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

Living Shorelines: What's in a Name?

During the 1900s, as people moved closer and closer to the shoreline, waterfront property owners in Connecticut often tried to address occasional flooding or erosion problems through the use of hardened structures such as seawalls and revetments. However, coastal scientists have found that many of these structures can interrupt the natural coastal sedimentation process, and can even increase the rate of erosion. Eventually, many of these hardened shoreline approaches cause unintended impacts to adjacent properties or resources and, ultimately, fail. The legislature acknowledged this problem and enacted the Connecticut Coastal Management Act (CCMA) in 1980. The CCMA includes specific policies that limit the use of hard shoreline flood and erosion control structures to only a few very specific circumstances. In the aftermath of the tropical storms Irene (August, 2011) and Sandy (October, 2012), the legislature recognized the need for even more resilient shoreline protection measures and created incentives for softer shoreline treatments such as living shorelines.

At its essence, a living shoreline is simply a shoreline management measure that includes natural features to reduce water's effect on the shoreline. Seems simple enough, right? Well, unfortunately, it's more complicated than that.

While it would be convenient to have one definition for "living shoreline" in the industry, that is not the case. What technically constitutes a living shoreline can differ from state to state and between state and federal agencies. Further complicating it, some groups even use different names for the same living shoreline techniques. For example, the US Army Corps of Engineers uses the term "natural and nature based-approaches" while others generalize the practice as "green infrastructure."

Regardless of what you call it, a living shoreline is a nature-based approach to managing shoreline areas--that is, using natural materials and living resources to protect, restore, enhance, or create shoreline habitat. Coastal resources such as dunes and tidal wetlands are intrinsically resilient to erosion. They also provide critical habitat value, and maintain the natural water-land interface important to

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a number of coastal species such as fish, horseshoe crabs, and turtles.

After storms Irene and Sandy, the state began investigating ways to promote the implementation of living shoreline applications in Connecticut. While DEEP has been promoting this approach for a few years, only a few applications have been submitted for this type of work. This is, in part, due to the lack of practitioner experience in Connecticut and homeowner's uncertainty that surrounds these approaches. In response, the Office of Long Island Sound Programs partnered with UConn's Climate Adaptation Academy to offer a series of Living Shoreline workshops to get the word out.

The first two workshops held in 2015 introduced the basic concepts of living shorelines and highlighted some of the design factors for consideration in Connecticut. A variety of environmental consulting firms also showcased a number of successful living shoreline projects from neighboring states including New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. These two workshops provided a foundation for the participants to build on at the third and final workshop in the series, held in September 2016.

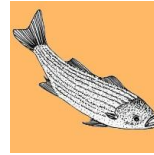
The final workshop, held at Harkness State Park in Waterford, was a really exciting day where participants worked collaboratively to design mock living shoreline projects. Attendees collaboratively used the park's different waterfront types--a beach, a bluff, and tidal creeks--as models for coastal conditions found along the Connecticut coast. Technical staff from GEI Consultants, DEEP, and Connecticut Sea Grant provided guidance to the teams as they developed their mock projects. A panel consisting of staff from DEEP, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Connecticut Sea Grant, and the Town of Waterford provided regulatory feedback to the design teams at the end of the day.



Participants at the September 2016 Living Shoreline Workshop
Photo Credit: DEEP

[Hammonasset Beach State Park](#)

[Climate Change Update: Long Island Sound Study Climate Change Website](#)



First Impressions

Sharing the "First Impressions" that Make an Environmental Difference

According to Erik Eckl, the founder of [Water Words that Work](#), his market research shows that there is a common progression among people who consider themselves to be "environmentalists." It starts with a "first impression" or experience that then makes them take a first environmental step. This step is usually then followed by a greater environmental awareness and a behavior change, and ultimately results in a "big step," such as choosing an environmental career.

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 month, we highlight the First Impression of Sylvain De Guise, Director of [Connecticut Sea Grant](#). Sylvain is a member of the Long Island Sound Blue Plan Advisory Committee and Chairman of the Plan's Inventory and Science Subcommittee:

Overall, the exercise was very enlightening. DEEP officials found that many participants had a solid grasp of the living shoreline concepts, but others struggled to avoid the old structural approaches. Overall, feedback from the workshop was positive.

