

The National Estuary Program was established in 1987 by amendments to the Clean Water Act to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries of the United States. Unlike traditional regulatory approaches to environmental protection, the NEP targets a broad range of issues and engages local communities in the process. The program focuses not just on improving water quality in an estuary, but on maintaining the integrity of the whole system — its chemical, physical, and biological properties, as well as its economic, recreational, and aesthetic values.

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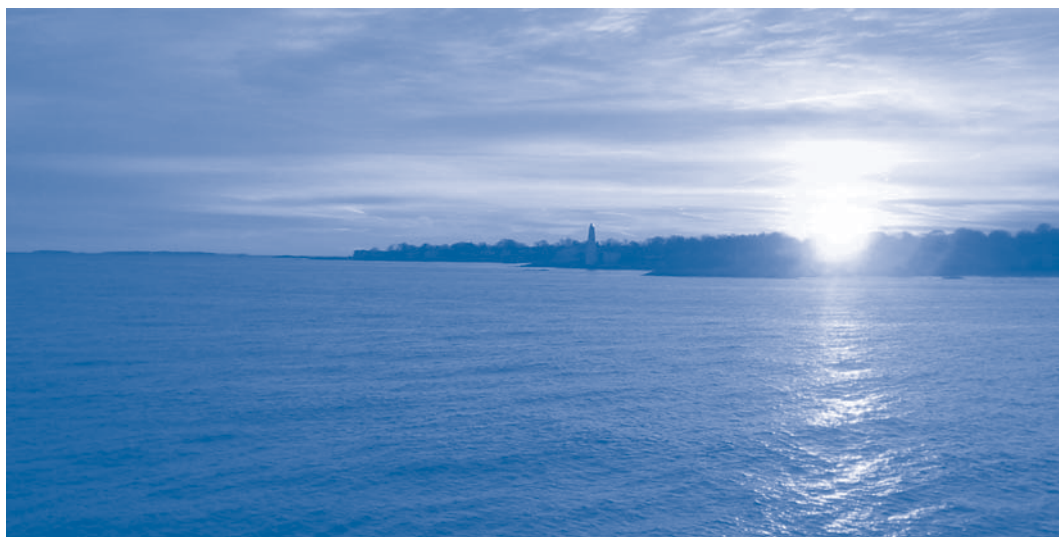


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Fact Sheet/Spring 2005

Long Island Sound

Photo courtesy of Jeff Butensky



What Makes Long Island Sound Special?

- Long Island Sound is an estuary, a place where salt water from the ocean mixes with fresh water from rivers and the land. Long Island Sound is unique in that it has two connections to the sea — The Race to the east and the East River to the west — and several major rivers.
- The Sound provides feeding, breeding, nesting, and nursery areas for a diversity of plant and animal life, and contributes an estimated \$5.5 billion per year to the regional economy from boating, commercial and sport fishing, swimming, and sight-seeing.

Why Does the Sound Need Special Attention?

- More than 8 million people live in the Long Island Sound watershed, and the associated development has increased some types of pollution, altered land surfaces, reduced open spaces, and restricted access to the Sound.
- Despite improvements over the past 30 years, serious problems remain, particularly hypoxia (low dissolved oxygen), which is caused by excessive nitrogen loading from sewage treatment plants and polluted runoff into the Sound, and the historic loss and degradation of fish and wildlife habitat.

What are the Long Term Goals?

- Meet CT and NY water quality standards for dissolved oxygen by 2014.
- Restore 2000 acres of tidal wetlands and other coastal habitats and 100 river miles of migratory fish habitat by 2008.

