

Long Island Sound Inventory and Blue Plan Advisory Committee

September 7, 2017

10:00AM – 12:00PM

Westport Public Library

20 Jesup Road, Westport CT

MINUTES

Advisory Committee Attendance:

Robert Klee, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Chair

Sylvain De Guise, Connecticut Sea Grant

Catherine Finneran, Eversource, Gas and electric distribution industry representative appointed by Governor Malloy, represented by Bob Deptula

Nathan Frohling, The Nature Conservancy

David Carey, Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Aquaculture

Christine Nelson, Town of Old Saybrook Town Planner

Evan Matthews [ABSENT], Connecticut Port Authority, Commissioner Redeker's designee

Jason Bowsza, Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Commissioner Reviczky's Designee

Eric Lindquist, Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, Secretary Barnes' Designee

Melanie Bachman, Connecticut Siting Council, represented by Fred Cunliffe

Leah Schmalz, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound (by phone)

William Gardella, General Manager and Dockmaster, Rex Marine Center, Norwalk

Bruce Beebe, Beebe Dock and Mooring Systems, Madison

Mike Theiler, Commercial finfish industry representative

Alicia Mozian, Town of Westport Conservation Director

Sid Holbrook [ABSENT], Westbrook, recreational fishing/hunting community representative

Other attendees:

Karen Chytalo, New York Department of Environmental Conservation (by phone)

Ian Yue, CT Sea Grant

Emily Hall, NOAA Coastal Fellow

David Blatt, DEEP

Mary-beth Hart, DEEP

Kevin O'Brien, DEEP

Brian Thompson, DEEP

Christian Fox, The Nature Conservancy

Penny Howell, DEEP

Mark Poppa, Eversource

Rep. Jonathan Steinberg

Tom Robben, Connecticut Ornithological Association

Phil Mikan, USCG

Welcome, Introductions, and Updates

Commissioner Klee began the Advisory Committee meeting by showcasing that the data and mapping initiative was nearing an end, and that there needed to be a shift to Advisory Committee members approaching and engaging their representative groups. Klee noted that we are slipping on the Blue Plan timeline slightly and need to continue to be conscious of the difficulties of the social and economic side of the project, as well as the data and mapping effort.

Brian Thompson updated the group on the progress of other regional ocean plans along the East Coast. Thompson mentioned that the Northeast Regional Ocean Plan has recently been completed and is starting to be implemented. He mentioned that there are data and resources from the Northeast Plan that can be utilized in Blue Plan development.

Karen Chytalo also updated the group on Mid-Atlantic planning efforts. She mentioned that the data portal is continually being updated and maintained and is currently being utilized by energy companies in project planning. Ecologically rich areas are starting to come into context in the Mid-Atlantic, similar to the effort the Blue Plan will make to define Ecologically Significant Areas.

Brian Thompson made a final update to the group about the National Estuary Research Reserve process in Long Island Sound and mentioned that a candidate site was close to being identified.

Data and Mapping Progress

Kevin O'Brien and Ian Yue spoke about how the Blue Plan team is taking the initial collection of data to the next step by creating map templates. They mentioned that spatial data was collected from 5 different online portals. The map products were organized into working sectors, divided between ecological and human use themes.

The data was then put through a rapid readiness assessment to understand whether there was clear metadata, if the data clearly related to Blue Plan efforts, and if the data was sufficient. Data was also evaluated based on the priority that it would be sufficient to show to stakeholders.

Map templates include a screenshot of the Long Island Sound as a whole and a closer look to an area of interest, summary information on the data, source information, metadata links, and links to access the data on the online

portal (Sample in Attachment 1). Ecological templates have all been created at this time, and the human use templates have begun to be developed.

Sylvain DeGuise made the point that data template products can be used to reach out to stakeholders to understand if this data and spatial representation relates to their real life. He also mentioned that the inventory of the data will need to understand where there are gaps – if data is dated, not sufficient, species shifts, etc.

Nathan Frohling pointed out a benefit of the templates being that people can still go into the online portals if they wish to see more information. Commissioner Klee also mentioned that the templates are likely an entry point for engaging those interested in accessing data about the Sound, but not an end point.

Stakeholders and Outreach Progress

Nathan Frohling began the stakeholder and outreach progress discussion by mentioning that the [Stakeholder Engagement Program](#) was completed and available on the Blue Plan website. He noted that Action 1 in the plan included outreach meetings and webinars, including efforts to engage New York stakeholders. Karen Chytalo discussed that the guidance is to put a public event in NY on hold. Frohling then reflected that although we may not be able to have a NY event soon, NY is still involved in outreach to ecological experts and human use sectors.

