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A Newsletter from the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
Exploring Long Island Sound - Issues and Opportunities

Do You Need a Permit for That? Check with DEEP Before You Conduct Any Work on the Beach, in a Tidal Wetland, or in Coastal Waters

Summer arrived on June 21st, and after a long winter (and a spring that sometimes felt like winter), many of us are itching to get outside and commune with nature...and tidy up from winter's onslaught of debris and damage. While "smelling the roses" does not require any authorization from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), many kinds of work on your property could require advanced approval if your land contains beaches or tidal wetlands, or borders Long Island Sound, Connecticut's major rivers, or any of the many smaller rivers and creeks that you can reach from the Sound by kayak or canoe.

Laws regulating the use of property in these sensitive areas were created not to prohibit development or use of the coastal area, but to make sure that development proceeds wisely and balances private property rights with the protection of natural resources. They are the result of our increased awareness of the ecological importance of coastal resources and their connection to people, biologically and economically. For example, tidal wetland plants are vital in the food chain for many types of fish that are commercially and recreationally important, which is one of the many reasons that tidal wetlands are protected by law.

So how do you know if your activity along the coast or certain rivers might be regulated by DEEP?

The first simple rule-of-thumb is, if you're doing something in an area that gets wet from the tides, or is close to a river, or is located in or near a tidal wetland, it's a good bet you'll need some sort of authorization from DEEP.

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First Impressions

Column Shares the "First Impressions" that Make an Environmental Difference



Ramp leading to a float with pilings and a dingy

A residential ramp and float need authorization from DEEP
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

The "official" rule is, any work conducted waterward of the [Coastal Jurisdiction Line \(CJL\)](#) in the tidal, coastal, or navigable waters of the state and in tidal wetlands is [regulated by the DEEP](#).

Under state laws, "work" means, among other things, building, repairing, or replacing seawalls, rock slopes, piers, floats, ramps, or walkways. Since there are so many activities and areas that can be regulated, it is always a good idea to check-in with the friendly and knowledgeable coastal regulatory staff at DEEP before starting a new project or *any repair on an existing structure*.

That's right, another rule-of-thumb is, don't assume that if a structure has been in place for many years you can repair, replace, or modify it without approval. Even work on existing structures, like seawalls and docks when damaged and in need of repairs and/or maintenance, might still be subject to DEEP's regulatory authority.



Wooden walkway placed directly on top of tidal wetland vegetation

Walkways need to be adequately elevated over tidal wetland plants
This walkway is too low and is smothering the wetland beneath it
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

This column features the "First Impression" that set someone on his or her path to environmentalism. We hope *Sound Outlook* readers will relate to these "First Impressions" and recall their own experiences that led them to appreciate and care about Long Island Sound.

This issue features **Katie Dykes**, the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.



Katie Dykes became Commissioner of DEEP in January 2019 as a member of Governor Ned Lamont's new administration. Turns out, she is perfect for the job of being Commissioner of an agency where environmental protection and energy issues intersect. Indeed, that intersection has been a consistent thread throughout Katie Dykes' professional life. She is certainly no stranger to the agency, having served as Deputy Commissioner for Energy just after the DEP added the energy "E" and became DEEP in 2011, expanding to include energy policy and regulation in the agency's mix of environmental, conservation, and outdoor recreation responsibilities.

Raised in West Virginia, Commissioner Dykes is also no stranger to the concept that energy development can have direct impacts on the environment. Her interest in environmental protection can be traced back to as early as the second grade, when Commissioner Dykes advocated cleaning up the river in her hometown to protect the fish.

