



Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund 2026 Grant Slate

OVERVIEW

The Long Island Sound is an estuary located between Connecticut and New York. It is one of the most densely populated estuaries in the United States, with 9 million people residing in the watershed. According to research conducted by the Long Island Sound Partnership, the Sound serves as an integral part of the regional economy, generating billions annually to the regional economy via boating, commercial and sport fishing, swimming, and beachgoing.

The following are the main themes and goals of the program:

1. Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds: Restore and maintain water quality in Long Island Sound and its watershed
2. Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife: Restore and protect the health and resilience of habitats and wildlife in the Long Island Sound and its ecosystems
3. Sustainable and Resilient Communities: Empower Long Island Sound communities to plan for and respond to environmental challenges in ways that prioritize well-being for all
4. Informed and Engaged Public: Inspire and empower the public to appreciate, value, and protect Long Island Sound and the waters that flow into the Sound

It is a critical priority to restore and protect the Sound, so it can continue to provide a diverse ecosystem, commercial opportunities, resiliency, and recreational access to all people. The Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund (LISCIF) is a partnership between Restore America's Estuaries, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Long Island Sound Partnership. The purpose of LISCIF is to provide technical and financial assistance to communities addressing environmental issues and improving the quality and accessibility of the Long Island Sound. Technical assistance is provided through LISCIF regardless of submitting a proposal.

Funding for LISCIF is available for:

- Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction
- Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types targeted by LISP
- Projects that foster a diverse balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife

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ABOUT RAE

Founded in 1995, Restore America's Estuaries is dedicated to the protection and restoration of bays and estuaries as essential resources for our nation. As the leader of a national alliance, we provide a unified voice for coastal conservation in Washington D.C. and advance the science and practice of habitat restoration through on-the-ground projects, groundbreaking science, high-level meetings, and our biennial National Coastal and Estuarine Summit.

Learn more at
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- Public engagement, knowledge and stewardship
- Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability
- Planning and design that sets the stage for the implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects, and resilience projects
- Community-based science projects
- Data management and integration projects
- Other similar activities that the applicant proposes, and the EPA approves are consistent with section 119 of the Clean Water Act

In the 2026 round of funding, LISCIF will award up to \$1,200,000 in competitive funding to projects in the Long Island Sound region, in Connecticut and New York. The following organizations have been selected for the 2026 round of funding with grant sizes ranging up to \$100,000.



CONNECTICUT

D-Path Program (CT)

Grantee: African American Society #024

Grant Amount: \$99,297.90

CCMP Theme: Informed and Engaged Public

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability.

The D-Path program will expand engagement with Long Island Sound (LIS) and its watershed, advance environmental stewardship, and implement on-the ground restoration projects to improve water quality. The program leverages the African American Society's (AAS) headquarters in Hamden, CT, and its farm in Washington, CT to engage youth from urban coastal communities and statewide decision-makers in hands-on agricultural and environmental learning that highlights the connections between upland rivers, streams, and the LIS watershed. Grant funding will support a pilot fall semester followed by a full-year launch. Youth stewards from Greater New Haven will participate in twice-monthly farm-based learning, beginning with a pilot cohort, then expanding to a full-year program with youth participating in twice-monthly sessions and a month-long summer overnight camp. Youth will learn sustainable, regenerative, culturally rooted farming, and land-stewardship practices, supporting the farm's transition from conventional to organic production. Activities include greenhouse construction,

compost, manure management, and installation of green stormwater infrastructure. Participants will contribute to a major restoration project that remediates a legacy cesspool using nature-based solutions, transforming an environmental liability into a landscape that protects soils and waterways. Produce grown through the program will be distributed by AAS to urban coastal communities facing food insecurity, extending the benefits of D-Path. D-Path will engage decision-makers through immersive farming experiences that highlight how agriculture practices influence water quality, food access, and health, strengthening support for sustainable farming and watershed management policies.

Building Resilience Capacity by Reconnecting Generations with Water, Land, and Shelter (CT)

Grantee: Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed

Grant Amount: \$97,094.06

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability; Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects; Community-based science projects.