The idea of Blue Plan messaging was then brought up by Mary-beth Hart, who inquired as to what sort of messaging information or materials would be helpful to the Advisory Committee. She mentioned that messaging should be simple, addressing concerns but getting at the salient points of the Blue Plan. There are efforts to do this through the FAQ's, updates to the website, and a presence on social media. The group discussion continued with ideas on developing talking points, identifying what the plan is and isn't, and ensuring the right outreach strategy for each individual sector. Bruce Beebe mentioned that when conducting his sector outreach he is concerned with getting a lot of noise; and suggests asking for people to respond with constructive information, as in something they like or something that's not working about the Blue Plan.

Other suggestions for stakeholder outreach were to put information out through organizational newsletters with examples being in boating, fishing, hunting, and local towns. Nathan Frohling then led a discussion regarding how different human use stakeholder groups would be engaged. He displayed a document showing the different human use stakeholder groups, and how some will have spatially represented data associated with them and some won't. He questioned how the Blue Plan team would reach out to groups without data associated with them. Frohling then mentioned that there are three separate formal public hearings that the Blue Plan will have to hold. The Committee's discussion concluded that the first public meeting should introduce the draft Inventory and that the last should introduce the draft Blue Plan. There was a conversation as to what a middle (or 2nd) public hearing should be about, some suggested to speak about a package of proposed policy measures while still emphasizing that the plan will work through existing regulations. Representative Steinberg suggested that the legislative Environment Committee could host a series of informational forums.

Inventory Progress

Sylvain DeGuise started the conversation about the Inventory by giving a brief overview of how the data and map products are being used toward stakeholder engagement (see Data and Mapping Progress for more information). He then asked for each Sector Expert and Assigned Staff (Attachment 2) to update the Advisory Committee on the progress of reaching out to their respective groups.

- Marine Transportation – Brian Thompson said that a letter was drafted and they were prepared to start their outreach.
- Recreational Boating – Bill Gardella mentioned that they were preparing a presentation to communicate with them as a group, and that they were receptive to a webinar.
- SCUBA – Leah Schmalz said that there was initial outreach to the recreation community.
- Waterfowl – David Blatt said that they have come up with a preliminary list of groups that may be interested to participate.
- Historical – Christine Nelson said that they have contacted Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and that they have a nearshore and offshore inventory that may be helpful. However, the staff archaeologist did feel left out of the process and could have more data to contribute. They have also reached out to Connecticut Council of Governments (COGs) as they do have archaeological data. A comment from the Advisory Committee suggested that they reach out to the New York SHPO and tribes as well.
- Aquaculture – David Carry mentioned that state leases are well documented, with town beds and kelp areas being well mapped. He mentioned that shellfish beds in rivers are not as well mapped, but there is a high confidence in natural bed areas seaward of the 10ft contour. Carry additionally mentioned that a challenge may be understanding shellfish beds in NY, as their shellfish practices are different than CT.
- Energy - Bob Deptula, who was representing Catherine Finneran from Eversource, mentioned that they had compiled an extensive list of people to reach out to, including the siting councils.
- Commercial Fishing – Sylvain DeGuise mentioned that a unique part of outreach to the commercial fishing sector is that vessels are often going somewhere outside the Sound, and that it will be crucial to decide what is relevant to put in front of people and what is not.
- Recreational Fishing – Bruce Beebe mentioned that they had drafted a letter to be sent out soon, and spoke about possibly reaching out to the Shellfish Commissions.
- National Security – Commissioner Klee and David Blatt mentioned that they do have contacts that they plan to reach out to.

De Guise and Frohling then gave a brief update on the ecological section of the Inventory, mentioning that there have been 5 different ecological webinars seeking input from scientific experts. These webinars were separated into topics pertaining to marine mammals/sea turtles, birds, fish, benthic physical habitat, and benthic biological habitat.

Policy Issues

Brian Thompson brought up that the Policy Subcommittee met for the first time and are planning for another meeting the following week. He mentioned that on the first page of the policy approaches from the [Framework Report](#), there is a recommendation to develop decision making support tools. Developing these tools would mean thinking about impact avoidance areas, preferred human use areas, compatibility matrices, etc. Thompson displayed

a sample compatibility matrix comparing human uses of Long Island Sound (Attachment 3), prepared by Emily Hall, and it was emphasized that this was an exercise to prompt discussion and that these types of tools would be further informed by the Inventory.

Nathan Frohling then gave a presentation showing how the Blue Plan, and policy surrounding the Plan, would ideally work. He showcased that the Blue Plan can utilize thematic maps, conflict/compatibility assessments, and important areas subject to siting and performance standards, to assist in permitting and regulatory decisions. Frohling cited examples of the benefits of marine planning from the Rhode Island Ocean SAMP and the Massachusetts Ocean Plan, where after the plan was implemented a proposed cable between Martha's Vineyard and the mainland was re-routed to avoid ecologically sensitive areas.

