
FUNDING STRATEGY

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY—NOT JUST DOLLARS

Long Island Sound has long served as the critical ecological link between the mid-Atlantic and the Gulf of Maine, as well as the economic engine and preferred home for millions of people. Since its establishment in 1985, first as a study area for the National Estuary Program and currently as an EPA-managed geographic program, the Partnership has assumed a lead role for science-based planning and coordination for the protection and restoration of this matchless iconic and historic natural resource.

Through unwavering public support and the backing of the states and hundreds of organizations in the Long Island Sound watershed, that multi-decade effort has already greatly improved the Sound. A seemingly irreversible trend of worsening water quality and degraded or vanishing habitats has been halted and even reversed in many places.

Since the first CCMP in 1994, the Partnership has encouraged collective action to improve the Sound's ecological health. New challenges must be addressed even as we make progress on the old ones. The next generation of ecosystem-level protection and restoration will require enhanced support to address smaller, more diffuse pollutant sources, disturbances from continued land development, and the human and environmental effects of extreme weather events and a changing climate. With innovative tools at hand comes the urgent need to find and sustain the resources to deploy them. This sustainability strategy is built on the recognition that a resilient ecosystem is the key to a prosperous economy and to maintaining Long Island Sound as the region's premier ecosystem for nature and humans.

The wise investment in the natural assets of Long Island Sound and its watershed can secure resilient and sustainable returns in increased property values, water quality, storm protection, recreation and tourism, and other goods and services. Implementing this revised

CCMP will require funding through diverse resources and partners. This includes maintaining funding from current sources of support, developing new funding sources, and expanding collaboration.

The CCMP recommends an ambitious agenda to invest in the health of the Long Island Sound ecosystem and its watershed. These investments can produce real value, not just from improved environmental quality, but also to the region's economic vitality and quality of life. The needed investments will not come from a single program or level of government. Continued funding will be needed across jurisdictions, including federal, state, and local governments in partnership with the private sector, with each entity contributing dedicated resources. Ongoing federal and state environmental programs need to be maintained and enhanced, particularly for sustainable and resilient ecosystems and communities, and to support project implementation, most significantly upgrading wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING

Partnership funding to implement the CCMP has increased since 2016, reaching \$62.8 million in 2024. A key priority is to develop regional capacity to use funds strategically and effectively. Equally important will be collaboration with partners to develop new and increased funding from non-EPA sources.

The increased funding has resulted in more projects on the ground, improving the health of Long Island Sound. Each year, the Partnership develops a work plan to implement priority projects for the CCMP based on appropriations approved by Congress. The work plan budget shows how the funding is distributed as grants to be used for ongoing projects and programs, including the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, the Long Island Sound Nutrient Bioextraction Initiative, the Long Island Sound Water Quality Monitoring Program, and the Long Island Sound Research Grant Program.

CURRENT FUNDING

The Partnership was established under Sections 320 and 119 of the federal Clean Water Act, which also authorizes funding for the program through the EPA. In 2024, the Partnership received \$850,000 under Section 320 of the Clean Water Act through the National Estuary Program and \$40,002,000 under Section 119 of the Clean Water Act as an EPA Geographic Program for the continued Restoration and Protection of Long Island Sound.

On November 6, 2021, Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (P.L. 117-58), to enhance the nation's infrastructure and resilience. It authorizes funding to improve infrastructure and resilience throughout the United States. Under the legislation, the Partnership is receiving \$21.2 million per year over five federal years (2022–2026). A total of \$106 million, in addition to annual appropriations, will fund local initiatives to improve the environmental health, coastal resilience, and economic vitality of the Sound.

Funding through the EPA was never intended to be the primary means of supporting implementation of the CCMP actions. Other federal, state, regional, and local programs provide essential sources of funding. The successful implementation of CCMP objectives and actions relies on sustained support for core environmental programs, carried out by numerous partner organizations through collaborative and strategic partnerships.

Grant recipients must meet statutory match requirements for funding. In addition to matching fund requirements the states, municipalities, and partners provide additional leveraged funds for projects to implement the CCMP, including upgrades to wastewater treatment plants, stormwater infrastructure, and on-site wastewater treatment systems. For every federal dollar appropriated to the program from 2015 to 2023, the Partnership leveraged an additional \$14 to implement projects, more than \$1.9 billion in total, demonstrating a sizable return on investment and reflecting the broader regional commitment to restore and protect the Sound. The Partnership will continue to pursue these opportunities as a means of financing the CCMP.