This project builds on two years of Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund (LISCIF) work. Previous LISCIF funding strengthened youth, cross-generational, intertribal, and cross-cultural collaboration supporting the development of our Watershed Regeneration Action Plan (WRAP) through a simple and effective “design circle” process. The third round of funding expands work by: 1. Piloting the curriculum developed through our Center for Indigenous and Regenerative Community Learning (CIRCL) in area schools and community gatherings, highlighting the relationships between water, land, and human decision making. 2. Working with BuildGreenCT and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum to host the 2027 Northeast Summit for a Sustainable Built Environment (NESSBE) with a proposed theme of “Culture of Place: How Regenerative Systems for Shelter Take Care of Life on Land and in the Water.” This event expands on our work with the Alliance CIRCL, supporting Indigenous knowledge leadership as foundational to repairing relationships between humans, land, and water. 3. Creating participatory art and idea boards from the conference that remain on view so that a wider audience, including schoolchildren, can contribute their own ideas. 4. Providing a CIRCL Toolkit Guide to Regeneration for Educators, Community Builders, and Youth Leaders, will document our shared learning. It will inform the Watershed Regeneration Action Plan and can be shared across the Long Island Sound watershed as a model for developing long-term resilience capacity.

Connecticut Shell Recovery and Shellfish Restoration Collaborative (CT)

Grantee: Collective Oyster Recycling & Restoration

Grant Amount: \$94,977.34

CCMP Theme: Clean and Healthy Watersheds; Thriving and Abundant Wildlife

LISCIF Program Priority: Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types targeted by LIS Partnership; Projects that foster a diverse balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects.

Collective Oyster Recovery and Restoration’s (CORR) project will recover and recycle shells from restaurants, seafood businesses, and festivals to continue maintaining a statewide, sustainable shell recovery and recycling network for oyster habitat restoration in Long Island Sound and preserve oyster reefs in Bridgeport, Stratford, and Branford, CT. With support from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAG) Bureau of Aquaculture and Laboratory, several non-governmental organizations will collaborate to recover and plant approximately 350,000-400,000 pounds (7000-8,000 bushels) of shells annually. This will significantly enhance the sustainability and resilience of historical shellfish beds in the sound and address the strategies of the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). While the focus of our project is shell recycling and oyster habitat restoration, we will broaden this initiative to foster greater community education, involvement, and outreach about the vital impact oysters have on our ecosystem and why shell recycling matters. Key components include increasing educational presentations in schools for students and presenting to more

adults and community groups (garden and rotary clubs, etc.). Maintaining the success of our program is important, and LISCIF26 funding supports operational costs—providing us with a stable foundation for future organizational growth.

Ecological Restoration Community Learning Initiative in East Lyme (CT)

Grantee: Friends of Brookside Farm Museum

Grant Amount: \$30,000.00

CCMP Theme: Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife

LISCIF Program Priority: Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types targeted by LIS Partnership; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects.

The Friends of the Brookside Farm Museum (BFM) propose a forest and wetland restoration initiative that will transform approximately 40 acres of degraded land into a thriving native ecosystem. Located across from two public schools and connected to a community center in East Lyme, the site will serve as both a restoration model and an accessible outdoor learning space. The project will remove invasive species, reintroduce native plants, and rebuild habitats to support greater biodiversity and wildlife presence. Improvements include constructing an additional walking trail, enhancing existing paths, installing educational signage, and creating a wetland-viewing platform and outdoor classroom. Guided by ecological experts, the area will become a space for recreation, reflection, and hands-on learning. Brookside will also function as a community education hub, offering biodiversity training, book clubs, discussion groups, and collaborative programming with Parks and Recreation and the East Lyme Public Library. These programs will empower residents to practice ecological stewardship at home, encouraging broader adoption of native habitat restoration. Project funds will support tools, community engagement supplies, outreach materials, and a seed-library initiative, creating lasting environmental and educational benefits for the region.

