Connecticut Department of
ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

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Long Island Sound Inventory and Blue Plan Advisory Committee
March 28, 2018
10:00AM – 12:00PM
Fort Trumbull
New London, CT

MINUTES

Advisory Committee Attendance:

Robert Klee, Commissioner

Sylvain De Guise, Connecticut Sea Grant

Catherine Finneran (by phone), Eversource, Gas and electric distribution industry representative appointed by Governor Malloy

Nathan Frohling, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

David Carey [ABSENT], Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Aquaculture

Christine Nelson [ABSENT], Town of Old Saybrook Town Planner

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

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

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

Melanie Bachman, **represented by Christina Walsh,** Connecticut Siting Council

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

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

Bruce Beebe [ABSENT], Beebe Dock and Mooring Systems, Madison

Mike Theiler [ABSENT], Commercial finfish industry representative

Alicia Mozian, Town of Westport Conservation Director

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

Other attendees:

Emily Hall, NOAA Coastal Fellow

Mary-beth Hart, DEEP

Brian Thompson, DEEP

Kevin O'Brien, DEEP

Ian Yue, CT Sea Grant

Syma Ebbin, CT Sea Grant

Christian Fox, TNC

Katie Lund, CIRCA

Mark Pappalardo, Eversource

Bill Lucy, Soundkeeper (by phone)

Adam Wright, Navy

John T. Sieviec

Louise Fabry Kiewicz

Kevin Finn

Sue Quincy

Jacqueline Roberts

Matt Allen

Ben Goetsch

Suzanne Burns

Donna Elks

Other members of the public did not sign in

Welcome, Introductions, and Update

Brian Thompson, Chair of the Policy Subcommittee, started off the discussion by noting the Blue Plan is gaining momentum with the completion of the first draft of the Long Island Sound (LIS) Inventory on Natural Resources and Human Uses, which was further reported on later in the meeting.

Thompson also brought the group up-to-date on a few key items related to ocean management. First, Connecticut (CT) has made progress on selecting and nominating a site as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is still in the process of reviewing the outputs of the site selection process. Once a site is selected, the nomination will be forwarded to Governor Malloy and to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). If the site is approved to be a NERR, CT DEEP will work with the University of Connecticut (UConn) to develop an Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan.

There was also an update provided on the LIS sea floor mapping project. Thompson mentioned that phase one was completed over two years in the central-western part of the Sound, and phase two in the eastern part of the Sound is now in progress. The purpose of this data collection is to understand the bathymetry of LIS, and characterizing bottom sedimentation and habitats. These efforts will also assist in further supporting Blue Plan data collection efforts.

The Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) are also continuing with the implementation of their ocean plans. Both efforts are working on updating elements of their data portals. The Northeast Ocean Data Portal, is

adding new information regarding marine habitats and transportation to the portal; both of which will be useful to the Blue Plan process (Northeast Ocean Data Portal, 2018). Both efforts are also working on coordinating sand management for resilience projects, and are working on designating areas of ecological significance.

Finally, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has recently released a five year plan for offshore oil and gas development, and the plan is in the public comment period. There was an informational meeting in Hartford in February attended by DEEP staff, and Connecticut has submitted comments to BOEM. The plan is to expand offshore oil and gas leasing areas, and there will be more opportunity to comment as the process continues, and if BOEM decides to lease an area.

Inventory, Ecologically Significant Area (ESA), and Significant Human Use Areas (SHUA) Progress

Sylvain De Guise, Chair of the Inventory and Science Subcommittee, introduced the completed draft of the Long Island Sound Inventory of Natural Resources and Human Uses (CT DEEP, 2018). He mentioned that in the document's 293 pages, there are three major sections, 1) an introduction clarifying what the Inventory is and is not, 2) a section on the ecological characterization of the Sound, including information on plants, animals, and Ecologically Significant Areas, and 3) a section on the human use characterization of the Sound, including commercial, recreational, historical, and community activities. As part of the outreach and data gathering process, there were an estimated 103 experts who gave ecological input and 198 experts who gave human use input.