Progress/Goals for the Future

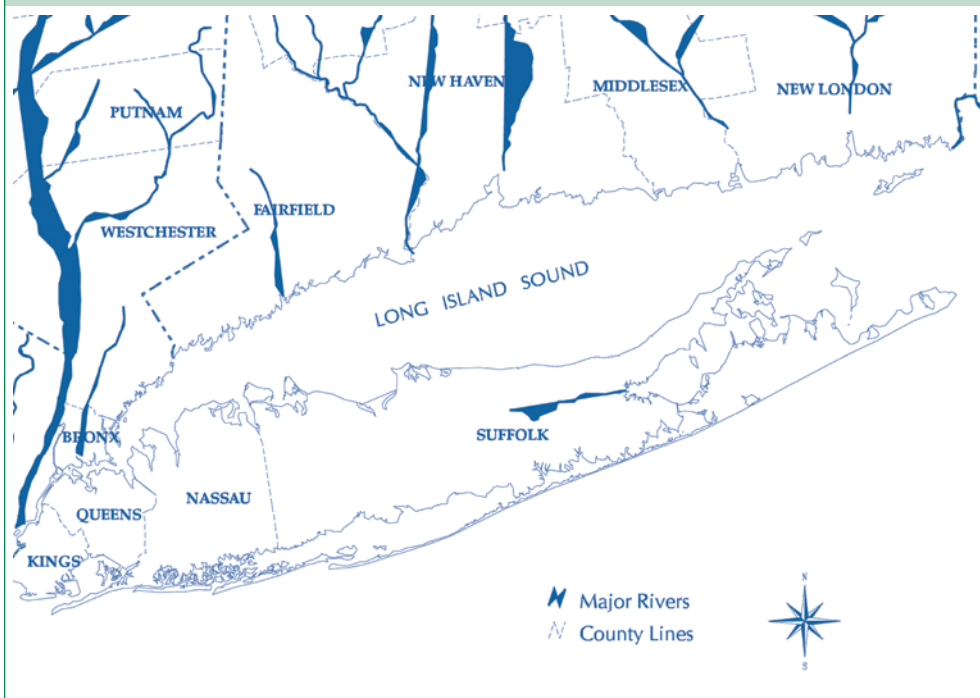
What Partnership Progress was Made in 2002-2004?

- Upgrades completed by the end of 2004, reduced sound-wide discharges from sewage treatment plants by nearly 28 percent from early 1990s.
- CT completed the first two years of its Nitrogen Credit Exchange program.
- USGS and NEIWPCC conducted three years of monitoring to identify sources and quantify loads of nitrogen from the upland states in the Connecticut River watershed. These collaborative projects are providing information that will form the base for a nitrogen management plan in the entire Connecticut River basin.
- Local, state and federal agencies worked to restore 175 acres of habitat, and 24 miles of fish passage. Since its inception, the Habitat Restoration Initiative has restored 535 acres and 61 miles of fish passage.
- In 2004, the Habitat Restoration Initiative published a coastal habitat restoration technical manual.

What Major Actions are Planned for 2005?

- Funding for local implementation projects will be provided through the new *Long Island Sound Futures Fund*, a cooperative effort administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.
- The LISS will re-evaluate needed nitrogen load reductions using updated modeling tools and monitoring data.

Long Island Sound



Background

- **Getting Resources:** With leadership from the Long Island Sound Congressional Caucus and support from local environmental groups and the public, Congress passed legislation in 1990 establishing the EPA Long Island Sound Office with its own funding authorization, through which more than \$35 million have been appropriated to support the program. Connecticut and New York have already spent millions to upgrade sewage treatment plants, control polluted runoff, and restore habitat, and also have committed to spend hundreds of millions more to complete the job.
- **Making Plans:** In 1994, the LISS completed the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which describes the major problems affecting the health of the Sound's ecosystem and the actions necessary to solve them, outlines a "phased" plan for reducing nitrogen loads to the Sound, and recommends development of a regional habitat restoration strategy.
- **Setting Goals:** In 1998, the LISS reached historic agreements to reduce human-caused nitrogen loads to the Sound from CT and NY sources by 58.5% by the year 2014 and restore 2,000 acres and 100 river miles of natural habitat by 2008. Efforts to meet nitrogen reduction goals were further strengthened with the approval of the LIS TMDL in 2001.
- **Measuring Progress:** The LISS has provided funding for an ambient water quality monitoring program to measure changes in dissolved oxygen levels since 1987, and both states monitor sewage treatment plant effluent to measure changes in nitrogen loads to the Sound.
- **Getting Results:** Since 1990, nitrogen discharges from sewage treatment plants in CT and NY have been reduced by more than 28%. Since setting habitat restoration targets in 1998, LISS partner agencies have restored 535 acres of coastal habitat and opened 61 miles of river for passage of anadromous fish.



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What Major Actions are Planned for 2005? (continued)

- The Stewardship Initiative will combine Geographic Information Systems data to identify priorities for land acquisition and protection, for increasing and improving public access, and for managing use conflicts around ecologically sensitive areas.
- CT and NY will continue high priority habitat restoration projects.



Who are the Partners?

EPA New England • EPA Region II • EPA Long Island Sound Office • Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection • New York Department of Environmental Conservation • New York Department of State • New York City Department of Environmental Protection • USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service • New York Sea Grant • Connecticut Sea Grant • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • U.S. Geological Survey • University of Connecticut • University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System • SUNY Stony Brook • Westchester County Department of Planning • New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission • Interstate Environmental Commission



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