Tackling Marine Debris in the Bruce Brook Watershed (Bridgeport/Stratford, CT)

Grantee: Harbor Watch, a Program of Earthplace

Grant Amount: \$85,501.60

CCMP Theme: Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

Harbor Watch is proposing to conduct a trash removal and community education project in the Bruce Brook Watershed. During the Bruce Brook Watershed-based plan development, the ever-present trash issue plaguing the brook became evident during stream walks by the consultant and during community meetings where residents identified trash as one of the main contributors to poor water quality in the watershed. A litter trap installation would serve two purposes: to prevent trash found along the banks from reaching Long Island Sound and to improve water quality in the watershed by reducing areas where trash accumulates and slows water flow. Post installation of the trap, Harbor Watch will assess how frequently the trap fills and determine the size of storms that would require special cleanout events to ensure proper maintenance beyond the life of the grant. During cleanouts, in an effort to learn from the litter trap, the trash types and amounts will be quantified. Harbor Watch plans to share the information learned from the trap cleanouts with the community to highlight the major contributors (such as material type or brand) and to provide suggestions on ways to change individual actions to stop the pollution at the source.

Watershed-Lab Phase III: Extending Impact (CT)

Grantee: Mill River Wetland Committee

Grant Amount: \$69,439.00

CCMP Theme: Informed and Engaged Public

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

Goal 1: Continue Watershed Lab at Barnum School in Bridgeport, CT. (Implementation Phase) Students in grades 2, 4, 5, and 7 in Bridgeport's historically distressed East Side neighborhood will continue to participate in Mill River Wetland Committee's Watershed Units from Fall 2027-Spring 2028. In addition, fifth graders will participate in a unique multi-faceted series of lessons and field experiences during which they will partner with peers, who also participate in the Watershed study trips and live adjacent to the Long Island Sound Estuary. Throughout the year, peers will exchange their own citizen science findings and personal learning experiences surrounding urban water pollution and conservation practices where they live. This opportunity will connect diverse populations using a shared watershed preservation model. Student and community members will also have additional program opportunities which will include after school activities, STEM-related events, and repeated exposure at partner-organized events. Goal 2: Mill River Environs Watershed Lab Expansion. (pre-implementation and/or implementation phase). MRWC will build lasting relationships that can be sustained beyond the project by increasing the capacity to deliver high-quality adaptable E-STEM based programs. Expanding organizational infrastructure by onboarding passionate educators and staff, upgrading data management tools and usage, and bolstering community outreach in multiple areas will lay the groundwork for future impact.

Designing nature-based solutions at Sliver by the River and Yellow Mill Channel (Bridgeport, CT)

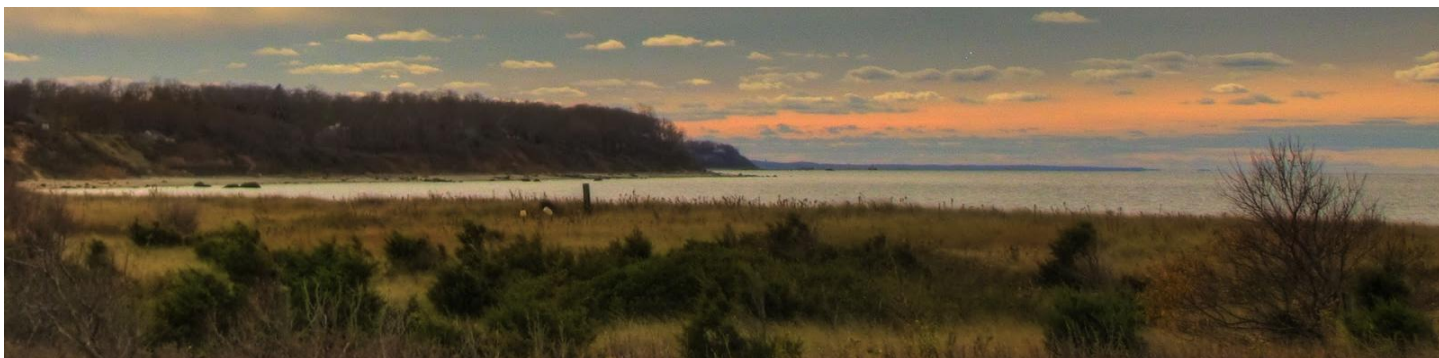
Grantee: Trust for Public Land

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability; Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects.