Her mother was a biology, chemistry, and environmental studies teacher, and Commissioner Dykes attributes her First Impression (and her First Environmental Step for a river clean-up) to her mother's influence, both in and outside the classroom:

I grew up in West Virginia and it is a beautiful, beautiful place, with lots of forests and fishing opportunities, and the Appalachian Mountains that we share with Connecticut. My mother would take us outdoors to hike and enjoy state parks and forests often. It was



A rock groin jutting out into Long Island Sound

Groins and jetties need DEEP authorization
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD



A seawall damaged by Storm Irene

Seawalls and other shoreline flood and erosion control structures
need DEEP authorization, even repairs to existing structures
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

DEEP has several abbreviated permit processes such as [General Permits](#) and [Certificates of Permission](#) that can reduce the amount of time DEEP needs to review a project and issue authorization. Activities allowed under these abbreviated processes include the maintenance dredging of maintained,

an important part of growing up there. For my fourth grade birthday party I insisted that we take everybody fishing! It was a great place to grow up and my mom really instilled that strong environmental ethic. She was also a very hands-on teacher, and through her environmental studies class she helped students understand environmental issues, not just in an abstract way, but also in terms of impacts in our communities. I think that's really where my awareness came from.

Commissioner Dykes didn't follow her mother into the science/technology/engineering/mathematics disciplines. Her primary interest was history, natural history in particular:

One of the things that fascinated me most as a kid was thinking about the natural history of places. When I read stories like Little House on the Prairie I was imagining what our ecosystems looked like 100 years ago. We did a lot of hiking in [Kanawha State Forest](#) and there was a Civilian Conservation Corps camp there, so I got to thinking about how that place had changed over time. It's always something that caught my attention, that our state parks and forests have a lot of history associated with them, the stories behind why they were preserved. I was always captivated by that, of how different the forest might have looked or how different landscapes looked earlier in our history.

Commissioner Dykes moved to Connecticut in 1995 to attend Yale University in New Haven where she pursued a double major in history and environmental studies:

I was really drawn to the history program at Yale, specifically environmental history. History has always been one of the great ways to connect with people and our planet, to wonder 'How did we get here?' What are the choices that have led to the challenges we're facing? History underlies everything--as a species, as human beings, what's our relationship to the natural environment and how has that changed over time? I think those are such fascinating questions.

At Yale I was a research assistant for Tom Siccama who focused on long-term ecosystem research. I learned a lot tromping around with him in his ecology classes. He took us to sites that he had been visiting since the 1980s, and he could tell you specific observed history: that tree was infested by gypsy moths, this salt marsh used to be farmed, here are the remnants of the 1938 hurricane which you can tell from all the trees that were blown down in the same direction. I thought that was really fascinating, the history you can find in ecology.

permitted dredged areas; the removal of derelict structures and vessels; beach grading; the repair, replacement, or slight modification of existing authorized structures; [the construction of 4/40 residential docks](#) (docks that do not extend further waterward than the distance to a depth of -4 feet mean low water or a distance of 40 feet from mean high water, whichever is shortest); [storm preparation and response activities](#); and conservation practices like [osprey platforms and perch poles](#).

Some of these licenses can also allow you to seek authorization of your structure if it is currently unauthorized and was in place before 1995.

New structures, dredging, or filling not covered by these shorter processes would likely need a [full individual permit](#).



Osprey feeding their young in a nest on an osprey platform

Yes, even osprey platforms need DEEP authorization--there's a General Permit for that!
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

Although it may seem like a daunting task, all it takes is a quick telephone call or e-mail to ask whether you need prior approval before you go ahead with your plans. Preparing an application and allowing time for approval avoids any complications that can stem from doing the work without authorization. So remember, please call or email the DEEP coastal regulatory program and consult with us before you undertake any work in an area that may be regulated by state law.

While at Yale, her love of hiking also inspired Commissioner Dykes to attempt a thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail:

I was a big consumer of old National Geographic magazines, and I remember reading an issue during high school that described thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail. That was the first time it occurred to me that you could do that. So I took a semester off in college to hike the trail, but like many people who start, I got 100 miles in and a hip injury forced me off the trail. I've since hiked bits and pieces of it. Someday...


Commissioner Dykes spent one of her summers during college at the [Hubbard Brook Ecosystem Study](#) in New Hampshire measuring trees and, as she recalls, getting eaten by blackflies. But another summer job in West Virginia brought the intersection of energy and environmental protection into sharp focus:

One of my most memorable jobs in college was working for a nonprofit organization that did home construction for low-income families in the coalfields of southern West Virginia. I connected with a lot of the families that we were serving in these areas, and many were being impacted by surface mining. Coal companies were buying-out some communities so that they could fill in those valleys with mining debris, and some families were seeing their drinking water supplies threatened. But the well-paying jobs that were provided by the industry presented some really stark challenges for these communities.