The Inventory and Science Subcommittee is now entering the public review process for the Inventory. The first circulation was to the Blue Plan Advisory Committee, prior to this Advisory Committee meeting. After today, the Inventory will be released for two rounds of public review: 1) an informal period, and 2) a formal period. The informal period will consist of sharing the Inventory with everyone who has contributed. Comments in the informal review will be due on April 6th, 2018 and a 1.2 version of the Inventory will be released by April 20th, 2018. The formal public review will then follow and will consist of posting the updated version online and holding a public hearing.

De Guise then introduced Ian Yue to discuss various data gaps that were discovered through the Inventory process. Yue mentioned how there were various steps to the data gaps analysis, first being to identify where the gaps are, then to describe how the Blue Plan group may be able to fill those gaps, and finally prioritizing what data the Blue Plan team may be able to fill in the time allotted. Yue also described that the effort and time to fill those data gaps were also taken into consideration.[1]

Nathan Frohling then spoke about the development of the ecological portion of the Inventory. Frohling mentioned how various ecological groups were represented in the Inventory, such as plants, animals, and habitats, and how these groupings directly correlated with the Blue Plan statute (Public Act 15-66).

Frohling then began to discuss the development of the Ecologically Significant Areas (ESAs). The criteria to develop the ESAs is preliminarily designated, and being based on the Rhode Island Ocean SAMP, includes topics such as

1) areas of high natural productivity, persistence, abundance, and diversity,
2) unique, rare, and sensitive habits.

[1] If you'd like to view a full copy of the Data Gaps Analysis, please contact DEEP.BluePlanLIS@ct.gov.

To assist and guide the development of the ESAs, an Ecological Experts Group (EEG) has been convened which includes scientists and ecological experts from both Connecticut and Long Island. The ESA process begins with understanding the ecological characterization of Long Island Sound, by describing the ecological processes, conditions, and features relative to the Blue Plan. Frohling also introduced a timeline to complete the Ecological Characterization and ESA process (Appendix 1).

In addition to the ESA process, Frohling introduced the concept of developing Significant Human Use Areas (SHUAs). Frohling described how there are many uses represented in LIS and the Inventory has an abundance of information. It will be useful to the Blue Plan to filter this information and designate some areas of critical human use activity. To assist in this process Frohling and Christian Fox conducted a Rapid Assessment of Human Use Areas (Appendix 2). They color coded this assessment to understand what data could be extracted from existing maps and where data needed to be attained (this also correlates with the data gap assessment). The next steps are to conduct participatory mapping sessions where there are gaps, and develop a process of map generation and guidance around SHUAs.

Frohling and De Guise then opened the discussion up to the Advisory Committee. Commissioner Klee mentioned that he had questions when it came to the rapid assessment of human uses and mentioned that many of the uses seemed like they lacked data (or were represented in green as seen in Appendix 2). Klee represented his concern that, with a number of data gaps, it may difficult to prioritize efforts and engage new sources. De Guise noted that the Inventory in its current state is not going to be perfect but that the continued iterations will get better and that the Blue Plan team is continuing to gather the best available information. Thompson also mentioned that a lot of the data gaps, or "green blocks," would be fairly easily transitioned to a full data set, or "blue block," with some additional resources, interns, or utilization of existing resources. Frohling also remarked on how the Blue Plan team is "noticing the clock," and that the group is continuing to pull resources together.

Policy Updates and Blue Plan Development

Thompson introduced the discussion by mentioning that much of the Blue Plan development team's time has been put towards developing the Inventory and that now the team is in a transition toward building the policies of the Blue Plan.

The Blue Plan development team has been collecting information and analyzing different paths forward, as Emily Hall, NOAA Coastal Fellow for the Blue Plan, created a summary document assessing how other marine spatial plans designate "special areas" and write the policy around those areas.[2] Thompson also showcased a draft policy graphic (Appendix 3) that separates that types of policies the Blue Plan may hold, and certain "lenses" that should be considered when applying those policies. Potential policies in the Blue Plan may surround geographic areas, resources and uses, different regions of the water column, and Sound-wide concerns. The "lenses" used in accordance with the policies may include reliability and certainty of data, degree of conflict between uses/resources, duration and permanence of uses/resources, and the existing laws and regulations. Frohling asked for a slight clarification on whether categories of resources and uses could be analogous to ESAs and Human Use Areas. Thompson noted that it would depend on how ESAs end up being defined and if you're defining specific geographic areas.