Trust for Public Land (TPL), in collaboration with local government, partners, and residents, will address the CCMP's Sustainable and Resilient Communities theme in Bridgeport, Connecticut, by finalizing community designs for new parks that showcase green infrastructure at vulnerable waterfront properties on the East Side and downtown. This 12-month effort will result in successfully obtaining permits and launching the implementation phase for nature-based solutions on the shoreline, including a native salt marsh with innovative tidal channels, as well as living shorelines. The consensus-based designs for these new parks emerged from a collaborative, long-term process led by TPL. As the city's primary nonprofit partner for waterfront revitalization, TPL will serve as project manager during the grant period while addressing SRC Actions 2-2, 2-3, 3-1, 3-3, and 3-4. This project will set the stage for implementation of resilience projects at these sites in Bridgeport, an achievement representing the culmination of years of community engagement around protecting the Sound and increasing equitable public access.



NEW YORK

Cloudburst Water // Ways (NY)

Grantee: City as Living Laboratory

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

CCMP Theme: Informed and Engaged Public

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability; Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects.

Water // Ways is being developed by City as Living Laboratory (CALL) in partnership with artists, scientists, and community members of Corona, Queens to build engagement, emergency preparedness, and environmental stewardship in response to the neighborhood's increasing challenges from severe flooding. CALL's approach follows an interactive and flexible framework, which consists of a series of exploratory activities, such as walks, workshops, and projects. WaterWays began in 2024 as a partnership with renowned urban ecologist Eric Sanderson of the NY Botanical Garden and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection. With the support of the Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund, CALL will organize four public walks and workshops hosted at accessible community venues that will explore neighborhood flood pathways, buried waterways, and the relationship between Flushing WaterWays and the Long Island Sound with approximately 150 residents and community stakeholders. In addition to continued programming with our two inaugural Cloudburst artists, CALL will also work with our Neighborhood Advisory Team composed of hyper-local community leaders and organizers to find and commission two additional Cloudburst artists who will develop public-facing projects that translate environmental research and community knowledge into accessible formats such as installations, printed materials, and/or public storytelling platforms that will reach thousands of additional community members. To ensure successful engagement, we will translate all materials into English and Spanish. By July 2027, the project will ensure that Corona residents have gained the knowledge, tools, and networks to participate more effectively in local resilience planning and stewardship for critical flood mitigation.

New Rochelle Coastal Center Community Planning and Engagement Initiative (NY)

Grantee: Energy Justice Law and Policy Center

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities; Informed and Engaged Public

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability; Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects.

This project will support a community planning and learning process to activate a permanent Coastal Learning Center at Five Islands Park in New Rochelle. With support from LISCIF, we grew the Eco-Ambassadors program into a successful marine science education and leadership initiative for underserved youth at the coastal pavilion.

In partnership with the City of New Rochelle and certified district teachers, we offer 6-week summer marine science programs for high school students and hire recent graduates as interns. Interns often go on to pursue science in college, and students continue into science and sustainability activities during the year. This trusted program now anchors year-round community coastal learning and stewardship in New Rochelle. A key goal of earlier LISCIF-supported work was to lay the groundwork for a permanent Coastal Learning Center and expand marine learning opportunities in New Rochelle, both in the community and in school curriculum. Our success in this work helped EJLPC and the City of New Rochelle secure a \$700,000 New York State grant to renovate the Five Islands Park pavilion from a seasonal facility into a permanent Center. This will be the first center of its kind in Westchester and will focus on stewardship, experiential sound shore learning, and urban coastal resilience. NYS capital funds will renovate the facility. The 2025 LISCIF grant sustains youth programming. However, there is currently no funding to build the organizational capacity and community planning needed to activate the Center, maintain programming during construction, or identify shoreline and watershed priorities for future phases. This project addresses that gap. With consultant support and staff time, we will engage in community planning, stewardship planning, and organizational capacity building while expanding Sound Shore public engagement. Through community workshops, stakeholder discussions, and participant surveys, residents will give input and learn about the ecological importance of the Sound shoreline stewardship. This engagement will increase community awareness and participation while informing the Center's future programs and priorities. We will develop three planning outputs: (a) a community-based and partner informed plan for access, programming, and long-term Center use; (b) a resilience and stewardship options summary that aligns shoreline studies and assessments with community priorities; and (c) a plan for organizational readiness, program continuity, and partnerships during renovation, including strengthened curriculum and workforce collaborations.

ELOC Don't Strain Your Drain Campaign (NY)

Grantee: Environmental Leaders of Color

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability.

