

Findings from Early Interviews with Stakeholders Related to Marine Spatial Planning in Long Island Sound

Developed for the Stakeholder Engagement Team of the CT-NY Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group by the Consensus Building Institute

February 2016



I. Introduction and Overview

The Connecticut legislature's passage of Public Act 15-66 in May 2015 formally committed to the development of the Blue Plan, a marine spatial planning process for Long Island Sound. Under existing authorities, the Blue Plan will seek to create a comprehensive, coordinated, and proactive approach to help protect traditional uses, natural resources, and environmental quality relative to potential new uses that may or may not be compatible.

The public act mandated the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environment and a 13-member Advisory Committee complete the Blue Plan process with support and input from entities such as the Connecticut-New York Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group (Working Group). The Working Group is an informal body composed of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, trade organizations, and others who have been collaborating to enable and prepare for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in Long Island Sound. In September 2015, the Working Group sought assistance in the development of stakeholder engagement options for the Blue Plan process. Following a competitive bid process, the Working Group selected the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) to organize stakeholder information and identify detailed options for stakeholder engagement in the Blue Plan process.¹

This assessment is not part of the official Blue Plan process. It was completed for the Working Group and intended to provide information to those managing the Blue Plan process. It represents a preliminary review of stakeholder needs and concerns, and suggestions for stakeholder engagement, as suggested by stakeholders who participated in the assessment interviews. It should be used to supplement, not replace, early stakeholder engagement efforts conducted as part of the official Blue Plan process.

Purpose

One portion of CBI's work for the Working Group was to interview people with a variety of interests and perspectives on what happens in Long Island Sound.

These interviews were intended to help the Working Group understand key issues that different sectors think could be influenced by the Blue Plan and to hear suggestions on how the public and particular sectors should be engaged during the Blue Plan process. CBI worked closely with the Stakeholder Team, a subset of the Working Group described above, in planning these interviews. The interviews were designed to supplement other work being done to develop a suite of ideas about effective stakeholder engagement.

Methodology

The first step of this series of interviews was to identify people from a reasonably representative sampling of key stakeholder groups to interview. Those who were invited to participate in the interviews represented stakeholders from the following categories: municipalities, federal agencies, tribal nations, education and research institutions, conservation and environmental organizations, fishing, aquaculture, recreation and tourism, marine transportation, marine trades, energy development and transmission, and economic development and real estate.

¹ CBI's team included Senior Associate Ona Ferguson, Associate Eric J. Roberts, and Project Support Coordinator Julie Herlihy.

These interviews were not intended to represent exhaustive outreach with all parties that have an interest in the Blue Plan process; instead, the interviews were intended to serve as preliminary engagement with a very small number of members of various stakeholder categories. Interviewing New Yorkers with an interest in the Sound would have added to the assessment findings and informed outreach strategies; however, for several reasons the planning team determined that it did not make sense to reach out to stakeholders in New York at this time. CBI ultimately conducted interviews with 25 people between January 4 and February 4, 2016. See Appendix B for a list of interviewees.

This Report

The report was written by the CBI team, Ona Ferguson and Eric J. Roberts, and is intended to identify the key concerns and interests of various stakeholder groups, and present the ideas interviewees provided for engaging others in their sector or stakeholder group. Additionally, CBI will be using the findings from the interviews to guide the development of a menu of options. Interviewees were given the opportunity to review the document in draft form and offer clarifications or additions. Please note that while this document is based on confidential interviews, any errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of CBI.

This report summarizes the findings from these interviews and is organized into the following sections:

- I. Introduction and Overview
- II. Themes and Issues Identified by Interviewees
- III. Feedback on Engagement Approaches from Interviewees
- IV. Appendices
 - a. Interviewees
 - b. Interview Questions
 - c. Existing Networks
 - d. Existing Events and Meetings
 - e. Publications and Newsletters

Interviewees talked about their interests in Long Island Sound, the concerns and hopes they have for the Blue Plan process, and how they and others in their sector might like to be involved when the Blue Plan process begins. The information reflects the views and perspectives of the interviewees and demonstrates the range of perspectives heard in the interviews. It does not reflect CBI's ideas, and because it reflects the full range of perspectives of the interviewees, some statements may be contradictory. Additionally, given the limited number of interviews completed for this effort, this information cannot completely represent all perspectives held by those people who care about what happens in Long Island Sound.

II. Themes and Issues Identified by Interviewees

Themes

The following topics or themes emerged from the interviews and represent aspects of Long Island Sound that people identified as essential to their sector. The topics identified may not all be touched by the Blue Plan process, but were ones that people imagined might be linked in to Blue Plan work in one way

or another. Again, for details on the specific questions that were asked to generate this input, see Appendix B.

Similar ideas are grouped together.