Commissioner Dykes then interned with an environmental lawyer in West Virginia who brought some of the early Clean Water Act cases challenging the impacts of mountaintop-removal coal mining. This experience sparked her interest in attending law school and getting involved in environmental policy and legal issues, particularly the intersection of energy and the environment.

However, upon graduating from Yale, Commissioner Dykes didn't immediately attend law school. Instead she participated in the [Luce Scholars Program](#):

After college I took a detour to Asia for two years working on biodiversity conservation in Mongolia. The project focused on supporting new national parks that had been developed right after the fall of the Soviet Union. I was 21 or 22 years old, learning firsthand about the biodiversity of the [Mongolian steppe](#)--unique species like Mongolian gazelles and rare freshwater salmon. I spent time with conservation biologists who were studying migration patterns and populations for many types of species that western scientists hadn't

 Side by side photos of dredged material being deposited into the dredge and then dewatered

Dredging activity needs DEEP authorization
Army Corps of Engineers [Dredge Currituck](#) during operation
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

For more information, please visit the [Coastal Permitting Process FAQs webpage](#), or contact Brian Golembiewski at 860.424.3867 and via email at brian.golembiewski@ct.gov, or Susan Jacobson at 860.424.3693 and via email at susan.jacobson@ct.gov to answer any questions you might have about your particular project. And then get out there and enjoy your summer!

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SPOTLIGHTED COASTAL RESOURCE: Protecting Coastal Resources Through the Coastal Regulatory Process

During their review of applications under the state's Structures, Dredging, and Fill regulatory authority, the friendly and knowledgeable staff in the DEEP's Land and Water Resources Division (LWRD) must consider a whole host of issues as they make their decision to issue--or deny--a permit. Those factors for consideration are spelled out in [Connecticut General Statutes \(CGS\) Section 22a-359\(a\)](#), and include issues that address coastal and inland navigation, recreational use of public waters, and the prevention or alleviation of shore erosion and coastal flooding.

But decisions must also be made with "due regard for indigenous aquatic life, fish and wildlife...and the interests of the state, including pollution control, water quality, and management of coastal resources..." to ensure that these important coastal resources are protected.

So how does DEEP LWRD staff reviewing an application give "due regard" to aquatic life, fish, wildlife, water quality and the management of coastal resources?

To start, the Connecticut Coastal Management Act (CCMA) defines specific coastal resources in Connecticut [CGS Section 22a-93(7)]. They are:

really had the opportunity to study. We worked with local communities to help support economic development that was compatible with protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Mongolia had also recently opened its borders to trade with China at that time, which spawned demand for wildlife products for medicinal use and furs. These wildlife products created a new income source for many rural households in the region. I led a study of illegal hunting as part of the project, working with park rangers in these protected areas in eastern Mongolia, many of whom were working on the study as volunteers or on a part-time basis. Our goal was to establish a system of legal hunting that would give hunters more predictability and reduce the risk of having their wildlife products confiscated, while at the same time generating funding for a sustainable wildlife management program, including fuel for rangers to conduct patrols.

Our study helped support an effort to amend Mongolia's hunting law, and I got to testify about it to a committee of the Mongolian Parliament! The amendment required that if a hunter wanted to sell wildlife products, they needed a tag to prove they were hunted legally. Otherwise the only way to document compliance was for a ranger to catch a poacher in the act, which was a big challenge for law enforcement in such a sparsely populated area. With data from our surveys of wildlife trade activity, we put together a cost benefit analysis to show how much revenue the Mongolian government could raise if these tags were required, and then we had to figure out how to produce the tags. The weather is so cold over there, we had to find something that was durable and wouldn't fail when it's -45°F. So I found myself calling around to manufacturers of concert wristbands to see at what temperature their adhesive no longer worked!