DEEP hopes to see more living shoreline projects in the future, but as evidenced by the workshop panel, the regulatory requirements for living shorelines projects vary by location and type of project. So please contact the Permitting Section Supervisors, [Jeff Caiola](#) at 860.424.4162 for the West and [Brian Golembiewski](#) at 860.424.3867 for the East, to ensure that any living shoreline application is processed as smoothly as possible.

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DEEP's Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse Undergoes Reorganization

There is nothing permanent except change. - Heraclitus

At first glance, it appeared that several retirements in the DEEP's Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse (WPLR) Inland Water Resources Division would have numerous negative consequences. The shrinking state budget and resulting hiring freeze meant that all vacant positions, including director of the division, would not be refilled. The remaining division staff would be leaderless while continuing to take on the additional responsibilities of their retired colleagues.

Rather than fall prey to a gloom and doom philosophy, the WPLR Bureau Chief saw opportunity.

Betsey Wingfield used these vacancies to reassess WPLR's various programs and functions. With input from staff on how to maintain bureau effectiveness and fulfill its mission, the Bureau Chief re-positioned staff to better adapt to changing conditions. As a result, WPLR has now been reorganized to consolidate the bureau's four former divisions into three, realigning the Office of Long Island Sound Programs, Inland Water Resources Division, and Planning and Standards Division into two entities. In addition, there are some changes and new assignments within the Remediation Division to accommodate the reorganization.

The newly reorganized divisions in WPLR are:

Land and Water Resources Division:

- Coastal resource management including outreach and habitat restoration under the Long Island Sound Study;
- Site-specific inland and coastal land-use permitting in the northern, southwest coastal, and southeast coastal regions;
- Municipal planning assistance and outreach, including coastal management, aquifer protection, harbor management, and municipal inland wetlands, and development of the Blue Plan; and
- Enforcement

Water Planning and Management Division:

- Ambient monitoring and Long Island Sound Study water quality;
- Nonpoint source/watershed planning and implementation;
- Water quantity planning and management;

 Image of Sylvain De Guise

Sylvain grew up on the banks of the St. Lawrence River in the small town of Sorel, Quebec, an hour northeast of Montreal. For his family, being on the water was a way of life. Swimming and fishing were popular activities, and everyone owned a boat. This family bond with the waters of the St. Lawrence River was Sylvain's "First Impression":

My dad is one of nine children, and they grew up right on the St. Lawrence. On Sunday mornings they would swim home from church, and their mom would carry their clothes and shoes back with her. There are 103 islands where I grew up, it was one of the hot spots for duck hunting in eastern Canada. My dad's aunt had a cottage on one of the islands, and all of my aunts and uncles had boats. We'd take a boat and go fishing, come back and take another boat to go waterskiing. I was born in the middle of September and my mother was boating until the end of August!

Sylvain's "First Step" was tied to his desire to share his love of the river with friends:

Even when I was young, what was a normal way of life and what was so much fun for us was not necessarily an experience that everybody could share. I had friends who lived in the same town and grew up in the same area whose families did not own

- Water quality planning; and
- Infrastructure management, planning and oversight (wastewater treatment plants, state dams, and dam safety)

This reorganization will give WPLR staff a chance to learn new skills across long-established program boundaries. This cross-training will eventually allow WPLR to better respond to subsequent gaps caused by any future vacancies. Overall, WPLR will remain effective and efficient in carrying out its fundamental mission. Which is by no means small change.

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Blue Plan Update

Development of the Blue Plan for Long Island Sound continues at a fast and furious pace! The Blue Plan Advisory Committee has established an Inventory and Science Subcommittee led by Sylvain De Guise of UConn/Connecticut Sea Grant (please see the ["First Impressions" column](#) for more about Sylvain) and a Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee led by Nathan Frohling of The Nature Conservancy.