1. Water Quality

Many interviewees commented on water quality or identified it as very important to the overall ecological health of the Sound, their work, the work of others, and the long-term economic vitality of communities surrounding Long Island Sound. For example, many identified water quality as particularly important to aquaculturists, as high levels of bacteria can limit shellfish harvesting. Others noted that water quality is essential to commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, and subsistence fishermen since the quality of fish caught for consumption is linked to the quality of the water. Good water quality is also important for maritime transportation since the majority of the ferry passengers are tourists who expect safe and clean water for recreation activities such as swimming, paddle boarding, kayaking, and sailing in the Sound.

Interviewees also shared a range of perspectives on the state of water quality and the factors influencing it. Some interviewees said the water quality in the Sound is better than it has been in 50 years and that industrial pollution is decreasing due to regulations. Some said stormwater overflow issues have been reduced as municipalities gained capacity to manage the stormwater. On the other hand, some said bacteria pollution from deteriorating sewage infrastructure and combined sewer overflows that release sewage into the Sound continues to impact water quality and the water use. To a lesser extent, some boats may occasionally pump holding tanks overboard, although this is regulated and generally thought to occur infrequently. Others commented on the improper use of fertilizers, weed killers, etc. and the runoff of these chemicals from the land into the Sound which then causes algae blooms. Pharmaceutical pollution caused by flushing unused medications down the toilet was identified as another factor impacting water quality.

Several interviewees commented on the link between the upper watershed and the water quality in the Sound, noting that a comprehensive Blue Plan would recognize the connection to the upper watershed. Nearly all of Connecticut, a significant portion of central and western Massachusetts, and sizeable portions of Vermont and New Hampshire contribute water to the Sound. As one person explained, the Sound is “at the bottom of the hill and any development or activity in the uplands or along the shoreline could impact water quality.” Because of this link, they were concerned about the Blue Plan’s ability to maintain or improve water quality since the “planning area” stops at the first railroad trestle or overpass spanning a river or estuary. Some commented that marsh habitats should be included in the Blue Plan planning area, since water quality and biological productivity in near-shore habitats would improve if action were taken to restore tidal exchanges in the marsh systems. Several interviewees noted significant reductions in the amount and quality of marshlands. Others noted that stormwater management practices in the upper watershed and along the shoreline could also impact water quality.

Aquaculturists hoped that the plan would recognize aquaculture’s positive contribution to good water quality. They explained that the clams, oysters, and mussels they cultivate help to clarify the water and extract nitrogen from the water column. Additionally, the structures used to cultivate the organisms provide habitat that can increase biodiversity.

2. Economic development and recreation

Many participants commented that the Sound is a significant resource that helps generate a lot of revenue, which circulates through the whole state of Connecticut. For example, both commercial and recreational fishing contribute significantly to local, state, and regional economies. Similarly, there are many harbors from Norwalk to Stonington and, according to one interviewee's estimate, the harbors collectively generate approximately \$9 billion in revenue each year. Much of the revenue generated in the harbor is related to recreational users. Sailing is a popular sport in the Sound, although it declined with the economic downturn in the mid to late 2000s and has yet to fully recover. Lower turnout notwithstanding, many sailing clubs continue to organize sailing races during the summer months. Some interviewees indicated that it seems that greater numbers of people are paddle boarding and kayaking.

3. Dredging

Dredging navigation channels, harbors, and ports in a timely manner and disposal of the dredge materials were common topics mentioned by interviewees. They are closely linked to the topics of shipping lanes and routes, the maintenance and use of the ports, and economic development and access to working waterfronts. Dredging is also related to water quality, fishing, and public health.

Interviewees commented that timely dredging is required to provide ships with safe and efficient passage between the Sound and the ports. Safe and easy passage between the port and the Sound means more ships can enter the port to offload goods or passengers, which in turn generates business and economic development in the port and the municipality. However, many harbors and ports have not been dredged in a long time and are now so shallow that some ships can no longer safely enter the harbor and access the port. This has led to the underutilization of the waterfront by traditional marine trades, which encourages the conversion of the port from a working waterfront to condos, restaurants, and boutique shops, etc. It also means that ships such as those that might be more common after the Panama Canal expansion is complete or those used for marine transportation initiatives would not be able to enter the harbor or access the ports.

Dredging is also linked to water quality, fishing, and public health. Upland sources have been linked to contamination found in the sediment of the ports, harbors, and the Sound. Without dredging to remove contaminated sediment, the contamination remains in the sediment and the water column, and can bioaccumulate in fish and humans. Recreational, subsistence, and commercial fishermen, as well as the general public, may then be exposed to the contamination by eating fish or shellfish that have ingested the contamination.

