



## Timeline and Testimonials

### 2013

We officially launched the *Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative* uniting our resources towards a cleaner, healthier Sound.

### 2014

After learning how report cards are used in other estuaries, we made our first aligned investment: the *Long Island Sound Environmental Report Card*. This multi-year effort brought together researchers and nonprofits from around the Sound to build this shared tool.

### 2015-2016

The first *Long Island Sound Report Card* was released and was available for all nonprofits to use and promote. Its easy-to-understand grading system helped highlight areas to improve the Sound's water quality. Additional Report Cards for two bays and harbors were produced.

### 2017

The effort to create Report Cards for individual bays and harbors highlighted the need to have consistent, comparable data collection. So, we funded the design and piloting of a new project, the *Unified Water Study*. This set of guidelines, instruments, training and technical assistance was designed by a broad group of water quality professionals, environmental nonprofits, and educators. The *UWS* helps water quality monitoring groups gather consistent data about their local bays and harbors.

### 2018

We started pooling our resources in the *Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund* and launched the multi-year development of "*QuickDrops™*," a shared database tool to help local groups better manage and share their water quality data. Once again, we set out to develop a regional resource designed to benefit all nonprofits working to improve water quality.

### 2019

We awarded \$316,000 in *Stewardship Fund* grants. Some standout projects included empowering a diverse community to create a plan for a clean, healthy Flushing Bay, and a grassroots initiative to protect rare seagrass meadows at Fishers Island.

### 2020

We increased *Stewardship Fund* dollars for grants and awarded \$377,250 which included rolling out two innovative programs for low-income youth that blend environmental education with hands-on activities.

We expanded our work with the *Long Island Sound Partnership*. This bi-state partnership consists of federal and state agencies, user groups, concerned organizations, and individuals dedicated to restoring and protecting the Sound. They develop and implement the *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)* – the game plan for conservation across the region.

The *Report Cards* became an official part of the *CCMP*. The *Partnership* took over funding for the *Unified Water Study*, committing over \$1 million annually to sustain it through today.

## **2021**

Our *Stewardship Fund* grew to \$486,500. Projects included building capacity in the *Long Island Sound Partnership's Citizen Advisory Committee* to help its members tackle pressing environmental issues, voice community concerns, and secure funding for the Sound. We kickstarted a project on City Island using oysters and marshes as natural buffers to storms.

## **2022**

The *Stewardship Fund* awarded \$492,000 in grants. We provided initial funding for the *River Restoration Network* to speed up collaborative work to remove barriers allowing fish to move freely along rivers in two states. We also started a pilot to help local governments harness water quality information to better target projects that improve the health of waterways in the Norwalk River watershed which feeds into Long Island Sound.

## **2023**

The *Stewardship Fund* awarded \$580,420 in grants. Grant highlights included: strengthening capacity in a grassroots volunteer group working to improve the Hutchinson River; restoring a natural stream corridor to improve ecology and reduce flooding and pollution in Westchester County; and launching community environmental education to inspire residents to take a role in keeping the Housatonic River healthy.

## **2024**

The *Stewardship Fund* awarded \$377,250 in *grants*. Projects included: a program to collect and recycle oyster shell for reef restoration in Connecticut; and building the *Coastal Restoration Coalition* in both states to find innovative ways to restore the Sound's natural coastline and improve its resilience to climate change.

*Long Island Sound Report Card* reached its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is issued every two years (independent of our support) and is matched by a Beach Report.

The *Unified Water Study* now boasts 29 monitoring groups covering 49 bays and harbors. And monitoring groups outside the Sound along Long Island's south shore are starting to get involved.

## **2025**

The seventh year of the *Stewardship Fund* resulted in \$456,545 in grants to 8 groups. Projects included: testing new technology to remove contaminants from dam sediments; and piloting new DNA technology to track down sources of bacterial contamination.

Overall, the *Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative* has pooled more than \$3 million towards over 70 impactful projects.

### **Our Members Say:**

“The greatest value for us is the education to make more informed decisions about projects. I feel like I am much better about knowing about what’s a good idea and what’s a bad idea, what’s been tried before and what hasn’t. And I feel like I have people at my back supporting me.”

“On our own we would never have been able to do this work not only financially, but by myself, or by my staff. We are not the experts in environment, so we learned from other partners around the table to help us through the process and to bring in all of the right people to set it up and get it done.”

“We’ve carved out a role for private philanthropy in our large public-private partnership. We provide risk capital to try to get things off the ground and to do proof of concept which reduces the risk to all funders. We’re willing to move first with the fewest guarantees of success with the hope if we spend \$50,000, we can unlock \$500,000”

“Being able to work with colleagues consistently and closely is just more fun. There are actually people in this collaboration who care about Long Island Sound and enjoy being out there. Spending time with folks like that is a better way to do the job. “

### **A Grantee Says:**

“The Funders Collaborative is willing to place bets on new ideas. There is no moving the work forward without somebody willing to do that. If all you are only willing to fund are ideas that are proven you are never going to change much. You are just going to do the same thing in the same way.”