Building on two successful years, ELOC's "Don't Strain Your Drain" campaign continues to protect underserved communities along Long Island Sound's tributary watersheds in Westchester County from environmental harm caused by improper household waste disposal. Year 3 expands from our core communities—Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, and Port Chester—to additional marginalized areas, including Tuckahoe, Village of Mamaroneck, and areas in Pelham and Eastchester along the Hutchinson River. Student Environmental Ambassadors from Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, and Port Chester will lead education campaigns about proper disposal of fats, oils, grease (FOG), medications, personal care products, pesticides, and other household pollutants that contaminate local rivers and Long Island Sound. Our expanded "Don't Pour Your Feast Grease Down the Drain" initiative targets major holidays when cooking oil disposal peaks. While our messaging reaches all watershed communities—including affluent areas like Scarsdale, Larchmont, and Rye—and all residents must help protect our shared waterways, our outreach prioritizes underserved populations who face disproportionate water quality issues due to aging infrastructure, sewage overflows, and limited access to disposal resources. Volunteers from affluent communities support our work while we promote clean water for all.

Building Capacity to Restore the Hutchinson River's Ecosystems Back to Health (NY)

Grantee: Hutchinson River Restoration Project

Grant Amount: \$60,000.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types targeted by LIS Partnership; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability.

Hutchinson River Restoration Project is a bottom-up grassroots volunteer organization with a dedicated and hardworking Board of Directors. It has become apparent, however, that to effectively address the enormity of the organization's goals, it must evolve as an organization and develop its organizational capacity. The purpose of this proposal is to build and strengthen HRRP's capacity to increase its effectiveness in restoring the long-term health of the Hutchinson River and its environs. HRRP must grow and evolve beyond a volunteer-based organization and restructure itself to include additional staff personnel. Additional personnel include a Boat/Field Manager and an Administrative Assistant, as well as two Interns. These staff positions are needed to help manage the growth and development of the organization's activities, programs and events. Funding for these staff positions will help to expand the organization's ability to: recruit, organize and manage volunteers for clean-up activities, organize and manage the tablings at community events and farmers' markets, and increase outreach to the public at large and to community organizations and officials. The Boat/Field Manager will help to care for the HRRP boat and help take people out onto the Hutchinson River for the organization's educational EcoTours. The Administrative Assistant will support all back-office activities such as financial reporting, distributing and writing newsletters, website revisions, upkeep of contacts, and other outreach communications. Two interns will be recruited to support the organization's activities and will be mentored in restoration and stewardship of the river.

Tileeh (NY)

Grantee: Khalipha

Grant Amount: \$60,000.00

CCMP Theme: Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife; Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction; Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types targeted by LIS Partnership; Projects that foster a diverse balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability; Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects.

Tileeh: A Riparian Buffer Restoration, Education, and Community Stewardship Initiative is a partnership-driven project focused on restoring priority sections of an approximately 8.8-acre riparian corridor along the Hutchinson River in Mount Vernon, New York. The project responds to long-standing environmental challenges in the city, where aging infrastructure, flooding, and degraded waterways have placed significant strain on local neighborhoods. Working closely with the Hutchinson River Restoration Project, the City of Mount Vernon, and the Westchester County Soil & Water Conservation District, Tileeh will combine ecological assessment, targeted habitat restoration, and accessible environmental education for both children and adults. Khalipha is also collaborating with graduate students in Columbia University's Urban Planning Studio, who are studying land ownership, open space, stormwater conditions, and access along the corridor to help inform long-term restoration and connectivity planning linking Project Kiana, Migui Park, and Tileeh. In the first year, the project will secure required insurance, obtain necessary permitting from the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) with support from the Westchester County Soil & Water Conservation District, and complete environmental and ecological assessments to identify site conditions and priority restoration areas. Monthly cleanups, stewardship gatherings, storytelling circles, and shared meals will build a network of residents engaged in caring for the river. In the second phase, the project will implement invasive species removal and native plant and tree installation in priority areas, culminating in a community river gathering to celebrate progress and strengthen long-term local stewardship of this important tributary to the Long Island Sound.