Emily Hall then introduced the Draft Blue Plan Table of Contents (Appendix 4). Hall walked through the potential Table of Contents, mentioning that some of the broader sections would include an overview of the Blue Plan and its processes, an overview of designating ESAs and/or Human Use Areas, a description of existing management frameworks and how the Blue Plan will interact with those, policy recommendations, how the Blue Plan will be

[2] If you'd like to view a full copy of the Special Areas Comparison, please contact DEEP.BluePlanLIS@ct.gov.

implemented, and finally areas for future consideration. Commissioner Klee commented that we should think about different types of users in the "Guide to Using the Blue Plan," as we may want to consider how to separate the data gaps and place those near the ESA and Human Use Area processes section, and we should make sure to highlight regulations that are already in place.

Stakeholders, Outreach and Messaging

Christian Fox, the Blue Plan outreach coordinator, started the conversation by giving an overview of the outreach program for the Inventory. As mentioned in the Inventory section above, the first round of outreach and review will be targeted toward organizations that were initially invited to participate in the development of the Inventory. In this review period, there will be specific attention to relevant chapters and an opportunity to incorporate changes before the wider public review process. Fox also touched upon efforts to fill-in identified questions and data gaps, with efforts like participatory mapping with recreational anglers and divers. Fox then discussed efforts to engage New York stakeholders and entities, such as asking existing contacts to facilitate communication with New York groups and to schedule in-person meetings. Two meetings that have already taken place include a discussion with Friends of the Bay on March 1st, 2018 and The Scuba Sports Club of Westchester on March 14th, 2018.

Hall then introduced updates to the Blue Plan website, including sections on the purpose, process, and principles of the Blue Plan (CT DEEP, 2018). The guiding principles are also laid out in a series of "buttons" that lead to webpages describing Blue Plan efforts in meaningful public participation, sound science, transparent processes, coordination and collaboration, and commitment to adaptive management. Hall then discussed with the group a new messaging idea to create and produce short videos that profile each sector of the Advisory Committee, highlighting how the Blue Plan will be useful to that sector. A series of similar videos describing marine spatial planning efforts can be found at, Insight from Leaders: Practical Solutions on Ocean Planning and are good examples of the types of videos the Blue Plan may be able to create (Open Channels, 2015).

Public Comment Period

In regards to the Inventory, one member of the public mentioned that it would be helpful to bookmark the chapters in the PDF version of the document.

Ben Goetsch brought up some concerns with the aquaculture chapter of the Inventory. Goetsch mentioned that in addition to town and state shellfish leases, there is a separate category of franchises that are mapped but not included in the Inventory. He also discussed the CT Aquaculture Mapping Atlas, and how it didn't include Housatonic River's natural beds; which are important for states to know. Alicia Mozian reflected on the Housatonic River comment, by recognizing how prolific they are and that there are other natural beds like the Saugatuck River. Mozian questions where the group should draw the line, and whether the Blue Plan should include all natural beds from bays and inlets. Thompson noted that natural beds should be identified.

John Sieviec mentioned that the Guilford Shellfish Commission has 50 years of data that they can contribute to the plan at a later date.

A member of the public mentioned that in regards to data gaps in the Inventory and Blue Plan, perhaps there was a place in Chapter 2 of the final Blue Plan to insert priority data gaps (Appendix 4).

An additional member of the public also commented on the ESA process, and wondered where essential fish habitat would fit into that framework. Frohling mentioned that essential fish habitat fits into the ESA criteria being developed.

A member of the public also suggested when designating "special areas," to not recreate already designated zones like navigational channels or dredged disposal areas that have been vetted.