Interviewees cited reasons why the ports had not been dredged and described how the lack of dredging and the closure of dredging sites impact the ports. One reason ports have not been dredged is that the Ambro Amendments to the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) require the federal government to evaluate the placement of dredged material in Long Island Sound under the requirements of this law and the Clean Water Act. This is detrimental to many of the ports in Connecticut where contaminated sediments do not meet the MPRSA requirements for open water disposal into the four existing disposal sites, two of which are slated for closure in December 2016. Closure of the sites means that even if the sediment is clean enough to be deposited at a site, the cost of disposal increases since more fuel is used to transport the material over longer distances.

Another reason the ports have not been dredged is related to the Harbor Maintenance Tax. The tax was implemented to generate funds to maintain federal infrastructure, including the dredging of channels in accordance with the regulations of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which was mandated to use the revenue to maintain the infrastructure. However, Congress repurposed the revenue generated by the tax and less than 50% of the revenue goes toward infrastructure maintenance. Furthermore, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is required to use the remaining funds on the highest-use ports to be the most cost effective. This effectively enters an un-dredged port into a downward spiral whereby ships cannot enter the harbor and access the port, which reduces the percentage of cargo passing through the port, which means the port is used less frequently and falls lower on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers priority needs list.

Additionally, several variables could be considered when deciding to dredge (or not to dredge) an area. For example, DEEP may attempt to exclude a shellfish bed from a dredging footprint to enable commercial shellfishermen to continue using the area. However, if the area around the shellfish bed is not dredged, then contamination will remain and could be passed on to consumers through contaminated shellfish. On the other hand, some agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, do not consider the potential for contamination to enter the food chain when determining which ports or harbors to prioritize for dredging.

4. Deepwater Ports

Many interviewees commented on the deepwater ports at Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London. They noted the need to maintain the ports and plan for them as a state-wide use while also encouraging their use as both a local and regional economic engine. However, interviewees acknowledged the challenge of dredging the ports to maintain depths that would enable the benefits of the port to be maximized. Some interviewees commented that Connecticut is in the process of establishing a state-wide Port Authority that may focus on economic development and utilization of the larger ports for commercial interests.

Commenting on the potential impact of the Panama Canal expansion, an interviewee said she did not believe the Panamax ships would visit Connecticut's deepwater ports. Instead, she anticipated that those ships would dock at the NY-NJ port but because it would require several days to unload one ship, some of the companies currently operating at the NY-NJ port may be forced to move into Connecticut's ports. This would mean more intermediary ships would visit Connecticut's ports to bring the cargo landward. However, this presents a problem as many of Connecticut's ports have not been dredged and shoreside infrastructure is deteriorating due to the lack of maintenance.

5. Overland Transportation and Water-based Shipping Lanes and Routes

Several interviewees commented on the connection between land-based transportation and water-based shipping lanes and routes. Interviewees indicated that congestion on overland transportation routes, especially via Interstate 95 (I-95), has increasingly led to conversations about the development of short sea shipping and high-speed ferry services. Development of short sea shipping and high-speed ferry services as part of the Marine Highways Program would significantly reduce the amount of tractor trailer traffic on I-95 and also reduce the amount of greenhouse gasses emitted from fuel combustion.

Interviewees suggested that while the Sound is currently underutilized for commerce, shipping lanes might increase as maritime commercial trade evolves and as short sea shipping increases. The expansion of the Panama Canal could also contribute to the development of the short sea shipping. However, as previously noted, dredging of the harbors and ports and maintenance of the shoreside infrastructure are closely linked to activities that could increase water-based shipping and reduce overland transportation.

6. Access to Fishing or Aquaculture Sites and Waterfronts

Interviewees with an interest in fishing, aquaculture, and marine trades expressed concern about maintaining access to locations or resources relevant to their work. For example, one fisherman explained that even though it currently is not economically viable, he keeps his trawling permits active so that he can resume trawling if and when it becomes economically viable again. But when that time comes, the fisherman does not want to return to find that he has been displaced by some other use or the infrastructure associated with that use. In-water infrastructure that could displace other uses or limit access include industrial uses that require the placement of cables, pipelines, permanent structures, semi-permanent structures, and/or the establishment of security zones around the infrastructure.

Fishermen and aquaculturists also voiced apprehension about the designation and management of important ecological areas or critical habitat areas while acknowledging the importance of such areas. Their concern is that the designation would lead to the creation of sanctuaries that would exclude them from the areas they have customarily accessed. Instead of creating sanctuaries to protect the areas, they hoped the planning process would facilitate proper management of the areas. For example, one interviewee suggested that if an area is designated critical habitat for juvenile fish, then management could require the use of fishing gear that does not impact juvenile fish.

Fishermen, aquaculturists, and those in marine trades were also concerned about continued access to working waterfront areas. They commented that working shoreline areas are increasingly being gentrified, and the resulting high prices limit the access of those who rely on the waterfront (or easy access to it) for their livelihoods.