Rematriating Water Initiative (NY)

Grantee: Metoac Indigenous Collective

Grant Amount: \$99,995.10

CCMP Theme: Informed and Engaged Public

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

The Rematriating Water Initiative seeks to address the need to restore the inherent kinship between the Indigenous Peoples of Long Island and the waters surrounding their ancestral territories, including the Long Island

Sound. This Indigenous-led initiative would serve as a resource to engage and educate local community stakeholders about the Long Island Sound and its watershed through an Indigenous lens while fortifying relationships. Indigenous peoples have stewarded the lands and waters of Long Island since time immemorial and in present day their fundamental responsibility, reverence, and interconnected kinship to these relatives is still honored. Rematriation is a concept rooted in Indigeneity that centers traditional matriarchal leadership related to stewarding and protecting lands and waters. This concept challenges extractive patriarchal and repatriation practices, which lack integrity and intentional reconciliation, by restoring sacred relationships between Indigenous Peoples, their ancestral lands, waters, lifeways, and allowing for interconnected healing. This initiative will consist of facilitating educational programming such as birdwatching/nature walks, boat/paddle tours, beach/land clean-ups, creating a wampum belt as a traditional educational tool, and webinars led by Indigenous knowledge holders and culture bearers for Indigenous and other local stakeholders to attend. These stakeholders will be informed about ancestral ecological knowledge, strategies for appropriate stewardship efforts, and practices centered in reciprocity resulting in a profound understanding of the essentiality of land and water conservation. These efforts will encourage active participation in the protection, stewardship, and sustainability of Long Island's natural resources, specifically the Long Island Sound, its watershed, surrounding lands, and waters.

Sound Science at the Lower East River Lab: Community-Based Extensions of Salt Marsh and Sea Level Rise Studies (NY)

Grantee: University Settlement Society of New York

Grant Amount: \$91,740.00

CCMP Theme: Informed and Engaged Public

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability; Community-based science projects.

Salt marshes are critical to the health of the Long Island Sound. Maintaining marshes protects our region from some of the worst consequences of sea level rise, but there are many open questions about how to best conserve and restore these unique habitats. Further, most communities living near the Sound are unaware of the importance of salt marshes, nor are they actively involved in marsh restoration. Our multi-institutional collaboration will engage communities around the study of the Sound's salt marshes. This collaboration will be hosted at the Lower East River Lab: a first-of-its-kind community lab, situated within a NYC public school building and opening in early 2026. Supervised by a newly hired Lab Director, with LISCIF support, high schoolers will work as paid interns; internships will involve field sampling at sites around the Sound, with mentorship from Dr. McClenachan of Stony Brook University. Interns will then develop hands-on educational activities to foster understanding of the connections between sea level rise, salt marsh ecology, and community resilience. These activities will be developed at the Lab and then shared with wider audiences, culminating in deployment at the Viva La Sound Festival on City Island.

The Long Island Sound Connections Program (NY)

Grantee: The Ward Melville Heritage Organization

Grant Amount: \$11,955.00

CCMP Theme: Informed and Engaged Public

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability; Community-based science projects.

The Ward Melville Heritage Organization (WMHO) operates the Long Island Sound Connections (LISC) program through the Erwin J. Ernst Marine Conservation Center, located on WMHO's 88-acre wetlands preserve at West Meadow Creek in East Setauket. Over the 2026-2027 school year, the program will serve approximately 240 fifth and sixth-grade students, engaging youth from Long Island and Connecticut in STEM-based, conservation-focused learning that connects classroom study with real-world field research on the Long Island Sound ecosystem. Students participate in hands-on environmental monitoring, including measuring dissolved oxygen, salinity, turbidity, and temperature; conducting biodiversity and species identification surveys; assessing wetland

and watershed habitat conditions; and analyzing the relationship between land use and water quality. New York students carry out field investigations at the MCC wetlands preserve, while Connecticut students study urban watershed systems in Bridgeport. Through structured virtual exchanges, partner classrooms compare ecological findings across distinct habitats, such as suburban tidal wetlands and more urbanized river systems, examining similarities, differences, and human impacts. Guided by WMHO educators and university scientists, students analyze data, engage in authentic scientific inquiry, and contribute to a growing longitudinal monitoring archive. The program culminates in a Long Island Sound Student Summit, where teams present research findings, propose stewardship strategies, and share their work with peers, educators, families, and community stakeholders, empowering participants to see themselves as citizen scientists committed to protecting this vital coastal ecosystem.