Being immersed in environmental awareness and the outdoors from an early age, Commissioner Dykes didn't have much opportunity for a Behavior Change to improve her already strong, mom-instilled environmental ethic. But her experiences in West Virginia and Mongolia coupled with her interest in natural history have made her think about the larger picture of how communities could adopt their own Behavior Change and make choices to prioritize the environment:

In all of the places I've worked, the principle challenge is to build a thriving economy that's compatible with environmental protection. No matter where you go, people want to have safe drinking water, clean air, they want their kids to be safe and healthy and they want

- coastal bluffs and escarpments
- rocky shorefronts
- beaches and dunes
- intertidal flats
- tidal wetlands
- freshwater wetlands and watercourses
- estuarine embayments
- coastal hazard areas
- developed shorefront
- islands
- nearshore waters
- offshore waters
- shorelands
- shellfish concentration areas



View of a tidal wetland marsh

Untreated stormwater discharges into tidal wetlands can upset the ecosystem's salinity and temperature
Photo Credit: CT DEEP

Applicants for activities in coastal areas must show these resources on their project plans if they exist in their project area. DEEP LWRD staff then review the proposed activity to see if the project will result in unacceptable adverse impacts to these resources. To assist in this critical task, the CCMA has defined specific "adverse impacts on coastal resources" in CGS Section 22a-93(15). These include but are not limited to:

- degrading water quality by introducing significant amounts of suspended solids, nutrients, toxics, heavy metals, or pathogens, or by significantly altering water temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, or salinity;
- degrading or destroying essential wildlife, finfish, or shellfish habitat by significantly altering migration patterns, species distribution, or breeding or other population characteristics of the natural species, or by significantly altering the natural components of their habitat; and
- degrading tidal wetlands, beaches and dunes, rocky shorefronts, and bluffs and escarpments by significantly altering their natural characteristics or function.

With these impacts in mind, DEEP LWRD staff review proposals to ensure that projects will not be detrimental to coastal resources. For example, a project cannot degrade water quality by introducing significant amounts of silt and sediment (e.g., unchecked land disturbance immediately next to coastal waters); or discharge significant amounts of freshwater into salt water environments (e.g., untreated stormwater runoff being discharged into a tidal wetland). Likewise, projects cannot destroy essential wildlife habitat or significantly alter migration patterns or habitat (e.g., interfering with fish migration upstream from Long Island Sound, or destroying submerged aquatic vegetation habitat like eelgrass); or significantly alter natural functions of beaches and dunes (e.g., constructing something in or completely bulldozing a sand dune that alters the dune's ability to absorb storm energy from waves and wind).

them to be able to stay in their communities and have jobs and a good economic future. Everyone wants that. And everyone deserves that.

As her "Big Step," Commissioner Dykes now heads up the state agency in Connecticut dedicated to conserving, improving, and protecting natural resources and the environment, as well as increasing the availability of cheaper, cleaner, and more reliable energy for all Connecticut families, especially those who face a large energy burden. But she also envisions her job as helping create opportunities for investment in economic development that can be an engine for better environmental quality:

How do you make it easier for those businesses that are delivering good environmental services and outcomes to do the environmentally right thing? Here in Connecticut we have the opportunity to build a clean energy economy, growing jobs in installing solar, electric vehicle charging, and offshore wind development. It's such a privilege to be part of a positive model here in Connecticut where our strong commitment to environmental protection also supports economic development that is delivering jobs and a cleaner and safer environment for families.

I'm a mom with three little kids, and I love experiencing through my children how they are learning about the environment and the importance of protecting our planet. To my six-year-old, it's just an obvious thing that we need to take care of the earth. How do we make it easier for grown-ups to be able to contribute to environmental protection, and prioritize it in their life and in their work and in our economy?

Commissioner Dykes has a long history of working to make environmental protection and conservation compatible with economic development, which makes her uniquely qualified to lead the DEEP into the future:

Connecticut has a legacy of commitment to natural resource abundance and environmental protection. We've built an economy where our environmental advantage is our economic advantage. The investments that we've made securing high-quality drinking water supplies, or investing in clean energy opportunities, those are driving both our environment and our economic advantage.