People from the marine trades perspective also expressed concern that the planning process would lead to marine zoning. Similar to others, they were concerned this might prevent them from using certain parts of the Sound.

7. Environmental Conditions

In addition to the water quality theme, many interviewees talked about other ecological conditions or trends and their importance to the Sound. Most interviewees who commented on environmental conditions linked them to the economic vitality of communities and industries; particularly aquaculture, fishing, sailing and boating, and other recreation activities like swimming, paddle boarding, or kayaking. Interviewees noted the following environmental trends:

- Lobstering is not as prevalent as it used to be because there are fewer lobsters. Interviewees said this could be because of the impact climate change and warmer waters, pesticide pollution, or possibly regulations that helped to bring back species that commonly eat lobsters.
- Seals are more prevalent now than they were 20-30 years ago. They eat many, many pounds of seafood a day (including mussels and lobsters) and their presence has attracted sharks that hunt the seals.

Generally, interviewees thought the Blue Plan would help to manage negative environmental impacts to marine ecology; however they also noted some concerns. For example, it was noted that proposals have been made to locate all utilities in a common corridor; and people expressed fear that this could create a dead zone.

8. Climate Change

Climate change raised many questions for most interviewees. Many people we spoke to acknowledged that climate change would compound any existing challenges and add risk and uncertainty to the equation. Some noted that climate change may already be impacting the Sound. For example, warm-water fish species are becoming more common and cold-water species are becoming less common. One interviewee thought climate change would likely impact the western and eastern sides of the Sound in different ways. Mostly, climate change raised questions such as: How will storms of greater frequency and intensity impact the Sound and those who utilize it the most? What will happen to existing marshes, critical habitat, or other resources over the next 50 years or more and how do we manage for that change? How will sea level rise impact shore-side infrastructure?

9. Energy

The population on Long Island demands a lot of energy which currently is met with a supply of gas and electric energy. However, the source of the energy could shift. Many New England states, including Connecticut, have solicited RFPs for a variety of energy projects. Funded projects may indicate the future direction of energy development and transmission.

Peak winter energy demand will drive the development of future energy projects. Natural gas is one option to meet peak winter energy demand, although it would require additional natural gas pipelines. If natural gas is selected as the best source to meet the winter energy demand, then it may be more likely that the natural gas facilities are located along the shoreline rather than as floating terminals.

The location of energy projects may be influenced by the location of shoreline infrastructure. Several energy transmission lines currently cross the Sound and discussions continue about transmitting energy through the most efficient route from the coast of Connecticut to Long Island. Typically, these discussions focus on areas an energy company can already access or areas where they could access a portion of the Sound, and the juxtaposition of energy infrastructure on Long Island.

Renewable energy development in and around the Sound could be an area of future growth. Nongovernmental organizations increasingly advocate for renewable energy, and many states, including Connecticut, are looking more seriously at the potential to develop renewable energy. While wind energy development in and around the Sound has been marginal at best, it is becoming increasingly viable. Some studies indicate a significant potential to develop wind energy on Long Island. Tidal energy projects could also become more frequent as the technology advances.

Hopes and Concerns Related to Blue Plan

This section describes the hopes people have for what the Blue Plan might accomplish and how the process might go, as well as things that make people anxious and which they hope project leadership will guard against.

Many people we spoke with said they appreciated this initial outreach and that they were hopeful that the outreach at this time is indicative of the approach that will be used during the development of the Blue Plan. They hope that the people crafting the Blue Plan will reach out to key groups at the right time. They also seemed encouraged by the fact that the Blue Plan Advisory Committee is, by design, a multi-stakeholder group. At least one interviewee mentioned that the long-term Long Island Sound Study set the tone for how to think broadly about what different interested parties want from the Sound and how to preserve it. People said they hope the process will inspire others to get involved and connect on critical issues beyond the example of engagement provided by the Long Island Sound Study's Citizen's Advisory Committee. One participant specifically requested the Blue Plan process seek to fully engage municipalities.

Many of the interviewees expressed hope that the Blue Plan will help to find the appropriate balance between environmental and conservation goals, as well as the needs and demands associated with population growth and the human use of Long Island Sound. To that end, participants said they hope that the Blue Plan process will compile resource inventories and conduct research needed to assess likely impacts of new activities. This information could help to clearly describe the current location of important resources and human uses, and eventually be used to help establish the appropriate locations for different types of activities. For example, the information could aid in identifying the optimal locations for dredged material placement sites, shellfish operations, or ecological restoration projects.