Three work teams have also been established to support the work of the subcommittees:

1. Ecological Characterization Work Team,
2. Data and Mapping Work Team, and
3. Human Use Characterization Work Team



Ferry and barge on Long Island Sound

Multiple Users of Long Island Sound
Photo Credit: DEEP OLISP

The Inventory and Science Subcommittee is currently working to assess the inventory of data that pertains to the plants, animals, habitats, and ecologically significant areas in the nearshore and offshore waters and substrates of Long Island Sound to determine if the data accurately reflects the "state of the Sound" as we know it. This will entail working with experts and users of the Sound to determine if the data is sufficient, which will identify data gaps if it isn't.

The Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee is also working with experts and users of the Sound to support the data inventory efforts and make sure all voices

boats. I remember taking friends boating for a day and they were so happy, they couldn't believe how nice it was and that whole thing was right in their backyard and they were not aware of it. And I can draw a parallel with a lot of people in Connecticut that have not had that first impression seeing the state from the water. It is so different from driving by a road that is close to the water. It's so much more than that.

Although the St. Lawrence River played a major role in Sylvain's upbringing, his career path was not related to the environment. Sylvain went to veterinary school with the idea of starting a conventional practice. But his second year of vet school changed that path:

When I went to vet school I was going to be a vet and have a practice with maybe some cattle and maybe some small animals, but I was on the same path as everybody else. In my second year of vet school I got really interested in pathology, and then I got to meet a couple of people that were working with whales. The whole idea that the whales in the St. Lawrence were likely among the most polluted animals on the planet, but they live in such a wild and pristine, good-looking area, and that they would suffer from chemicals that were man-made and that were released along the industrial corridor-the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence-that was a big realization for me. It was the "A-ha!" moment.

The switch from conventional veterinary medicine to studying the impacts of pollution on the St. Lawrence River beluga whale population was Sylvain's "Behavior Change," which ultimately led to his "Big Step": a career devoted to the environment. He was reminded of the advisories he would hear

are heard in the Blue Plan planning process.



Shellfishermen in Long Island Sound

Shellfishing in Long Island Sound
Photo Credit: DEEP OLISP

In an effort to provide an overview of the Blue Plan process and solicit public feedback on the issues and goals associated with the plan, there will be a public event at the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk on Wednesday November 16, 2016 from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm. Refreshments will be served from 6:30 to 7:00, followed by a screening of a documentary about ocean planning. The film will be followed by a panel for a back-and-forth flow of information about how stakeholders (e.g., fishermen, boaters, environmentalists, marine trades, etc.) and the general public will play an important role in shaping the Blue Plan. The event is free, please [register here](#).

about as a kid, warning swimmers not to swallow water because of high bacteria counts:

I think my behavior change was to choose to dedicate the rest of my working life to something I cared about. But through that, I mean, you have to go back 25-30 years. That's when you opened up a bottle of something and you threw the bottle cap in the water. That's just what people did. So when we did outreach through our work with belugas, I was often asked to go speak at someone's grade school. And the kids would start talking about, "Yeah but it's normal to throw things in the water, right?" And I'd say yeah, it's normal but there's consequences. And years later I met a friend of mine whose kid was in one of those classes in grade school. He said they'd go fishing and he'd have a beer and toss the cap in the water, and his son goes, "Dad! What are you doing?! You're killing all the belugas! It's your fault!" And he said, "I've never thrown anything in the water again." So that was an interesting turning point. I was surprised at the impact that one can have on the next generation: one, it's a lifetime impact; and number two, is to understand that even in grade school, kids can make the link between belugas and PCBs and throwing stuff in the water, even if it's just the one cap from that one bottle that you have, it's the sum total of that.

After earning his PhD, Sylvain continued his studies with a 3-year post-doctorate position at the University of California Davis, where pathology met "chemistry":

At the end of my PhD I got a fellowship from the Medical Research Foundation of Canada, which is kind of the equivalent to the NIH, to go do



a 3-year post doc wherever I wanted. And I chose California because there were a couple of real smart people whose work in marine mammals and their fundamental work with rats and mice was the cutting edge of the state of science at that time, which would allow me to advance what I was doing with whales. So I drove across the country and I got to the lab after driving for a week or so. Instead of putting me right to work, they said, "We have a Halloween party tonight, why don't you come?" And I met one of the vet students that was doing research part-time and in the summer in that lab, who ended up becoming my wife. So I met her the very first night I got to California.