There are so many people in this state working hard, thousands of people volunteering their time working with their local land trusts, advocates, scientists and environmental professionals, people who have dedicated their careers to have a positive



A scallop on a blade of eelgrass

Eelgrass and other submerged aquatic vegetation are essential habitat for scallops and other wildlife, and are protected through the state's coastal regulatory process
Photo Credit: Long Island Sound Resource Center



Dunes at Harkness State Park that were damaged by Storm Sandy

Dunes perform several important functions, such as providing protection during coastal storms
The state's coastal regulatory program, in turn, protects dunes
These dunes at Harkness State Park provided protection during Storm Sandy
Photo Credit: CT DEEP

It doesn't matter if the proposed activity is a residential dock, ramp and float, or a walkway over tidal wetlands, or a jetty, or a seawall, or a dredging project. The factors for consideration under Connecticut's coastal regulatory program help DEEP LWRD staff ensure that whatever activity is proposed doesn't result in unacceptable adverse impacts to coastal resources.

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environmental impact. We have very engaged legislators, municipal leaders, environmental advocates, community leaders, businesses, and families who partner with us. We may not always agree on how to get things done, but people largely agree on the priorities of trying to solve climate change, protect our environment, and support outdoor recreational activities.

It's great to come to work every day to help support everyone in reaching our mission. I had worked on energy issues so much for the last couple years, reconnecting with environmental quality and outdoor recreation and wildlife over the last couple months has been so wonderful. We have an amazing, incredibly talented team here at DEEP. I think one of the most thrilling parts of these first few months on the job for me, honestly, is getting to help support an incredibly knowledgeable and dedicated team of professionals here in this agency. It's very humbling. People ask, "What are your top three priorities, what is it that you want to get done?" And when you get to know the breadth of this department and our very diverse set of programs, you realize we're not getting three things done, we're getting 3,000 things done!

For those who might have been concerned that Katie Dykes was "too much energy, not enough environment" when she was selected to be DEEP Commissioner, her vast and varied experience should put those concerns to rest. From her early childhood experiences with hiking and fishing, to her conservation wildlife studies and establishment of a legal hunting program in Mongolia, to her work on the legal issues associated with water quality impacts from coal mining operations in West Virginia, Katie Dykes couldn't be better suited for the job.

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Fisherman collecting shellfish

Intertidal flats are important habitat for shellfish concentration areas and for shellfishers
Photo Credit: CT DEEP



The LIS fund supports projects in the areas of education, public access to the shoreline, habitat restoration, and research.

Long Island Sound Blue Plan Update: What's Next?

After three years, three public hearings, six regional public meetings, and countless webinars, phone calls, and meetings with interested stakeholders, organizations, and commissions, the 90-day public comment period for the [Long Island Sound Blue Plan](#) closed on June 21, 2019.



The legislation that authorized development of the Blue Plan [[Connecticut General Statutes \(CGS\) Section 25-157t](#)] requires that the Commissioner of DEEP adopt a final draft of the Long Island Sound Resource and Use Inventory and the Long Island Sound Blue Plan not later than 90 days after the end of the public comment period . So DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes will work with the Blue Plan Advisory Committee and the Development Team through mid-September 2019 to review of all of the comments received during the public comment period, and make revisions to the Plan to address those comments as warranted.

Once the Plan has been revised to address all pertinent comments, the final draft of the Plan will be ready for submittal to the Connecticut General Assembly for consideration during the upcoming legislative session that starts in February 2020.

The legislature's Environment Committee will then hold its own public hearing on the final draft plan, and that Committee will make recommendations to the full legislature as to whether or not the final plan meets the intent of CGS Section 25-157t and should be approved.

The Blue Plan Advisory Committee and Blue Plan Development Team will post updates on the Blue Plan website (www.ct.gov/deep/lisblueplan) and reach out through the [Blue Plan listserv](#) once the revised final draft of the Plan is available. The intent is that the final draft of the Blue Plan will reflect the sectors and

resources it seeks to represent so the Plan will enjoy smooth sailing through the legislative review and approval process in 2020.