Providing a bit more detail, individuals offered the following. These points were offered as either hopes or fears, and are framed here as hopes. They hope that the Blue Plan will:

- At a high level, provide a mechanism to proactively manage potential conflict. This included keeping lines of communication open.
- Carefully define key terms such as compatibility and balance among uses and the coastal zone.
- Clarify conflicting agency guidance or requirements (e.g. about buoy placement in aquaculture operations).
- Result in a product that helps DEEP compare proposals for energy infrastructure and informs regulations. Save agency time, energy and resources by simplifying proposal review processes and regulations.
- Establish a mutually agreed upon set of dredging and port maintenance priorities for the tri-state area (CT, NY, NJ).
- Focus on and be designed to support only those industries that are appropriate for Long Island Sound.
- Focus on ensuring that any policies resulting from the plan are developed in collaboration with those on the ground who will be affected by its implementation.
- Avoid getting too involved in fishery management, which is already managed federally and between New York and Connecticut.
- Ensure that the plan will not increase costs for already cash-strapped municipalities or limit municipal control over the types of projects implemented along their coastlines.
- Take sufficient account of local knowledge even though it may not fit easily into a computer model. Ensure that local knowledge and science and "scientific data" are both used, rather than the latter overwhelming the former.
- Streamline to gather the right amount of information and enable people to deliberate for a reasonable period (rather than letting the timeline of data collection, analysis and deliberation go on and on and run the risk of meeting fatigue).

- Result in a document that is easy for the public to understand and support; a high-level overview of what is happening in the Sound and how the Sound is used.

III. Feedback on Engagement Approaches from Interviewees

Interviewees shared their wisdom about working with their respective sectors and in the broader region; but, with the exception of publications and events to attend, they often did not provide specific suggestions of how best to engage people in the Blue Plan process. This is likely in large part because very little is known at this time about how the formal Blue Plan process will unfold. Much of the insight they shared fell broadly into the following categories.

Engage and inform people early and often to build trusting, transparent relationships – The people we spoke with highlighted the importance of informing potentially interested parties of what would be happening early and often throughout the process; they suggested minimizing the potential to catch people off-guard or surprise them with unexpected information. To help potential participants understand why they should care about the plan and why they should be involved, several interviewees suggested that early engagement efforts must clearly describe the goals of the Blue Plan, why it is being created, and how the plan could affect various stakeholder groups. Similarly, early engagement also should inform people how engagement will be structured, when and how they can get involved, and the ways in which their participation could have an impact. Interviewees commented that this crucial early, transparent engagement would help Blue Plan leadership build trusting relationships for sustained public and stakeholder-focused engagement.

Use existing networks to ensure all stakeholders are informed and consulted – Interviewees indicated that strong networks already exist for many of the sectors that work in or around Long Island Sound, and suggested that the managers of the Blue Plan process use those networks as primary channels of communication. These networks and the pre-existing forums or leadership groups that are a part of them have wide networks that can distribute information throughout the process and bring people together for sector-specific discussions at key junctures of the planning process. Many of the interviewees offered to distribute information and announcements to their networks, and suggested utilizing the networks listed in Appendix C. They also suggested that those appointed to the 13-member Advisory Committee and those on the CT-NY Bi-state Marine Spatial Planning Working Group could distribute announcements to their respective constituents. The following networks, and in some cases the network coordinators, are listed here because multiple interviewees suggested them as reliable and credible organizations or individuals with deep connections in a particular interest area:

- Fishing and Aquaculture: Tessa Getchis and Nancy Balcom of Connecticut Sea Grant, and Mike Grimshaw of Southern New England Fisherman’s and Lobstermen’s Association.
- Marine Transportation: the Connecticut Maritime Association, and Bill Gash of the Connecticut Maritime Coalition.
- Marine Trades: the Connecticut Marine Trades Association.
- Municipalities: the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.
- Economic Development: Local chambers of commerce and the Connecticut Economic Development Association.

Interviewees suggested seeking opportunities to distribute information through the listservs, newsletters, or other publications produced by the network coordinators. Interviewees also suggested Blue Plan managers request that organizations or agencies that work with particular interest groups post

Blue Plan announcements on their websites. For example, many interviewees frequent the web pages of CT DEEP or other state and federal agencies for updates and information relevant to their sector.

Be strategic – Choose the right moments and topics to engage on and choose language carefully. To the extent possible, engage people strategically at specific times on specific portions of the plan, as opposed to asking for input on the whole plan. Different sectors may require different engagement approaches at different times. For example, energy companies may need to be engaged early in stakeholder engagement scoping to ensure they can participate in the process in a way that is consistent with their business models and the regulated nature of their business; they may be more likely to participate in sector-specific focus groups or individual interviews than they are to attend public meetings. To encourage participation, someone suggested using messaging that is not too dire or technical; the appropriate and strategic use of humor can help to sustain participation.

