance the goals, objectives, and actions of this COE Plan with internal and external stakeholders. The talking points developed for this COE Plan drew significantly from information gained from interviews with LISS committees and workgroups undertaken by the MD Team. These talking points are provided to LISS for further message testing and implementation.

Goal 1: Increase the public's awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of Long Island Sound and the challenges ahead to ensure its health and resilience by celebrating restoration successes and program accomplishments, and by delivering information that is accessible to the Sound's diverse communities.

INTERNAL

- Undertaking communications, outreach, and engagement with Sound stakeholders at the earliest stages of a LISS activity will lead to better planning, better outcomes, and greater success in fulfilling the CCMP Vision, Themes, and Goals.
- If we want to build and enhance community support for LISS actions -- much less inspire champions to support them -- we cannot show up with the plan of action in hand. We need to hear from our diverse communities in each watershed and especially historically disadvantaged communities before we shape alternatives and actions.
- Whether hired as additional staff assigned to the LISS Communications Team, consulting resources, or delegated shared resource from LISS or partner agency staff or NGO partner staff, executing the expanded scope of work set out in this Plan and this goal will require additional resourcing.

EXTERNAL

- The information we share strives to be accurate and inclusive, to build trust that we are adequately addressing the challenges to restore and protect the Sound.
- We are intentional about our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in serving Long Island Sound communities and want to promote and amplify the work of disadvantaged communities and others on issues affecting the Sound. (also Goals 2,3, and 4)
- We support disadvantaged communities, and we work with disadvantaged community leaders and their faith-based, social, and community-based organizations both to identify and implement the critical work needed for the Sound. (also Goals 2, 3, and 4)
- We pride ourselves on our diversity, equity, and inclusion commitment and work with disadvantaged communities to create public value for the Sound, its watersheds, and its ecosystems. (also Goals 2, 3, and 4)
- We share with you this story about one community's environment and sustainability journey – community champions for the Sound benefit the health of the Sound, its habitats, and communities.

- Our communities are building on successes to address the challenges of protecting the Sound while building resilient communities.
- Sharing the latest and exciting development / breaking news / exciting innovation about the health of the Sound helps engage more people in efforts to enhance the Sound and its resources.
- Sharing stories about the many individuals and organizations – Champions for the Sound – working across Long Island Sound and its watershed to protect and enhance this valuable resource will foster environmental leaders.
- Long Island Sound Study collaborates with diverse partner groups and individuals to continue to restore the health and resilience of the Sound.

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for individuals to engage as environmental stewards in their communities and to promote actions needed to ensure the health and resilience of their local watersheds and Long Island Sound.

INTERNAL

- Bringing in new expertise to the team is central to the COE Plan’s success to implement communications, outreach, and engagement that will provide the right information to individuals so they can choose to make lifestyle changes in support of protecting and restoring the Sound.

EXTERNAL

- There are many actions you can take at home, at work, and at play to help continue to restore the Sound. Become a champion for Long Island Sound today!
- Anyone can become a champion for Long Island Sound by enjoying the benefits it provides, helping to keep it clean, and spreading the word about its importance.
- Community champions are the real leaders in making our watersheds and habitats healthy and building sustainable and resilient communities. Join us today! (also Goal 3)
- Every voice within Long Island Sound matters. LISS recognizes this fact and is working with diverse communities to ensure that all concerns are heard and can help shape decisions that affect the Sound. (also Goal 3)

Goal 3: Broaden and increase active commitment of all Long Island Sound communities in support of policies, programs, and projects to improve the health and resilience of the Sound and ensure equitable access to its resources.

INTERNAL

- Bringing supplementary expertise and capability to the team is central to the COE Plan’s success to engage with communities to secure their collaboration and partnership on efforts to protect and restore the Sound.

EXTERNAL

- Communities can develop plans and policies that will aid in the conservation and resilience of their environment, community sustainability, and the health of the Sound.

- Long Island Sound's health and beauty is being restored because of the hard work and dedication of many municipalities that are champions for the Sound. Will you join them?
- There are steps we can all take to improve the ecological health and resilience of Long Island Sound and our communities.
- Many disadvantaged communities experience a disproportionate number of environmental injustices like pollution and lack of greenspace or equitable access to beaches and other recreation opportunities.
- The Long Island Sound Study recognizes this disparity and is working with disadvantaged communities to reap the same benefits of clean water and outdoor recreation as others have enjoyed for decades.
- The Sound provides so many recreation opportunities for our communities. Here's some information on how you can visit the Sound, its watersheds and bays, its shorelines, and the many different recreational offerings available.
- The Sound is a resource that supports the resilience of our communities and our economy. Please join with so many other champions of the Sound to make it an even greater resource for our communities.
- Whatever we can do to help make our communities more resilient will help to restore the Sound as well.

Goal 4: Increase coordination among LISS partners, committees, and work groups to expand the reach and impact of communications, outreach, and engagement and enhance collaboration with communities and individuals throughout the Sound.