Sailboat on Long Island Sound

The hope for the Long Island Sound Blue Plan: Smooth sailing ahead
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

The work doesn't stop once the Blue Plan is approved by the legislature. The DEEP Commissioner and the Long Island Sound Blue Plan Advisory Committee will continue to monitor Plan implementation and solicit input from stakeholders and the public. In fact, the Advisory Committee is required by statute to meet quarterly every year once the Plan is approved by the legislature, and the Commissioner of DEEP must hold one public hearing each year to gain feedback on how well the Plan is being implemented, consider emerging topics, and determine whether revisions to the Plan are necessary to address any unforeseen issues that might have arisen during implementation. If revisions are necessary, they must also go through the same process as the initial Plan and get legislative approval.

Information about the Long Island Sound Blue Plan can be found at www.ct.gov/deep/lisblueplan. To receive updates about the Plan, please join the [Blue Plan listserv](#).



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**SPOTLIGHTED COASTAL ACCESS:
It's Called "Sound View" for a Good Reason**

Street names can be pretty self-explanatory and helpful to travelers. For example, Stratford Avenue in Bridgeport will eventually lead you into Stratford. Essex Road in Westbrook will eventually lead you into Essex. But Hartford Avenue in Old Lyme does *not* lead you into Hartford! Quite the contrary, Hartford Avenue in Old Lyme leads you to [Sound View Beach](#). And while the road might not be fittingly named, the beach certainly is. Hartford Avenue ends at the beach which offers sweeping views of Long Island Sound.

Sound View Beach offers sunbathing and swimming, with several shops and places to eat within walking distance. There is no lifeguard on duty, so swimmers do so at their own risk. The beach is open from sunrise to sunset, and visitors should plan to arrive early since parking and upland space for blankets is limited.



View of Long Island Sound

The View of the Sound from Sound View Beach
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

The upland public beach area at Sound View is limited because it is nestled between two fences that mark private beaches along either side. But the roughly 28 paces of shoreline from fence-to-fence is not the only shorefront available for public use. Those private beach fences must end at the mean high water mark, because that's where the "public beach" begins throughout the State of Connecticut. Connecticut's shore belongs to the public in a specific legal sense: Under the common law Public Trust Doctrine, a body of law dating back to Roman times, all coastal states, as "sovereigns," hold the submerged lands and waters waterward of the mean high water line in trust for the public. The

general public may freely use these lands and waters, whether they are beach, rocky shore, or open water, for traditional public trust uses such as fishing, shellfishing, boating, seaweed gathering, sunbathing, or simply walking along the beach.



Private beach fences alongside the public beach at Sound View beach in Old Lyme

Sound View Beach is open to the public, but it is located between two fences that delimit private beaches on either side
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

On the ground, the public trust area extends from the water up to a prominent wrack line, debris line, or water mark on the beach. In general, if an area is regularly wet by the tides, you are probably safe to assume that it is in the public trust. That means the public is well within its right to walk along the shore or sunbathe on this lower, wetter portion of the beach, even if fences prevent us from using the dry upland portion of the private beach.

A private beach landowner may not exclude the public from lawful uses of the public trust area, just as an upland owner cannot exclude the public from driving or walking on the street in front of their house. That means the public can legally stroll along Sound View's neighboring beaches or sunbathe as long as they remain on the wet sand area, where a beach chair is probably preferred to a blanket for sunbathing or reading the latest book on your summer reading list.

Parking for Sound View is available at the town's parking lot, on-street spaces on Hartford Avenue, and permitted private parking lots. The Sound View Parking Lot and Hartford Avenue Street parking are "Pay-to-Park" from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. After 6:00 pm parking is free, and

the parking lot closes at 9:00 pm. Parking fees are \$5.00 per two hours on weekdays and \$7.00 per two hours on weekends and holidays. It's a two-hour minimum, so you can pay for up to eight hours at once or go back to Kiosk and add time as needed. Privately owned and permitted parking lots are also available: 3 on Swan Avenue, 3 on Portland Avenue, and 1 on Pond Road. Those parking fees are determined by the lot operators. Be sure to check the [Town of Old Lyme's beach webpage](#) for any updated information.