Sylvain's career path then brought him and his wife from the west coast to the east coast, leaving California for Connecticut. He joined the University of Connecticut's Department of Pathobiology and Veterinary Science where he taught classes, conducted research, and participated in the diagnostic lab performing necropsies on dead animals (dogs, cats, cows, horses, etc.) to determine the cause of death. Since 2005 Sylvain has been director of Connecticut's Sea Grant Program. While he's no longer teaching or working in the diagnostic lab, Sylvain maintains the research program, dividing his time between Storrs where his research lab is located and the Avery Point campus in Groton where the Sea Grant Program is based. And Sylvain has been involved in some important research:

My experience with the belugas in the St. Lawrence launched my 25+ year career in trying to better understand the links between exposure to man-made and natural toxicants on the potential associated health

You can also stay up-to-date on all things Blue Plan by visiting the [Blue Plan Advisory Committee webpage](#). The next meeting of the Advisory Committee is scheduled for Wednesday December 7, 2016 from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon at Fort Trumbull, New London. All are welcome to attend.

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Long Island Sound Report Card Shows Some Improvement

Another Long Island Sound Report Card was issued on October 6, 2016 by researchers at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. They issued the first report card in 2014 that [reflected the health of the Sound as measured during 2013](#). The new report card reflects the [health of the Sound during 2015](#). And it appears that there has been some improvement.



The 2015 Long Island Sound Report Card (above) shows some improvement in the western Sound over the 2013 Report Card (below)



The report card grades the health of the Sound based on specific "indicators." These include water quality indicators like nutrients, dissolved oxygen, and water clarity. Overall, these water quality indicators in Long Island Sound had good grades, except for nutrients which had a moderate grade. Again, there are no surprises in this report card, which shows that the far-western Sound continues to suffer from poor grades. But the waters off the western Connecticut coast showed improvement, which is certainly cause for celebration. And it's an indicator that water quality management efforts are on the right track.

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effects in aquatic species, ranging from marine mammals to fish and invertebrates such as oysters and lobsters, working on issues that range from local (lobster die off in Long Island Sound in the late 90's) to national and international (assessing the effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on bottlenose dolphins). That's my lab.

The opportunity to lead Sea Grant was another eye opener, with opportunities to participate and influence a broad range of coastal and marine issues ranging from shellfish aquaculture to coastal community resilience, caring about ecosystems and educating the next generation of leaders and citizens. It is really "Science Serving the Coasts" in action. It is a privilege to be part of a national program that has the flexibility to address local priorities in a manner that makes a difference. And I think Sea Grant can do that because our staff members live, work, and recreate in the communities they serve.

In the end, I think things have come full circle. I first learned to love the coast. Then learned to understand the influence that humans can have on coastal and marine ecosystems, and I am now working with communities and organizations to find solutions to pressing issues, so that people can continue to love the coast for generations to come.

With Sylvain's impressive background, we're lucky to have him involved in developing the Blue Plan for Long Island Sound!

**View past issues of
[Sound Outlook](#)**

SPOTLIGHTED COASTAL RESOURCE: Beaches and Dunes Hazard Guide for Coastal Property Owners

Regular readers of *Sound Outlook* know that we have sung the praises of beaches and dunes numerous times in past issues. These important coastal resources, by their very nature, are ever-changing systems that erode or collect sand transported by waves, tides, currents along the shore, and the wind. They also do yeoman's work, providing critical, unique nesting habitat for some shore birds and turtles while also providing recreational opportunities, a delicate balance in many areas. And, as we experienced first-hand during Tropical Storms Irene and Sandy, beaches and dunes act as an important buffer to coastal flooding and erosion, helping reduce the powerful energy of storm waves.