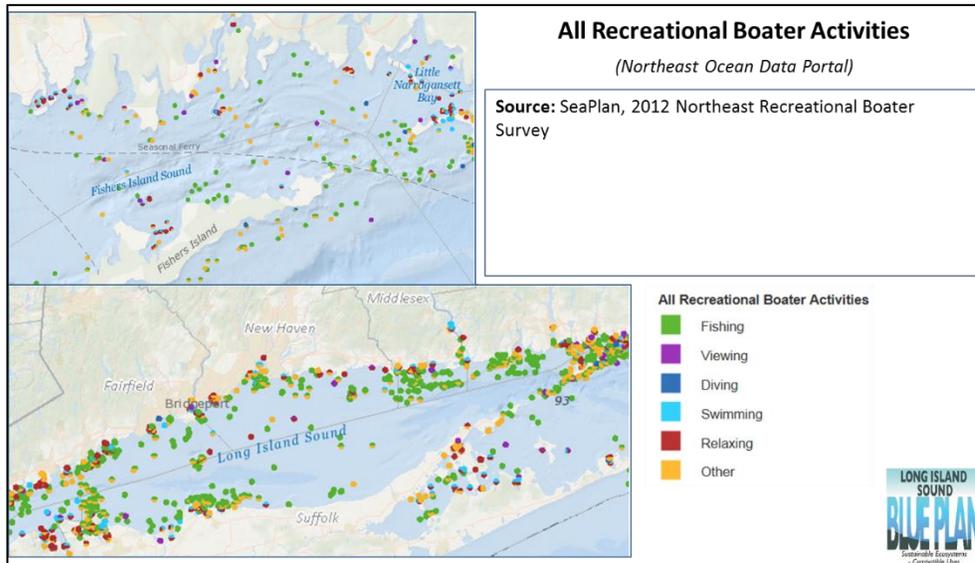
Public Comment Period

Tom Robben from the Connecticut Ornithological Association mentioned that Long Island Sound is an important ecosystem and that there is a lot of science conducted within the Sound, whether that be professional science, amateur science, or education. Robben noted that he did not see research or science efforts reflected in current stakeholder outreach. Committee members then discussed means of incorporating citizen and nonprofit-derived scientific information. Finally, Nathan Frohling reminded members of the five upcoming Ecological Characterization webinars to take place in October.

The meeting adjourned at 12:03 pm.

<http://www.ct.gov/deep/lisblueplan>

Attachment 1: Sample Map Template



All Recreational Boater Activities



Blue Plan Sector(s): Recreation & Tourism > Recreational Sailing/Boating/Kayaking

Summary Description: The Northeast Recreational Boater Activities Layer depicts activity points plotted by participants in the 2012 Northeast Recreational Boater Survey, which was conducted by Sea Plan, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) states' coastal agencies, marine trade associations composed of many private industry representatives, and the First Coast Guard District. Boaters were able to identify locations where they partook in specific activities related to recreational boating, such as fishing, wildlife viewing, SCUBA diving, and swimming. The methodology consists of surveying a random sample of selected boat owners throughout the Northeast through a series of monthly online surveys. The surveying period lasted throughout the 2012 boating season (May 1 through October 31, 2012).

Full Description:

<http://www.northeastoceandata.org/files/metadata/Themes/Recreation/RecreationalBoaterActivities.pdf>

Access Instructions: Go to <http://www.northeastoceandata.org/data-explorer/>. Go to Recreation > All Recreational Boater Activities.

Attachment 2: Sector Outreach Assignments

	<u>Sector expert</u>	<u>Assigned staff</u>	<u>Other resources</u>
Marine Transportation Navigation and Infrastructure	Evan Matthews	Brian Thompson	Bruce Beebe
Recreational Sailing, Boating, kayaking	Bill Gardella	Nathan Frohling	
SCUBA and Recreational Diving	Leah Schmaltz	Christian Fox	
Waterfowl Hunting	Sid Holbrook	David Blatt	
Historic & Archaeological	Christine Nelson	Ian Yue	
Aquaculture	David Carey	Sylvain De Guise	Ben Goetsch
Energy and telecom cables	Catherine Finneran	Ian Yue	Melanie Bachman Fred Cunliffe
Commercial Fishing	Mike Theiler	Sylvain De Guise	Nancy Balcom
Recreational Fishing	Bruce Beebe	Christian Fox	
National Security	Rob Klee	David Blatt	

