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

**Summer 2021
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Connecticut General Assembly Approves the Long Island Sound Blue Plan

Regular readers of *Sound Outlook* are no doubt familiar with the Long Island Sound Blue Plan, a marine spatial plan that maps the locations of many of the natural resources and human uses found in Long Island Sound (please see the [Fall/Winter 2020 issue](#) for links to every *Sound Outlook* issue that contains information and background about the Blue Plan).

The final draft of the Blue Plan had been transmitted by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to the Connecticut General Assembly for their approval in January of 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic quickly sidelined the 2020 legislative session. The DEEP resubmitted





Editor's Note

You might have noticed that this issue of *Sound Outlook* looks a little different. That's because we are currently switching to a new format for this newsletter, and we're still working out the kinks.

The transition has been a long process, and there are some formatting and functionality changes that we will have to accept going forward (for example, we can no longer include links to individual articles from the table of contents).

But the content will continue to be informative and, we hope, enjoyable to read.

As we make the switch to the new format, we'd like to share this abbreviated newsletter to provide updates on several topics of interest.

The Fall 2021 issue of *Sound Outlook* will resume with more in-depth articles and our acclaimed "First Impressions" interview column, so be sure to keep checking your inbox.



the Plan in January 2021, and the Connecticut General Assembly unanimously approved the plan during the 2021 legislative session, the House on April 26, 2021, and the State Senate on May 14, 2021.

Now that the Blue Plan has gained legislative approval, it is in full effect, which means its policies will be applied by the DEEP, Department of Agriculture/Bureau of Aquaculture, Connecticut Siting Council, and municipal shellfish commissions to projects proposed within the Blue Plan Policy Area. The [Blue Plan Users Guide](#) is a great resource for project proponents and regulators alike. A companion to the Long Island Sound Blue Plan, the Guide is intended to assist readers in easily finding, understanding, and applying the information, policies, and tools provided by the Plan to help understand how policies are applied.

Another result of the Blue Plan approval is that the Blue Plan Advisory Committee must return from its COVID-19 hiatus. The Committee reconvened for a meeting on September 1, 2021 to discuss next steps now that the Plan is in effect. The Zoom meeting recording, presentation slides, and minutes can all be found on the [Blue Plan Advisory Committee webpage](#).

We encourage you to visit the Blue Plan website at [Long Island Sound Blue Plan Home \(ct.gov\)](#) for additional information and resources. The Blue Plan Development Team will continue to provide updates through the listserv and *Sound Outlook*.



As we reported in the [June/July 2017 issue of Sound Outlook](#), DEEP is in the process of establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) for Long Island Sound. The NERR system is a partnership between states and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that promotes the stewardship of coasts and estuaries through innovative research, education, and training, addressing both local issues as well as contributing to national focus areas.

We are pleased to announce that progress on Connecticut's NERR continues apace.

A [preferred site for the National Estuarine Research Reserve](#) was approved by NOAA in September 2019 and includes the following state-owned properties:

- Lord Cove Wildlife Management Area;
- Great Island Wildlife Management Area;
- Bluff Point State Park, Coastal Reserve and Natural Area Preserve;
- Haley Farm State Park; and,
- The public trust portions of waterbodies defined by:
 - Long Island Sound ranging approximately west to east from the mouth of the Connecticut River to Mason's Island and north to south waterward of the mean high water shoreline to just shy of the Connecticut state boundary in Long Island Sound;
 - The area waterward of the mean high shoreline of the lower Thames River from approximately the Gold Star Bridge south to the area described in the first sub-bullet above;
 - The area waterward of the mean high shoreline of the lower Connecticut River from approximately Lord Cove south to the area described in the first sub-bullet above.

In September 2019, DEEP was also informed by NOAA to move on to the next stages of the designation process which involve completing a Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Management Plan. During the course of 2020 and 2021, DEEP and partners from UConn, Sea Grant, and CT Audubon Society conducted meetings to solicit input for these elements.

Now, a public comment period has been opened until October 18th, 2021 to provide input on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Management Plan (DMP). Information about downloading the draft documents and providing public comments can be found on the [NERR Home Page \(ct.gov\)](#).

In addition, **two online public hearings have been scheduled on October 7th, 2021** via WebEX to receive comments on the DEIS and DMP. The hearings are scheduled for 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. EST and 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. EST. The content will be identical and attendees may select either option based on convenience. Online participants should go to the [University of Connecticut's NERR WebEx room](#) to attend the hearings.

If you are unable to participate online, you can connect to the event by phone using the toll-free number 1-415-655-0002 and the attendee access code 120 026 3550.

Closed captioning will be provided for those who attend the public hearings online.

Registration for the WebEx hearings is not required to participate; however, we ask that anyone wishing to provide a comment please fill out the [CT NERR Public Hearing Sign-up Form](#).