[The Beach Rules board at Sound View Beach in Old Lyme](#)

Be sure to follow the rules when you visit Sound View
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

When you're done strolling along beach, head back up to Hartford Avenue where you'll find Italian ice and ice cream. And those yummy beach donuts from yesteryear are still available on weekends at the Shoreline Community Center starting at 7:00 am until they run out, which is another good reason to get to Sound View early! If you're staying late, try to grab the brass ring on [the 1925 Allan Hershell Carousel](#) which is open from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm from Memorial Day to Labor Day.



Carousel horses in Old Lyme

Ride a "sea" horse at the Sound View carousel
Photo Credit: DEEP LWRD

After you take in the view of the Sound from Old Lyme, you can view the [Connecticut Coastal Access Guide](#) and find information on more than 300 other sites where the public can access Connecticut's coast.

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Climate Change Update: CIRCA--Five Years and Rising!

Five years ago this past January, Governor Malloy announced the creation of a "Connecticut Center for Coasts." The initiating legislation for the creation of the center was Special Act 13-9, signed by the Governor on June 6, 2013. (Please see the [June 2014 issue of Sound Outlook](#) for more background.)

Later dubbed "CIRCA" (Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation), the Institute was designed to increase the resilience and sustainability of vulnerable communities and individuals along Connecticut's coast and inland waterways as they are affected by the growing

impact of climate change on the environment. In May 2014 CT DEEP and UConn signed a Memorandum of Understanding making it official that CIRCA is a collaboration between both entities. In July 2014 Dr. James O'Donnell was appointed Executive Director of CIRCA, overseeing the Institute's staff located at the UConn Avery Point Campus. CT DEEP leadership serves on the Executive Steering Committee, which guides the selection and evaluation of projects and the effectiveness of outreach programs. DEEP staff also contribute guidance and technical expertise to CIRCA funded projects.

Base funding for CIRCA staff and grant programs initially came, in part, from DEEP Supplemental Environmental Project funds, and a federal grant administered by the Connecticut Department of Housing to enhance municipal resilience in Connecticut. CIRCA's programs help communities identify critical infrastructure that is at risk from Sea Level Rise (SLR) and other climate change impacts, measure their vulnerability, and identify ways to reduce that vulnerability. In 2017, CIRCA was awarded National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Resilience Grant funds to monitor, evaluate, and provide recommendations for the design and placement of living shorelines.

In 2012, NOAA released global sea level rise scenarios, and CIRCA was required by Public Act 18-82 to update these scenarios and develop a local sea level change scenario for Connecticut. CIRCA recommended that Connecticut plan for up to 20 inches (50cm) of sea level rise higher than the national tidal datum in Long Island Sound by 2050, and also suggested that it is likely that sea level will continue to rise after that date. The Institute also recommends that the scenarios be updated at least every 10 years, or more frequently, to incorporate the best available science and new observations. In 2018, CIRCA released a final report, Sea Level Rise in Connecticut and developed a Connecticut Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge Viewer tool (please see the [February/March 2018 issue of Sound Outlook](#) for more information).

Public Act 18-82 also authorized [DEEP to publish Connecticut's sea level change scenarios](#), and requires that all future state projects located in the coastal boundary that are either undertaken by a state agency or funded by a state/federal grant or loan to meet CIRCA's SLR projections.

Most recently, CIRCA in coordination with DEEP and other state agencies, regional councils of governments, and municipalities, initiated [Resilient Connecticut](#) through Phase II of the HUD National Disaster Resilience Competition. Resilient Connecticut's guiding principle is to establish resilient communities through smart planning that incorporates economic development framed around resilient transit-oriented development, conservation strategies, and critical infrastructure improvements. The project will provide the state with a regionally focused Climate Adaptation Planning Framework piloted in the Superstorm Sandy-impacted regions of New Haven and Fairfield Counties. The project will also generate recommendations for a Statewide Resilience Roadmap that includes regional resilience planning, policy consideration, and actionable priorities.

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