Talk with stakeholders where they meet – Interviewees suggested many different conferences, events, and meetings where those working on the Blue Plan could provide information, seek feedback, and engage in constructive dialogue. Some of the suggested events are organized annually. For example, to reach fishermen, several people suggested setting up a booth or trying to get on the agenda of the Annual Boat Show hosted by the Connecticut Marine Trades Association. Other regularly scheduled events or meetings occur more frequently. For example, Blue Plan managers could participate in monthly meetings of the Connecticut Marine Trades Association to engage fishermen or regularly scheduled meetings of nine Council of Governments, which are coordinated by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, to reach elected municipal officials and other local leaders. Other organizations, such as yacht clubs, might be willing to organize special events at which Blue Plan managers could engage recreational boaters and marina managers. For additional sector specific suggestions, please see the list of suggested meetings and events in Appendix D.

Focus on the quality of engagement and facilitation – To elicit meaningful input from in-person meetings, interviewees noted that the quality of the meeting (agenda, approach used, and facilitation) are all important. Project leaders should find ways to enable everyone who attends to participate without feeling overwhelmed or that their ideas may be disrespected by others. Opportunities to participate in meetings should vary between full plenary presentation and discussion and small group discussions on focused topics. Providing participants with specific things (e.g. draft documents, hypothetical situations, or existing issues such as dredge spoil disposal, etc.) to react to at each meeting could help to ensure a constructive and focused discussion. This can also help with maintaining participation over several years of work.

Use a variety of engagement approaches to reach varied audiences – Interviewees commented that people like to participate in a variety of ways. While some prefer to stay informed through email updates and public information sessions, others will want a hands-on experience in which they can make a difference or contribute significantly to the development of the plan or the Sound itself. For example, general information could be distributed to the general public in materials provided to volunteers during coordinated international beach clean up activities. Or, partnering with maritime high schools or graduate programs could be a good avenue for collecting input from younger generations. Still others suggested that methods should be provided to collect input and feedback asynchronously and remotely when participants are unable to attend in-person events. Some commented that people in their industry may or may not use a particular type of communication method or may be less likely to engage in certain ways (e.g. participating via an online forum or webinar).

Look to other successful engagement programs for suggestions: Several interviewees suggested it would be useful to emulate and/or build upon successful outreach and engagement activities conducted for the Long Island Sound Study and the Northeast regional ocean planning.

The following table summarizes feedback we received on particular types of engagement approaches or activities stakeholders could complete.

Approach or Activity	Feedback from interviewees
<i>Use well and often</i>	
Email and listservs	Nearly all participants said email was a good way to distribute information and announcements. Many of the networks in Appendix C have existing listservs that network coordinators could use to distribute information and announcements on behalf of the Blue Plan project leaders.
Sector-specific newsletters, publications and other print media	Use existing sector-specific publications and newsletters and local and regional print media. See Appendix E for a list of suggested publications and print media outlets. Announcements could also be distributed through the networks listed in Appendix C.
Phone	Personal phone calls are an effective way to encourage involvement. Text messages may be a good way to announce meetings or events, or direct people to additional information.
Website	Several interviewees suggested a robust, interactive and user-friendly website was critical to engagement. They suggested using interactive tools and other visual means (short videos, info-graphics, etc.) to explain the process and key components of the Inventory and Blue Plan, or to seek feedback on key topics. The website and documents on it should be accessible on all devices (desktop, mobile phone, etc.). There was a wide variety of comfort with using a website or other online tools among interviewees; comfort varied by sector and also to some extent with peoples' age. Current webpage: http://www.ct.gov/deep/LISBluePlan
In person public meetings	Many people we spoke with were enthusiastic about participating in public meetings; however, their participation would depend on the timing of the meeting. Interviewees from the academic and energy sectors indicated they were less likely to participate in public meetings.
In person focus groups or issue specific meetings	Most everyone we spoke with said they would participate in focus groups or issue-specific meetings (e.g. focused on aquaculture); however some people with broad interests might not want to focus on one topic. Focus groups would be the preferred engagement option for some business or industries that may have sensitive information they do not yet want to make public. Some industry groups may prefer individual interviews over focus groups due to concerns about sharing information with competitors.
<i>Use more strategically</i>	
Surveys	Many interviewees said they would be willing to complete a survey, but only if it fit into their schedule, or was focused on a specific topic, and if they were able to complete it quickly.
Webinars and/or conference calls	Interviewees indicated that it would generally be easy to attend meetings in person given the small region involved and they would prefer in-person meetings, however some interviewees from the fishing and marine transportation perspectives expressed interest in webinars and conference calls because it would reduce travel time and costs. Conversely, some indicated they would not participate or would feel uncomfortable participating via webinar or conference call. Another consideration is that this approach could be used if agency staff are under travel restrictions.

