

Options for Stakeholder Engagement In Long Island Sound Marine Spatial Planning

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

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Participants in LIS MSP Training 2015

Report Authors

This report was produced by the Stakeholder Team, a subcommittee of the Connecticut-New York Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group (Working Group). This working group is an informal body composed of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, trade organizations and others who have been collaborating to enable and prepare for marine spatial planning in Long Island Sound. The Stakeholder Engagement Team is a subset of the Working Group who selected the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) through a competitive bid process to organize stakeholder information and identify detailed options for stakeholder engagement in the Blue Plan process. The Stakeholder Engagement Team along with the project manager oversaw the contract, provided direction, guidance and input into this work and final results. This document was created by a team of CBI professionals including principals Senior Mediator Ona Ferguson, Associate Eric Roberts and Project Support Coordinator Julie Herlihy.

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See Appendix B.

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I. Introduction, Methodology and This Document

Context

As Connecticut's Long Island Sound Blue Plan process to develop a marine spatial plan for Long Island Sound gets underway, it is anticipated that those leading the effort will choose to reach out to and potentially engage the extensive and diverse group of people who care about what happens in Long Island Sound. How might they reach out? When? About what? This document contains information on a variety of ways that they might consider for engaging the public and key stakeholders. It is intended to provide a range of possible options for consideration, not to lay out any particular recommendations or prescriptions.

This document was developed by the Consensus Building Institute and the Stakeholder Engagement Team for the Connecticut-New York Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group (Working Group). See Report Authors (inside cover page).¹

Methodology and This Document

This document is not a part of the official Blue Plan process. It is intended to help Blue Plan officials think clearly about the many options available to them for stakeholder engagement and to illuminate some pros and cons of each. It provides information on techniques that have worked in other places. Those leading the Blue Plan process will make all stakeholder engagement decisions when the time comes.

The ideas in this document are drawn from a suite of information sources. The CBI Team drew ideas from a review of Long Island Sound marine spatial planning-related documents including the draft Sound Marine Planning Interim Framework Report,² the Blue Plan legislation, and previous research on stakeholder engagement in marine spatial planning efforts. We, the CBI team, interviewed 25 people who represent a variety of sectors relevant to Long Island Sound to learn their perspectives on stakeholder engagement. For information from those interviews, see the document entitled *Findings from Early Interviews with Stakeholders Related to Marine Spatial Planning in Long Island Sound*. We also talked extensively with the Stakeholder Team.

The CBI team drew extensively on our own experience as well. This includes five years of experience working on stakeholder engagement for the Northeast Regional Ocean Planning process, work with the Coastal States Organization and NOAA on state/federal engagement and coastal management, substantial estuary work in the Hudson River involving stakeholders in joint thinking on complex scientific topics, and work with the Massachusetts Ocean Partnership when the Massachusetts Ocean Plan was being developed. We also thought carefully about many other public engagement processes we have been involved in during our combined 15 years of experience doing meeting facilitation and neutral mediation on natural resource topics such as marine spatial planning.

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

² *Options for Developing Marine Spatial Planning in Long Island Sound; Sound Marine Planning Interim Framework Report*. Prepared by the Interim Framework Report Team for the Connecticut-New York Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group. January 2016.

Our first step was to review the variety of stakeholder engagement techniques that are available and have been or could be used in marine spatial planning. We sketched those out briefly in this document then developed several options for how these techniques might be combined into offerings for consideration by the Blue Plan. We also share ideas about general principles and trade-offs that could help Blue Plan officials select the best possible option(s) for stakeholder engagement.

Comparison between this report and the Sound Marine Planning Interim Framework Report

The Interim Framework Report referred to above explores stakeholder engagement as an essential component of marine spatial planning and presents five options for structuring stakeholder engagement. This report builds upon and deepens the ideas in the Interim Framework Report. The Interim Framework report was developed prior to the convening of the Blue Plan Advisory Committee and takes a broad view of stakeholder engagement options. This report recognizes that the Blue Plan Advisory Committee has been established and delves deeper into this particular context, drawing on interviews with 25 Long Island Sound stakeholders and other expertise to propose specific ways to conduct the engagement work that the Interim Framework describes more generally. The Interim Report remains a valuable reference document on the subject of stakeholder engagement, both in its presentation of options and in the background material it provides regarding the nature of stakeholder engagement.

New York and Connecticut

New York state agencies and stakeholders have an essential role to play in Long Island Sound. However, at the time of writing this report, the nature of New York's participation in the Blue Plan process was uncertain. In order not to make any assumptions about New York's future role, or to get out ahead of the official process, this initiative did not include in-depth thinking about or discussion with groups in New York. Despite this, the stakeholder engagement techniques described here would work similarly in either state and could be conducted across state boundaries or be inclusive of stakeholders from both states.

