



A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY

Website: <http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net>

**CITIZENS ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
OF THE
LONG ISLAND SOUND
STUDY**

OFFICERS

Curt Johnson
Connecticut CAC Co-Chair

Nancy Seligson
New York CAC Co-Chair

Martin Garrell
Secretary

CAC SUBCOMMITTEES:

Advocacy, Legislative & Policy
Tracking & Accountability
Local Government

LISS WORK GROUPS

Habitat Restoration
Stewardship
Nonpoint Source/Watersheds
Communications
Nutrients

CAC ADDRESS

Long Island Sound Study
Citizens Advisory Committee
c/o EPA LIS Office
Stamford Government Center
888 Washington Blvd, Suite 6-5
Stamford, CT 06904
Office: 203 977-1541
Fax: 203 977-1546

*The CAC meets quarterly on the
second Thursday of March, June,
September, and December at
alternating locations in New
York and Connecticut. Meetings
are open to the public.*

Mark Tedesco
Long Island Sound Study Management Committee
EPA Long Island Sound Office
Stamford Government Center
888 Washington Blvd. Suite 6-5
Stamford, CT 06904-2152

October 15, 2014

Dear Mr. Tedesco and Members of the LISS Management Committee:

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) of the Long Island Sound Study calls on the LISS Management Committee to strengthen and focus the Summary Draft Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) on fewer, stronger and clearer outcomes and priority actions. Please seize this opportunity to set a bold vision and strategic course of action for the restoration of Long Island Sound.

We offer our sincere appreciation for the enormous effort that you and the Core Team have invested in researching and drafting the CCMP documents now out for review. We also recognize and appreciate the two working sessions that you facilitated at CAC meetings over the past year to capture our input. These sessions did succeed in capturing hundreds of actions and perhaps most valuably, reinforced the value of the four priority themes and goals identified in the CCMP.

During and after these sessions, CAC members and leaders repeatedly requested a process to allow for consensus building around a few priority outcomes and actions. CAC members also continually asked to see their priorities reflected in the CCMP. Unfortunately, this did not occur.

The CCMP will be the strategic blueprint for our collective efforts to restore the Sound for years to come, and its Executive Summary is the most critical component for effectively communicating the priority actions needed to CAC members, elected officials and the public. It is imperative that the summary is as clear, focused and strategic as possible, and includes all of our mutual priority actions.

While we believe the Summary of the Draft CCMP (hereafter referred to as the "Summary Draft") dated September 2014 is a good start, the "Desired Outcomes and Targets" and "Top Actions" lack adequate specificity, focus and vision.

Also, we noted that several shared CAC priority outcomes and actions were either not included in the Summary Draft or were not presented clearly. Lastly, the longer CCMP narrative and Action appendices, running several hundred pages, while valuable for staff, are simply too cumbersome and detailed for practical application by members of the public, and contain far too many actions to be a meaningful blueprint tool.

To assist the Core Team and Management Committee in making this Summary Draft a more concise and useful tool, the CAC has worked to identify common priority Outcomes as well as Top Actions that need to be clearly articulated in the Summary document. Specifically, we urge the Management Committee to incorporate the following priorities into a revised Executive Summary of the CCMP. Several of these recommendations are designed to replace more general statements associated with the following specific recommendations now included in the Summary Draft. This letter is not suggesting that the existing Outcomes and Actions currently in the Summary Draft be eliminated. The following reflect top priority Outcomes and Actions to be added or substituted in the document.

Waters and Watersheds:

Overall Outcomes: Focus existing state and EPA Clean Water Act implementation tools, such as MS4 permit conditions, SSO and CSO enforcement strategies, state and federal water infrastructure investments, water quality monitoring and associated adaptive management to achieve the following outcomes and top actions.

1. Outcome: Adopt low impact development standards for new development and green infrastructure retrofits within the New York and Connecticut watersheds.

Top Actions:

a. By 2018: Assure that any new development or major redevelopment is designed so that, at a minimum, the first 2 inches of precipitation are captured and infiltrated on site.

b. By 2035: Retrofit, with green infrastructure techniques, a total of 20% of the impervious surfaces of public streets, driveways, parking lots and rooftops within the New York and Connecticut portions of the watershed to capture and infiltrate the first one inch of rain to improve water quality and reduce increased flooding risks associated with climate change.

2. **Outcome:** Substantially reduce the area and duration of hypoxia in the Sound compared to the weighted average of area and duration experienced over the past five calendar years (2008- 2013). Establish and implement aggressive and practicable nitrogen reduction targets beyond the existing 58.5% TMDL. The aggressive additional reduction targets are necessary in light of climate related trends including changes in temperature, river flow, and wind direction and velocity.

Top Actions:

a. By 2016: Establish a new federal and state-recognized enforceable plan for achieving the maximum practicable nitrogen reductions within the watershed. The plan must target multiple sources of nitrogen, relative contributions, effective strategies for reduction and consideration of biological response to reductions. It should also include nitrogen credits for natural system bioextraction, including shellfish aquaculture and harvesting, shellfish restoration, algae aquaculture, and marsh restoration and enhancement projects designed to adapt to anticipated mid-range sea level rise.

b. By 2018: Identify policies, practices and technologies to enhance resiliency to sea level rise and storms, and accelerate nitrogen reduction efficiency of waste water treatment systems including septic, waste water treatment facilities and stormwater infrastructure.

3. **Outcome:** Reduce beach closures by 50% by decreasing pathogen and bacteria flows and improved beach management (over the rolling average of closures for the past five years).