In regards to the policy discussion, a member of the public commented on how in the policy graphic, the reliability and certainty of data "lens" may actually be an umbrella for all the other topics (Appendix 3). Thompson mentioned that the boxes in the graphic may not be evenly distributed, and could be altered.

A member of the public also asked where the existing laws and strata of existing regulation would come into play. Thompson mentioned that the existing laws and management "lens" would assist regulators and applicants in understanding the processes already in place, in addition to the chapter set aside in the Blue Plan to further describe the existing management framework.

Concluding Remarks

Commissioner Klee concluded the Advisory Committee Meeting with a thank you to the committee and members of the public for continuing to contribute to the development of the Blue Plan. Klee then announced that the next meeting would be scheduled for June 19th 7:00 – 9:00pm at the New Haven Regional Water Authority.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.

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

Resources

CT DEEP. (2018). *Blue Plan Homepage*. Retrieved from www.ct.gov/deep/lisblueplan

CT DEEP. (2018). *Long Island Sound Blue Plan Resource and Use Inventory*. Retrieved from https://www.northeastoceandata.org/

Northeast Ocean Data Portal. (2018). *Northeast Ocean Data*. Retrieved from https://www.northeastoceandata.org/

Open Channels. (2015). *Insights from Leaders: Practical Solutions on Ocean Planning*. Retrieved from https://www.openchannels.org/videos/insights

Appendix 1. *Proposed Process for Developing the EC and Identifying Ecologically Significant Areas*

1. April: Review Ecological Inventory, EC outline and proposed ESA process with EEG

2. April/May:

    a. Define and delineate a BP study area. Develop and centrally host the data products, identified above, that will be the basis of the EC and the ESA process. Organize data products according the outline above, including clearly identifying which products support each of the draft criteria.
    b. Review the draft BP Policy Subcommittee criteria with the EEG. If possible, use the Northeast RPB's IEA/CEI Framework, which has been researched and developed to be consistent with other frameworks from around the world and has already been scientifically vetted, to suggest an organization that will support the participatory mapping process to identify ESAs.

        i. LIS BP Policy Subcommittee criteria category 1: Areas of high natural productivity, abundance, or diversity includes the following IEA/CEI components:
            1. Areas of high productivity
            2. Areas of high diversity
            3. Areas of high abundance
        ii. Unique or fragile habitat or habitat management or regulatory areas includes the following IEA/CEI components:
            1. Areas of vulnerable marine resources
            2. Areas of rare marine resources

3. June:

    a. Hold an in-person EEG meeting to review all draft data products
    b. Develop a draft Ecological Characterization that incorporates the data products identified above
    c. Organize the EC data products according to the BP Policy Subcommittee criteria for use in identifying ESAs

4. June – September:
    a. Hold two in-person EEG meetings to conduct participatory mapping to identify preliminary ESAs:
        i. Meeting 1 to focus on areas of high natural productivity, abundance or diversity
        ii. Meeting 2 to focus on areas of unique or fragile habitat or with habitat management or regulatory status
    b. EEG provides independent review of the draft EC