Beaches and dunes protected homes during Tropical Storm Sandy, October 2012
Photo Credit: Civil Air Patrol

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**Look Out For These Other
Upcoming Events!**

**Long Island Sound Study
(LISS)
[Committee Meetings](#)**

**Please be sure to check the
[Calendar of Events](#) on
DEEP's website**

**November: Harbor seals arrive
in LIS from northern New
England; winter flounder move
into shallower water**

**December: Bald eagles return
to Connecticut for the winter**



But Tropical Storm Sandy eroded an area behind a seawall
Photo Credit: Civil Air Patrol

As mentioned in this issue's living shorelines article, before the passage of the Connecticut Coastal Management Act (CCMA), coastal property owners commonly installed hard structures like seawalls to prevent property erosion, often with damaging consequences. Then came the CCMA in 1980, promoting policies that recognize the important functions of beaches and dunes and protect them from adverse impacts. In general, the CCMA tries to make sure that uses such as recreation and construction are beach- and dune-friendly and don't unreasonably interfere with the natural processes of collecting sand or eroding it. The CCMA also encourages the restoration and enhancement of disturbed beaches and dunes, and the maintenance and protection of healthy ones.

Connecticut Sea Grant has developed a tool for coastal property owners to help them consider using erosion control techniques supported by the CCMA. The online [Hazard Guide for Coastal Property Owners](#) can help property owners evaluate threats to their property and identify what they can do to protect their coastal property and the natural environment.

The website gives background information about the variety of Connecticut's beaches and dunes and the different sources of erosion. It also provides a [beach, dune, and coastal flooding checklist](#) that helps identifies things to look for to determine if the beach is eroding, as well as the different actions to consider to deal with beach erosion. Many of these action will likely be familiar to *Sound Outlook* readers: moving landward, designing appropriately with beach-friendly setbacks, nourishing the beach, constructing a living shoreline, and enhancing and protecting dunes by building dune paths and planting beach grass, all techniques that have been promoted in past issues of *Sound Outlook*.

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National Estuarine Research Reserve Update

The effort to designate a Long Island Sound National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in Connecticut has continued through the summer, with the site selection team organizing and meeting several times.

Using guidance from NOAA and the NERR Steering Committee, these meetings have focused on collecting and processing information needed to evaluate potential areas for a NERR.

The meeting materials and notes are available on the [NERR project web page](#).

Subsequent meetings in the early Fall will center on identifying three to five finalist sites. Once the finalists are selected, a public presentation will be scheduled to describe the selection rationale, explain the next steps, and begin to seek additional input from relevant parties. The evaluation of the finalist sites is expected to continue into the Summer/Fall of 2017.

For additional information about the Connecticut NERR, please contact [Kevin O'Brien](#) at 860.424.3432.

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SPOTLIGHTED COASTAL ACCESS: New Meigs Point Nature Center Opens at Hammonasset Beach State Park

Hammonasset Beach State Park is among the oldest and is the most visited of Connecticut's state parks. The largest shoreline park with 1,100 acres and over 2 miles of beach, Hammonasset officially opened in July 1920 and now hosts over 2 million visitors a year. To help introduce those visitors to the natural wonders of the park, the Meigs Point Nature Center opened its doors on June 27, 1972.

However, after over four decades of providing environmental interpretation services, the Nature Center was beginning to show its age. After more than ten years of planning, design, and construction, the new [Meigs Point Nature Center](#) opened on May 26, 2016. Using the most current environmental interpretation technology, the new 4,000 square foot, \$4 million Nature Center provides park visitors with new ways to understand and appreciate Hammonasset Beach State Park and Connecticut's coastal environments. The Nature Center welcomed over 1,500 visitors in its first month of operation!



Image of new Meigs Point Nature Center

New Meigs Point Nature Center
Photo Credit: David Kozak/DEEP

Located steps away from the old facility that now serves as the Center's administrative support center, the new Nature Center more than doubles the display space available to teach visitors about the park's natural resources, using solar and geothermal energy to help light and heat the facility.