Social media	Several interviewees said their industries struggle to use social media and that social media may not be an effective way to engage their sectors. Yet they recognized that social media might be a useful method for distributing bite-sized information that could encourage participation or to announce the dates and times of specific events.
Comment on draft documents	Several interviewees said they regularly comment on draft documents and would be willing to do so for the Blue Plan, although they were not sure if others in their stakeholder group would do the same.
Data Collection	Some interviewees were eager to provide data and information, while others were open to the idea depending on how it would be displayed publicly.

Timing of Engagement

Finding the right time to engage different stakeholder groups and individuals will be challenging. However, members of most stakeholder groups indicated general times of the year when they and others in the group might be more likely to participate in Blue Plan activities, and other times of the year when they might be less likely to participate. Generally, winter meetings could be more difficult to attend due to winter weather conditions.

Sector	Good Time of Day	Good Time of Week	Good Time of Year	Other Notes
Aquaculture	Evening	Depends on the weather and shipping schedules	Winter: January, February and March.	Some aquaculturists have more availability between July 29 and September 20 when seed oyster harvesting is suspended.
Fishing	Evening	Depends on the weather	Winter: January, February, and March.	
Conservation and Environmental Organizations	Regular work hours	Monday through Thursday or Friday morning.	No specific time of year is better than another.	Evening and weekend meetings possible, but not preferred.
Recreation and Tourism	Variable	Monday through Thursday (especially if in summer months)	Late Fall and Winter months (October through early April)	Weekend meetings would not be well attended in the summer.
Marine Transportation (Ports)	Variable	Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays	Variable	
Marine Transportation (Ferries)	Regular work hours, but morning may be preferable	Variable	No preference	
Municipalities	Variable	Variable	Variable	Avoid late August through November in odd numbered years (election season).
Marine Trades	Variable	Variable	October to early April	
Government Agencies	Variable	Monday to Friday	Variable	Government employees may not have flexibility with overtime, so

				evening meetings may be difficult for some.
--	--	--	--	---

V. Appendices

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Please tell us a bit about what your organization does and how you're connected to Long Island Sound.
2. What aspects of LIS are most important to you that you think might be influenced by a Blue Plan Process?
3. What are the trends (both positive and negative) facing [that resource or that type of work]?
4. What are your hopes about the Blue Plan process? How might it help you, or others in a similar role, to do your work?
5. Do you have concerns about the Blue Plan process? Do you think it might create challenges for you and others in your position and if so, how?
6. How would you like the public and key stakeholders to be invited to participate?
7. What might make it easy or hard for your sector to contribute or participate, especially over a period of several years?
8. How can [your sector] best be included in the process?
9. How would you and your colleagues want to be notified of ongoing Blue Plan activities and events? What are good avenues for publishing notices and getting the word out?
10. What meetings or regional events do people in [your sector] attend in the LI Sound region?
11. What organizations, companies, individuals we should be sure we have on our master contact list that we're creating? Which of these are the best representatives for your sector, if any?
12. Within your sector, there are likely some folks who tend not to participate in things like this. Do you have any advice on how to engage those folks?
13. How or when would you recommend that the process seek to engage members of the general public?
14. Anything else we should be aware of?

Appendix C: Existing Networks

These networks were suggested as ones that the Blue Plan could use to reach particular audiences. They are grouped here by interest/issue area.

Interest/Issue Area	Network Coordinator	Network Name
Aquaculture	Coalition of CT Shellfishermen	Coalition of CT Shellfishermen
Aquaculture	CT SeaGrant	CT Shellfish Initiative
Aquaculture	Eastcoast Shellfish Growers Association	Eastcoast Shellfish Growers Association
Aquaculture	Southern New England Fisherman's and Lobstermen's Association	Southern New England Fisherman's and Lobstermen's Association
Education and Research	New England Estuarine Research Forum	New England Estuarine Research Forum
Energy	Association of Natural Gas	Association of Natural Gas
Energy	Department of Energy	Department of Energy
Energy	Electric Power Research Institute	Electric Power Research Institute
Energy	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Energy	ISO New England	ISO New England
Energy	New England States Committee on Electricity	New England States Committee on Electricity
Energy	Northeast Energy And Commerce Association	Northeast Energy And Commerce Association
Environment and Conservation	The Nature Conservancy	The Nature Conservancy
Environment and Conservation	Citizens Campaign for the Environment	Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Environment and Conservation	Environment Connecticut	Environment Connecticut
Environment and Conservation	Audubon Society	Audubon Society
Environment and Conservation	League of Conservation Voters	League of Conservation Voters
Environment and Conservation	Rivers Alliance	Rivers Alliance
Environment and Conservation	Group for the East End	Group for the East End