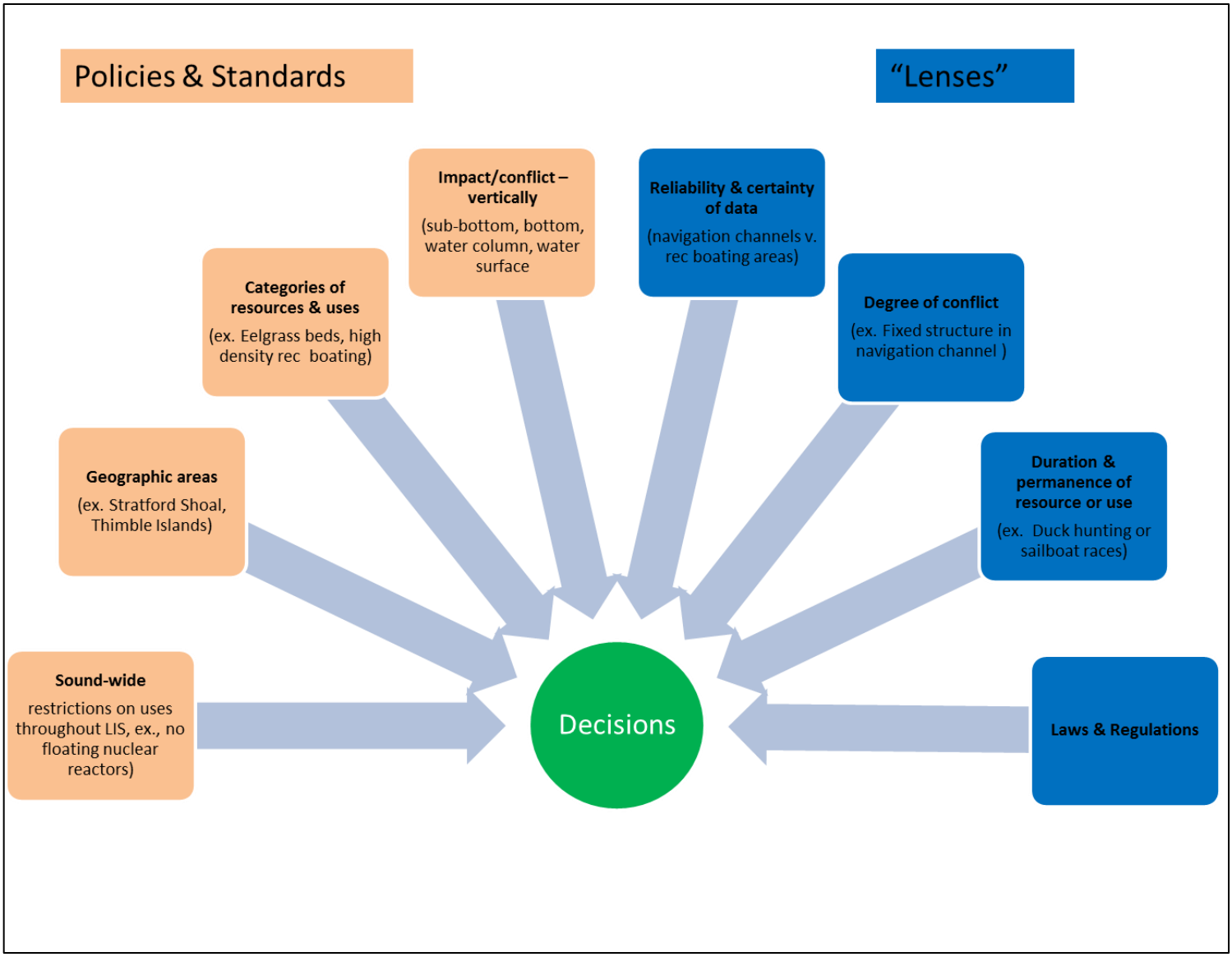
5. September/October:
    a. Revise and finalize the EC
    b. Generate draft ESAs derived from EEG discussions