Living examples of native flora and fauna and the latest interactive digital media are used to explain the environments found at Hammonasset through the themes of: (1) Into the Air; (2) At the Beach; (3) Into the Woods. and (4) In the Water. Displays organized around these themes describe how coastal ecosystems function and what visitors might look for when exploring these environments in the park, including the sandy beach, rocky shore, and tidal marsh.

The ever-popular touch tank is one of the more "hands-on" exhibits at the Nature Center. Visitors get to experience up-close some of the live animals that make their home around the park, including sea stars, snails, whelks, clams, and periwinkles. Traveling touch tank programs are also available through the Nature Center using tanks that were donated in memory of Joan Brown Hoelzel, a beloved friend and DEEP colleague who was born and raised in Madison, worked for the Office of Long Island Sound Programs, and loved Long Island Sound.



Image of a Great Blue Heron in the building shingles

Great Blue Heron Inlay
Photo Credit: David Kozak

Although his primary audience is the thousands of school children he teaches each year, Nature Center Director "Ranger Russ" reminds potential visitors that Meigs Point Nature Center is not just for kids. Adults, too, will enjoy learning about Connecticut's coastal ecosystems and can also test their knowledge with the interactive displays.

The Meigs Point Nature Center is open from 10 am to 5 pm Tuesday through Sunday from March to November, and 10 am to 4 pm Tuesday through Sunday from December through February. As fall turns to winter, the Nature Center is the perfect place to spend an afternoon!

For more information on [Hammonasset Beach State Park](#) and the more than 300 other places open to the public on Connecticut's coastal waters, please visit the [Connecticut Coastal Access Guide](#).

Purchase of a LIS License Plate Supports the LIS Fund



For information on ordering a Long Island Sound License Plate, call 1-800-CT-SOUND.

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Climate Change Update: Long Island Sound Study Climate Change Website

The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) National Estuary Program has launched a web-based resource guide to help environmental managers, municipal officials, and the public learn about and address the impacts of climate change.

The LISS first began incorporating climate change priorities into its management programs in 2008 with the creation of a Climate Change and Sentinel Monitoring Program to provide early warning of climate change impacts to Long Island Sound ecosystems, species and processes so these impacts could be managed and addressed. These warnings are based on the results of monitoring of climate-related changes to a set of indicators, or "sentinels," that were recommended by LISS technical advisory work groups. Examples of sentinels include loss or changes in the functions of ecosystems like tidal wetlands, and changes in species populations, including both the loss of and introduction of new species resulting from warmer water in Long Island Sound.

By 2011, a Sentinel Monitoring Strategy was developed and pilot projects began monitoring sites around Long Island Sound. The LISS also created [Sentinel Monitoring for Climate Change web pages](#) to provide information about the program for the public, environmental managers, and scientists.

The program has now moved into the second phase of the 'Strategy' to equip and educate the public with climate adaptation and resilience strategies. So, the LISS Communications Team, working with the Climate Change Sentinel Monitoring Work Group has developed a new website to help Long Island Sound residents, educators, and municipal officials learn more about climate change issues that can impact Long Island Sound.

The [Climate Change in Long Island Sound: A Long Island Sound Resource Guide](#) is divided into four sections:

1. What You Should Know: a primer on key concepts about climate change as well as access to web resources, including indicators of climate change in Long Island Sound.
2. Town and City Resources: a portal providing links to what communities are doing to adapt to climate change and reduce greenhouse emissions, including cases studies from five Long Island Sound communities.
3. Science and Monitoring: examples of research and monitoring being conducted in Long Island Sound.
4. Educators' Toolbox: resources for teaching about Earth's climate system and the changing climate, including "Science Spotlights" of local scientists conducting climate change research, and highlights of a teachers' workshop on climate change.

Visit the DEEP website at www.ct.gov/deep

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We strongly encourage *Sound Outlook* readers to explore the LISS Climate Change Resource Guide. The wealth of information will help Connecticut become more resilient and better equipped to address climate change impacts.

proficiency in English and may need information in another language; or if you wish to file an ADA or Title VI discrimination complaint. Any person needing a hearing accommodation may call the State of Connecticut relay number--711. Requests for accommodations must be made at least two weeks prior to any agency hearing, program, or event.

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