Top Actions:

- a. Reduce pathogen flows by at least 50% from sewage pipe related leaks (SSOs, CSOs, illicit stormwater discharges); septic and cesspool failures, and stormwater sources; with the identification of sources enhanced by DNA- based pathogen monitoring techniques;
- b. Improve beach management through improved real-time monitoring that combines enhanced DNA-based sampling, and more accurate and up to date modeling. Provide support for on-going pathogen monitoring activities at the local harbor and embayment level.
- c. Reduce floatable debris through shoreline clean-ups, upstream catch basins, and policies that encourage reduction of throw-a-way plastics.

Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife

Outcomes:

1. Restore a total of 2,000 acres of habitat and reopen 300 miles of river to fish.
2. Protect 2,600 acres of open space and coastal habitat identified in the LIS Stewardship Initiative through easements and land acquisitions, including protection of 680 acres of critical habitat on Plum Island.
3. Reduce disturbance and increase productivity rates of beach and island nesting birds of conservation concern to achieve a five year average of 1.5 fledglings per pair for Piping Plover and strive to achieve a five-year average of 0.5 fledglings per pair for Least Terns.
4. Protect, restore or enhance 500 acres of diverse stopover habitat for avian species migrating along the Atlantic Flyway.
5. Maintain and restore diverse, balanced, and abundant populations of fish, birds and other wildlife.

Top Actions:

- a. By 2018: Identify priority riparian, upstream and undeveloped uplands in coastal watersheds as well as riparian flood plains and floodways for habitat restoration efforts.
- b. By 2018: Identify priority open space and coastal habitat identified by the LIS Stewardship Initiative for land protection efforts.
- c. By 2016: Establish a sustainable program of annual stewardship and monitoring of federal and state listed bird species. Engage citizen scientists and provide youth employment and educational opportunities.
- d. By 2016: Identify and set goals for protecting existing and emerging habitat areas for American Oystercatcher.

- e. By 2020: Increase monitoring and restoration efforts of forage species for birds, e.g. sand lance, horseshoe crabs.
- f. By 2020: Identify priority habitat areas for migrant landbirds and shorebirds along the shores of Long Island Sound as part of the Atlantic Flyway. Develop plan to protect, restore and enhance these habitats.
- g. By 2020: Identify conservation and restoration plans for submerged habitats. Develop priorities for protection through mapping and spatial planning activities for seagrass, shellfish, rocky reefs, deepwater coral/sponges.
- h. By 2020: Identify priority upland and aquatic habitats and species vulnerable to climate change impacts. Develop action plans to mitigate or adapt to these impacts (e.g., remove or mitigate impediments to coastal processes, habitat migration, dune and beach system protection and enhancement and marsh restoration and enhancement projects).

Sustainable and Resilient Communities:

Outcomes:

- 1. Maintain navigable channels in harbors and bays using sustainable practices that include timely dredging and material re-use. Encourage dredge material re-use projects that restore and enhance natural system resiliency.
- 2. By 2020, all waterfront communities have developed plans for shoreline resiliency and infrastructure sustainability and resiliency, with half in active implementation.

Top Actions:

- a. By 2020: 20 waterfront communities have evaluated natural and climate-related impacts and developed plans for shoreline and infrastructure sustainability and resiliency, with 10 communities actively implementing them.
- b. By 2018: Identify and design 15 coastal and riverine habitat enhancement/restoration projects that will protect human neighborhoods from flooding, assure clean water and provide wildlife habitats. Examples include: nature-based demonstration projects that protect or restore priority natural shorelines, beach and dune restoration/enhancement, marsh enhancement, migration and restoration, shoreline softening projects, removal of high risk dams, ecological connectivity and flood improvement projects associated with bridges and culverts, and protection, restoration and enhancements to riverine floodways and flood plains
- c. By 2018: Secure legislation that supports coastal resilience by requiring consideration of sea level rise in coastal permitting, waste water management and promoting nature-based adaptation.
- d. By 2018: Identify high priority coastal conservation areas around Long Island Sound, including both ecological priority and disaster reduction priority areas and implement projects to conserve them.
- e. By 2025: Implement coastal and riverine habitat enhancement/restoration projects to benefit 60 miles of coastal and riverine habitat.

Sound Science and Inclusive Management

Outcome:

1. By 2020, complete a bi-state marine spatial plan for Long Island Sound, adopted and implemented by both NY and CT, to facilitate compatible uses of the Sound and conservation of its natural resources and habitats.

Top Actions:

a. By 2018: Characterize, inventory and map natural resources and human uses of Long Island Sound, obtain authorization and funding to support completion and implementation of a bi-state marine spatial plan.

b. By 2016: Issue an economic analysis report on the anticipated Long Island Sound regional economic impact expected from meeting the combined goals and outcomes established under this revised CCMP framework, with the economic impacts broken down by analyzing the outcomes listed under each of the four themes included in the revised CCMP.

Thank you for consideration of these comments to strengthen and focus the Summary of the Draft CCMP by incorporating and prioritizing these shared priority issues and actions. Collectively, we have the opportunity to set a visionary course for two decades of work restoring the Sound through the CCMP update process. We look forward to working with you and the Management Committee in setting this strategic course and implementing this important plan in the years to come.

Yours truly,



Nancy Seligson
CAC Co-chair, NY



Curt Johnson
CAC Co-chair, CT

c.c.
Mr. Curt Spalding, Regional
Administrator
US EPA
Boston, MA

Ms. Judith Enck, Regional Administrator
US EPA
New York, NY

Mr. Joseph Martens, Commissioner
NYS Dept. of Environmental
Conservation
Albany, NY

Mr. Robert Klee, Commissioner
Ct Dept. of Energy and Environmental
Protection
Hartford, CT

NY and CT Congressional Delegation