Appendix 2. *Human Use Area Rapid Assessment*

Sector	Possible HUA	Visual End Product	To Obtain HUA Maps…		
			Have	*Extract data from existing maps*	*Obtain data and create maps **
Aquaculture	Commercial shellfish leases (CT municipal waters)	Polygons			
	Commercial shellfish leases (CT state waters)	Polygons			
	CT Gear Areas				1
	CT Seaweed Aquaculture leases				
	CT Recreational shellfish areas	Polygons			
	CT Designated Natural Beds	Polygons			
	NY shellfish aquaculture lease areas	Points			1
	NY seaweed aquaculture lease areas	Points			1
	NY aquaculture gear areas	Points			2
Commercial Fishing	Commercial finfishing areas	Polygons			3
Recreational Fishing	Recreational finfishing areas	Polygons			1
	"Enhanced Opportunity" Sites	Points			
Charter/Party Boat Fishing	Fishing areas important to charter businesses	Polygons			3
Recreational Boating and Sailing	Marinas and Yacht Clubs	Points			1
	Boat launches	Points			
	Placeholder Areas restricted in boating for other uses by DEEP Boating				2
	Sail and rowing racing (and training?) areas (including local and larger geographic regions?)	Points or Polygons			3
	Long-distance sail races	Lines			
	Marine event areas	Polygons			2
	High density boating areas	Polygons			
	Mooring fields	Polygons			3
	Anchorages (transient, recreational)	Polygons			3
Harbors and Marinas	N/A	N/A			
Non-Consumptive Recreation	Important recreational diving sites	Points			2
	Shipwrecks (sorted)	Points			
	NY Coastal Access Sites	Points			2
	State parks/Beaches/Scenic viewsheds	Polygons			
	Recreational sightseeing tour viewing locations	Points or Polygons			
Waterfowl Hunting	Waterfowl hunting areas	Polygons			2
Historic and Archeological Marine and Coastal Cultural Resources	Designated national, state, and local historic sites and districts	Points			
	Submergered Archeological Sites	Points			
	Submerged archaeological sensitivity – Shipwrecks	Polygons			
	Submerged archaeological sensitivity – Pre-contact civilizations	Polygons			2
	Areas of tribal significance	Polygons			2
Research, Monitoring, and Education	Long-term monitoring locations	Points			
	Coastal experiential-education locations	Points			1
Marine Transportation, Navigation, and Infrastructure	Designated Navigational Channels	Lines or Polygons			
	Ports / Working waterfronts	Points or Polygons			1
	Ferry and shipping routes	Lines or Polygons			
	Designated Aids To Navigation	Points			
	Dredge disposal sites (active, historic)	Polygons			
	Lightering zones	Polygons			1
	Anchorages (commercial)	Polygons			
Energy and Telecom	Existing cables and cable areas	Lines and Polygons			
	Existing pipelines and pipeline areas	Lines and Polygons			
	Coastal power plants	Point			
	Offshore terminals	Point			
	Onshore terminals w/nearshore berths	Points			1
National Security	Designated Security Zones	Polygons			
	NUWC Test Range	Polygons			
		49	20	7	22

* 1 = Doable &/or min effort (9x)
2 = Likely doable &/or more effort needed (8x)
3 = Feasibility uncertain &/or significant hurdles (5x)

Appendix 3. *Policy Development Graphic*



Appendix 4. *Draft Blue Plan Table of Contents*

Long Island Sound Blue Plan

Proposed Table of Contents

- Title Page
- Publication Info (Date, Advisory Committee Members, Blue Plan team, etc.)
- Letter from Commissioner/Top Official
- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary/Forward
- List of Figures

- *Chapter 1: Introduction*
    - Purpose and Need for Marine Spatial Planning in Long Island Sound
    - Vision and Goals of Blue Plan
    - Timeline of Marine Spatial Planning in Long Island Sound (Bi-state working group – present time)
    - Blue Plan Process
        - Data Gathering
        - Stakeholder Engagement
        - Policy Development
    - Guide to Using the Plan

- *Chapter 2: Current Status of LIS*
    - Overview of Inventory Process
    - Human Use Overview
        - Significant Areas of Human Use (SHUA) Process/Results
    - Ecological Overview
        - Ecological Characterization Process
        - Ecologically Significant Area (ESA) Process

- *Chapter 3: Blue Plan Management Framework*
    - Coordination with State Coastal Management Program
    - Coordination with Town and Municipal Programs
    - Inter-State Coordination (New York and Rhode Island)
    - Federal CZMA Consistency

- *Chapter 4: Blue Plan Policy Recommendations*
    - Sound-wide Policies
    - Siting and Performance Standards by Ecologically Significant Resource Category
    - Siting and Performance Standards by Significant Use
    - Area-Based Priority and Performance Standards

- *Chapter 5: Blue Plan Implementation*
    - Implementation Overview (achieving vision and goals)
    - Adaptive Management and Plan Revision

- *Chapter 6: Issues for Future Consideration*
    - Climate Change Impacts
    - New Proposed Uses
    - Legislative Recommendations
    - Areas/Issues for further analysis and research

- Acknowledgements
- Acronyms and Abbreviations
- Appendices