SHORT- AND LONG-TERM RESOURCE NEEDS

Funding is needed to continue cooperative efforts under the Partnership to coordinate implementation of the plan through ecosystem-based management. Anticipated cost ranges have been assigned to each action based on the best professional judgment of the Partnership. These cost ranges are meant to be estimates and are not intended to represent final budgetary allocations. The cost ranges for each action will then provide approximate costs for achieving the objectives leading to short- and long-term resource needs. Final costs will be established during project development and the implementation of an activity, when more detailed information can be accurately assessed.

PROPOSED ACTIONS TO MAINTAIN OR GARNER NEW SUPPORT

While some of the proposed actions that support the CCMP's objectives over the next five years will be accomplished through ongoing support of existing programs, many actions will require funding beyond current levels to be accomplished. Effective coordination of all stakeholders is essential to the efficient use of available resources to achieve the desired results. Congress, through provisions in the Clean Water Act, has charged the EPA with providing overall coordination of, and support for, the regional effort. As an EPA-directed program, the Partnership is prohibited from engaging in lobbying, private fundraising, or seeking funding directly from private endowments.

As stated in the Introduction, federal, state, regional, local, and nongovernmental contributions are critical to the success of the Partnership. Financing for implementation beyond Section 320 and Section 119 of the Clean Water Act funding is leveraged from state and federal public funding sources secured through grant opportunities by the Partnership directly, or implementation partners on a project level. The Partnership strives to be a catalyst for scientific inquiry and collective action, recognizing that grant-making is an effective approach to amplify social and environmental benefits to Long Island Sound. Some funding sources may yield relatively small amounts of revenue on an annual basis but may have the potential to do so consistently over multiple years. Other sources may be relatively large but only available on a one-time



basis. Some sources may be implemented by changes in administrative practice while others may require regulatory or statutory changes.

At the core of the Partnership's funding strategy is the recognition that the primary barrier to community-level implementation is the limited capacity of local governments and non-governmental organizations, rather than a lack of available funding. As a result, the Partnership funding strategy emphasizes breaking down barriers to successful community-level project planning, design, and implementation. Resource-limited communities need assistance to ensure that progress is broadly shared. This first requires listening to community needs followed by a commitment to serving those needs through multiple, tailored efforts, including:

- Holding annual community workshops to facilitate the implementation of practices, policies and tools related to land use, climate adaptation planning and implementation, water quality management, and habitat protection.
- Regularly updating a clearinghouse of tools and resources (e.g., the Long Island Sound Resilience Resource Hub), to facilitate access to the best available information relevant to the Long Island Sound region and to lessen reliance on multiple, redundant analyses.
- Providing technical assistance for navigating federal and state grant application systems, developing strong grant proposals, and effectively managing grant funding.
- Delivering training programs, in coordination with partners, that are tailored to communities' needs identified through the Partnership's *Sustainable and Resilient Communities Needs Assessment* and subsequent evaluations such as 1) improving the use of existing technical tools or geospatial applications that illustrate and assess the effects of sea level rise, storm surge, and vulnerability for a variety of resilience topics, 2) developing resilience plans, 3) updating codes, 4) sharing success stories and innovative applications of nature-based solutions, stormwater management, or green infrastructure, 5) providing guidance on grant writing opportunities, requirements and management, 6) training on effective communication, 7) educating the public and community leaders on environmental issues, and 8) conducting economic valuations of ecosystem services.

- Enhancing coordination across all levels of government, recognizing that policies and services are delivered at different levels and many will be impacted by a changing climate (e.g., road flooding and culverts no longer adequate for drainage systems).
- Maintaining the Community Impact Fund to provide direct technical and financial assistance to organizations working to address issues in distressed communities.
- Expanding engagement with distressed communities.

This strategy is consistent with the federal thriving communities technical assistance centers that are working towards a holistic government-wide framework for providing technical assistance and capacity building resources, particularly to those most in need. The Partnership will coordinate efforts with federally established technical assistance centers working to remove barriers and improve accessibility for distressed communities.

Program success is measured by maximizing and optimizing direct EPA funding as well as funding leveraged by the EPA and partners in implementation, reported annually through the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) National Estuary Program Online Reporting Tool (NEPORT).