INTERNAL

- The LISS partnerships' strong collaboration on programs is an exemplar for what the partnership can do via collaboration on communications, outreach, and engagement to strengthen the ability of the partnership to achieve the LISS/CCMP vision and themes.
- Shared communications, outreach, and engagement efforts expands our reach; and establishes LISS partners as a trusted source of information about the Sound.
- Shared information development increases efficiency and brand recognition and allows LISS partners to produce and share timely and accurate information with the public and decision makers.
- A unified and coordinated COE effort requires a forum for the partners to routinely (or on an ad hoc basis as needed) address issues in the management and execution of the COE effort.
- By staying in close working alignment through the COE WG, LISS and the participating partners can robustly identify and execute the distribution of the best information available to enhance individual and community ownership of the effort to promote the health of the Sound and establish community resilience.
- An Annual Work Plan will help the Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Work Group prioritize its goals and actions, make adjustments, and identify the individuals and organizations who will lead specific initiatives each year.

- Sharing the communications, outreach, and engagement load expands our reach; supporting each other in spreading the news expands our reach; aligning leads with the issues enhances the partnership as a trusted source of information throughout the diverse Sound communities.
- Sharing the information development load increases efficiency, allows for the most knowledgeable sources to contribute to the materials supported by each of the partners, and enhances the partnership's ability to put timely and accurate information in the hands of the public and decision makers.
- The effective coordination and execution of the COE Plan among LISS partners, working groups and committees, and the public and community groups needs continuous attention and engagement by the Communications Team leader. To enable this, some current duties must be back filled and additional support for managing this coordination must be identified and resourced.

EXTERNAL

- The health and resilience of Long Island Sound will depend on the involvement and action of the many industries, trade groups, labor unions, and businesses that rely, or the members of which rely, on the Sound for their livelihoods.
- We look to the industries, trade groups, labor unions, and businesses within Long Island Sound to be champions for the Sound, taking action that will continue to improve the health and resilience of its natural resources while sustaining the resilience of the Sounds' diverse communities.

Goal 5: Effectively manage and adapt the Strategic Communications, Outreach, and Engagement Plan by tracking ongoing efforts and addressing new challenges and opportunities, with practices that are accountable, inclusive, and innovative.

INTERNAL

- Prompt application of early lessons learned will enhance the effective implementation of the Plan over its remaining life and identify additional opportunities and requirements for enhanced planning and execution of COE.
- A mid-term application of lessons learned will enhance the effective implementation of the Plan over its remaining life and aid in the development of the follow-up plan.
- Building on the success of the first Plan's execution will lead to an increased ability in COE on behalf of LISS/CCMP vision and themes into the next half decade.
- A Public Perception Survey was launched in the second half of 2022 to see how well people know the Sound and what LISS does. LISS will use the results of the survey to help guide future actions.
- A rebranding of LISS could welcome more of the public and less technically oriented individuals into its work, building more Champions for the Sound.
- Knowing what will resonate among different stakeholder groups in terms of messaging and rebranding would benefit from one or more focus groups. This will also benefit the COE efforts going forward.

- Expanding the stakeholder database with the addition of new individuals and organizations and maintaining the lists accuracy is a critical foundation of the COE effort, allowing the direct delivery of information and updates to stakeholders in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- Providing timely and accurate information to a wide and diverse array of individuals and community organizations whose actions can impact decision-making regarding the Sound is critical to the success of the LISS/CCMP vision and themes.
- Providing timely and accurate information to a diverse array of individuals and community organizations can expand the champions working to improve the health of the Sound and change individual behavior to help sustain the Sound's resources and build sustainable communities.
- Maintaining trusted and current relationships with media is critical to securing placement of stories, opinion pieces and editorials supporting LISS vision and themes.
- Identifying sufficient resources to staff and fulfill the technical requirements of the COE effort is critical to COE success.
- Requirements can be fulfilled through a combination of enhanced staffing for the LISS communications team, providing dedicated or part-time staff, technical, administrative, and other support to the LISS Communications Team from agency/organizational partners and contract/technical/consulting personnel.

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F. Acronym List

CAC	Citizens Advisory Committee
CCMP	Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan
COE	communications, outreach, and engagement
CT DEEP	Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
CWA	Clean Water Act
DEIJ	diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice
EJWG	Environmental Justice Work Group
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FTE	full-time equivalent
HRSWG	Habitat Restoration and Stewardship Work Group
LISS	Long Island Sound Study
MD	Marstel-Day, LLC
NEIWPPC	<i>formerly known as</i> New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission
NERR	National Estuarine Research Reserve
NEP	National Estuary Program
NGO	non-governmental organization
NOAA	National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
NYSDEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
PIE WG	Public Information and Education Work Group
SRCWG	Sustainable and Resilient Communities Work Group
STAC	Science and Technical Advisory Committee
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
WG	work group
WQMWG	Water Quality Monitoring Work Group

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