You can also find an online document containing [CTNERR DEIS/DMP Public Hearing Information](#) and additional details about the overall commenting process and participation in the October 7th hearings. This document may be updated as needed to address questions that arise and will provide access to materials for the hearings (e.g., final agendas and slide presentations). Hearing materials will be added approximately 2 days prior to the hearing. We encourage readers to participate in these exciting next steps toward designating a NERR for Long Island Sound.



The view from Bluff Point in Groton
Photo Credit: CT DEEP

SPOTLIGHTED PUBLIC ACCESS: Dave Kozak is Retiring

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) will be losing a true public servant this fall when Dave Kozak of the agency's Land and Water Resources Division retires after dedicating almost 29 years to state service.

During Dave's time with the DEEP (and DEP as it was known in its pre-Energy days), he has become a subject-matter expert on a variety of topics including conservation land protection, marsh migration, and, of course, coastal public access.

He has worked tirelessly on a range of issues, from developing policy, to managing grants and projects, to monitoring stream gauges and flood-prone coastal areas. Perhaps most importantly, Dave's Superpower is his ability to bring state and local officials, consultants, environmental groups, and property owners together to conserve valuable coastal resource lands and waters.

An avid outdoorsman, Dave was also ready and willing to lead coastal nature walks during Connecticut Trails Day events just about every June. The firsthand knowledge he shared during those hikes was surpassed only by his passion for protecting and conserving coastal resources.

Dave also led a number of land conservation and planning initiatives, including the Coastal Land Acquisition Management (CLAM) system and creating Connecticut's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Plan (CELCP), which will continue to guide future coastal land acquisition and management strategies. He has also organized, secured funding, and negotiated a number of coastal land purchases, several of which have been highlighted in this column as additions to Connecticut's Coastal Public Access Guide. All of Dave's efforts have formed a lasting legacy that will benefit the people and natural resources of the State of Connecticut long into the future.

And did we mention the [Connecticut Coastal Public Access Guide](#)? This invaluable database of information would not exist if not for the persistence and determination of Dave Kozak. From the early years when the guide was actually a printed map, to the development of the interactive website it is today, Dave has spearheaded the effort. He has kept the database of sites up-to-date (no small task when he's also acquiring sites to add) and he has also gotten his hands dirty installing public access signs in the field and helping maintain sites and trails in his spare time! Dave is an access champion and has advocated tirelessly for the rights of the public to access the [public trust](#), and he is the reason that the public can now access over 300 coastal sites in Connecticut.

Most recently, Dave has focused on the cutting-edge issue of tidal marsh migration in response to climate change and sea level rise, and has contributed several articles on the subject to *Sound Outlook*. He has overseen the funding, staffing, and implementation of several versions of the Sea Level Affecting Marsh Model (SLAMM) as applied to significant marshes on Connecticut's coast, adding to the state-of-the-art in understanding how tidal marshes react with man-made infrastructure as well as topography in responding to various sea level rise scenarios. (Please see the [October/November 2019 issue of Sound Outlook](#) for one of Dave's SLAMM articles.)

We're confident that we'll run into Dave while he's on a bike ride or hiking somewhere along Connecticut's coast, and we wish him health and happiness in retirement! Thank you Dave, for all you've done for the people and the coastal resources of Connecticut.





Dave Kozak is retiring in the Fall of 2021

CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE: Two GC3 Coastal-Related Recommendations Signed Into Law

On July 6, 2021, [Governor Lamont signed An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation](#), Public Act 21-115, into law. This law implements multiple recommendations of the [Governor's Council on Climate Change \(GC3\) Phase 1 Report](#) (please see the [Fall/Winter 2020 issue of Sound Outlook](#) for more information on the GC3).

From a coastal management perspective, the new law allows Connecticut municipalities to create a stormwater authority to address water quality and flooding, and adds climate resilience and flood prevention to the purview of municipal flood and erosion control boards. These efforts will help strengthen long-held coastal management objectives of protecting Long Island Sound water quality and promoting resilience in coastal hazard areas.

When [Governor Lamont signed Executive Order No. 3](#) on September 3, 2019 to reconstitute and expand the GC3, he cautioned that climate change is an urgent, existential threat that must be tackled immediately, and vowed that his administration would ensure that Connecticut remains a national leader on climate action. We strongly encourage readers to get involved with helping the GC3 realize this vision. Please visit the [Governors Council on Climate Change \(ct.gov\)](#) website for links to GC3 reports and meeting information including Zoom meeting recordings and presentation slides.



Frequent, tide-generated "nuisance" or "sunny-day" flooding on Chaffinch Island Road, Guilford was alleviated by elevating the roadway
Photo Credit: Joel Stocker

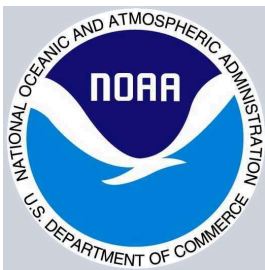
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