Environment and Conservation	North Fork Environmental Council	North Fork Environmental Council
Environment and Conservation	Manhasset Bay Protection Committee	Manhasset Bay Protection Committee
Environment and Conservation	Sound Waters	Sound Waters
Environment and Conservation	Sound Keeper	Sound Keeper
Fishing	Southern New England Fisherman's and Lobstermen's Association	Southern New England Fisherman's and Lobstermen's Association
General	Long Island Sound Assembly	Long Island Sound Assembly
General	Long Island Sound Study	LIS Study
General	Long Island Sound Study	Citizens Advisory Committee
Marine Trades	CT Marine Trades Association	CT Marine Trades Association
Marine Transportation	Harbor Commission	Harbor Commission
Marine Transportation	North American Association of Port Authorities	American Association of Port Authorities
Marine Transportation	North Atlantic Ports Association	North Atlantic Ports Association
Marine Transportation	Oil Consortium	Oil Consortium
Marine Transportation	Pilots Commission	Pilot Commission
Marine Transportation	US Maritime Administration	Maritime Highway Initiative
Municipal	CT Conference of Municipalities	Sustainability Committee
Municipal	CT Conference of Municipalities	Environment Committee
Municipal	CT Conference of Municipalities	CT Conference of Municipalities
Recreation and Tourism	East CT Sailing Association	East CT Sailing Association
Recreation and Tourism	Power Squadron	Power Squadron

Appendix D: Existing Events and Meetings

This list contains events and meetings that were suggested as places where Blue Plan participants could reach out to particular audiences.

Interest/Issue Area	Organizer	Event Name	When	Frequency
Aquaculture	CT Department of Ag	Yearly meeting		Annually
Aquaculture	NE Lobstermen's Trade Show	NE Lobstermen Association		
Aquaculture	MA Lobstermen's Trade Show	MA Lobstermen Association		
Aquaculture	NOAA	Milford Aquaculture Seminar	Jan-Feb	Annually
Aquaculture	NOAA/Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center	Northeast Aquaculture Conference and Exposition		
Education and Research	LIS Biennial Research Forum	LIS Biennial Research Forum		
Environment	New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission	New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission		
Environment	New England Water Environment Association	Annual Conference		Annually
Environment	Ocean Conservancy	International Coastal Clean Up		Annually
Fishing	New England Hunting and Fishing Show	New England Hunting and Fishing Show		Annually
Fishing	Conservation and Hunting Clubs	Fishing Tournaments		
General	Long Island Sound Study	Citizen Summit		Annually
Marine Trades	CT Marine Trades Association	CMTA Boat Show	January	Annually
Marine Trades/Recreation	Yacht Club Commodores	Specially Scheduled event		
Marine Transportation	CT Maritime Association	Ship Owners Trade Show	Feb-Mar	
Marine Transportation	CT Maritime Coalition	CT Maritime Coalition Conference		

Municipal	CT Conference of Municipalities	Annual Conference	October	Annually
Recreation and Tourism	East CT Sailing Association	Annual Meeting	Jan-Feb	Annually
Recreation and Tourism	Swim Across America	Swim Across America		
Energy	Northeast Energy And Commerce Association Conference	Northeast Energy And Commerce Association		Annually
Economic Development and Real Estate	CT Business Council of Fairfield County	CT Business Council of Fairfield County		
Fed Agencies, others	US Coast Guard	Hazmat Security Meeting		Annually
Fed Agencies, others	US Coast Guard	Area Maritime Security Meetings		
General	Long Island Sound Study	Science and Technical Advisory Committee		3x/year
General	Long Island Sound Study	Management Committee		
Marine Transportation	Northeast Diesel Collaborative	Ports Working Group		
Economic Development and Real Estate	Chambers specific to each town	Chambers of Commerce meetings		
Marine Trades	CT Marine Trades Association	Stakeholder Meetings		Quarterly
Marine Trades	CT Marine Trades Association	CT Marine Trades Association Meetings		Monthly
Marine Transportation	US Coast Guard	US Coast Guard Forum		
Municipal	CT Conference of Municipalities	Council of Governments (9 councils)		

Appendix E: Publications and Newsletters

The following publications and newsletters were recommended channels through which the Blue Plan could communicate with interested stakeholders.

Interest/Issue Area	Publication Name or Source
Aquaculture	Commercial Fishery News
Aquaculture	CT Sea Grant
Coastal Resources	Sound Outlook
Economic Development and Real Estate	CT Economic Development Association
Energy	CT Law Journal
Environment	Connecticut Wildlife Magazine
Environment	Your Environmental Connection
Fishing	The Fisherman
Fishing	National Fisherman
Fishing	CT Fishin' Tips
General	Connecticut Mirror
General	Connecticut News Junkie
General	Hartford Courant
General	Newsday
General	New London Day
Marine Transportation	CT Maritime Association
Marine Transportation	CT Maritime Coalition
Marine Transportation	FogHorn
Recreation and Tourism	East CT Sailing Association
Recreation and Tourism	WindCheck