



Strengthening Our Citizens Advisory Committee

The Long Island Sound watershed is a vibrant and bustling region, home to 23 million people who live within 50 miles of the Sound and rely on its waters and lands in their lives and livelihoods. A thriving Sound benefits wildlife, boosts people's quality of life, and bolsters the long-term resilience of its communities. Yet, the Sound grapples with big challenges that go beyond local concerns like water pollution and climate change. To tackle these challenges, people and organizations need to join forces to take action to protect the Sound both for current and future generations.

The *Citizens Advisory Committee*, or "CAC", brings together 30 organizations from government, businesses, and nonprofits across Connecticut and New York to champion the health of the Sound. Operating under the *Long Island Sound Partnership*, the bi-state leader of Sound-wide activities, the CAC plays a key role in implementing the *Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* – basically the game plan for conservation in the entire watershed.

The nonprofit professionals who chair the CAC (one from CT and one from NY) have full-time jobs and dedicate additional time and effort to running the CAC. Also, the member organizations use staff and volunteers who are already very busy. Therefore, starting in 2021, the *Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund* awarded a grant to establish a Coordinator position to support CAC activities.

Thanks to our grant, the CAC has really stepped up its game. Now each week, and during quarterly meetings, members get updates on what's going on and hear about events like the annual CAC Education Trip to present to members of Congress in DC. Federal funding for the *LI Sound Partnership* has increased, and a critical 10-year review and update of the regional *Conservation Plan* has been completed. The CAC provided crucial input by assembling detailed comments from its groups and solid recommendations to share with the *LI Sound Partnership*. Plus, during this time, they got a commitment from the *LI Sound Partnership* to hold a Sound-wide annual meeting to ensure planning and decision-making are inclusive and accountable. Nowadays, members talk regularly about their projects, explore new strategies, and find common ground and partnerships.

As Nancy Seligson, Co-Chair, *Citizens Advisory Committee*, aptly stated "We are now working together more strategically. We've gained clarity about actions and outcomes setting up the program for greater success while acting as true partners."