During the last weeks of developing this report, New York State's formal participation in the Blue Plan process has become more likely. Our assumption going forward would be that New York Blue Plan officials will include a parallel leadership role and that stakeholders from New York will need to be fully involved.

II. The Role of the Public (“Stakeholders”) in Marine Spatial Planning

The Blue Plan Advisory Committee

The Blue Plan process is specified by legislation to be multi-stakeholder at the highest level: the Advisory Committee responsible for completing the plan will be made up of people representing specific, diverse sectors. This results in a group that will be informed by a variety of stakeholder views that will presumably develop a plan that is responsive to a range of needs, expectations and aspirations. As the Blue Plan Advisory Committee undertakes its work, there will likely be times when the committee will

have reason to seek input from others who do not sit on the committee. The legislation specifies certain ways that the public must be invited into the process, including consultation with particular sectors and a certain number of public hearings before a draft plan is developed, once a draft plan is completed, and after the final plan is submitted. This work – reaching out to others who have a perspective on a Blue-Plan-related issue – is the subject of this report.

The Blue Plan Advisory Committee has a series of important questions to answer about how it will make its decisions, at what points it solicits input from those who are not members of the committee, and how it will weigh that input. Will committee members be expected to consult with people they represent between meetings? Will they be expected to share broader perspectives from that particular sector? Might they also be expected to consult with people in other sectors beyond their own, especially for those sectors which are not directly represented on the Advisory Committee?

For the purposes of this report, we refer to the **(Blue Plan) Advisory Committee** where only committee members are intended. We use the term **Blue Plan officials** to indicate a larger group of people that includes Connecticut Blue Plan Advisory Committee members, Connecticut DEEP leadership and staff, any New York State agency officials involved in the Blue Plan, advisory counterparts identified by New York that are analogous to the Advisory Committee, other contractors staffing the Blue Plan effort, and possibly others who become involved in the Blue Plan process.

Stakeholder Engagement Could Enhance Blue Plan Process and Content

It is important for stakeholders who do not have a formal or official position in a process to see that their input, concerns, and ideas are deeply considered and contribute to the work being done – especially when that process could influence issues that matter to them. When they are asked to participate, to share data, information or ideas, they want to see how that contribution influenced the outcome. They want to feel they have some traction or a role. Ideally, they may even want a guarantee that they'll see their contributions in the final products. Yet in a big process like the Blue Plan, where hundreds of people may be contributing, there is often no formal way to provide that assurance. Blue Plan officials do, however, have the opportunity to ask only for information they really want (so they will listen carefully when that information is provided), to capture that information so it can be easily used, and to take time to review and incorporate what they learn from the stakeholders and the public.

In addition, in many if not all techniques, Blue Plan officials will have the opportunity to reflect back to stakeholders how their input was captured, considered, and/or incorporated into the planning process. This feedback is often easiest to provide in written form (summaries of themes from public workshops, surveys or listening sessions), but could also be presented at Blue Plan Advisory Committee meetings. Hearing these themes and ideas reflected back, and learning how public input was shared with those making decisions, can be very important to members of the public.

In this case, stakeholder input will likely be meaningful and useful in two ways:

- Contributing data, information, and concrete content to include within the Plan. This is direct input of *content* into the Plan.

- Providing guidance and insights about how the Blue Plan process and resulting plan can work best. This input on the *process* of the planning effort and its resulting *plan* can help gain trust and prevent anger about both the process and its outcome. Anger about poorly run processes can derail even the best final outcomes. Consulting with stakeholders on the stakeholder and technical process throughout the planning effort can go a long way toward enabling Blue Plan officials to course correct and build bridges as they work on developing the Blue Plan.

Best practice says stakeholders should inform and advise on both content and process.

This report addresses the possibility that outreach beyond that specified by legislation may be considered, and when it is, the results of these outreach efforts may contribute valuable information to the process and build stronger support for its outcome. It is also worth noting that the Blue Plan Act suggests additional outreach measures if they are deemed to be necessary or beneficial. From Section 1.(d) of the Act: “. . . the Blue Plan Advisory Committee . . . may provide for other public outreach and input measures, as appropriate, to assure sufficient stakeholder engagement and representation . . .”

Possible Benefits of Stakeholder Engagement

All outreach to the public, even what appears to be the simplest messages or meetings, can take a large amount of work by staff and volunteers. So why, given constrained time, resources and capacity, might it make sense to go beyond the bare minimum approach? Making this effort has to make a difference to be worthwhile. People communicate with and reach out to stakeholders who care about a topic or place because, in addition to following basic democratic principles, in the end it also makes sense to do so. Some of the common reasons for going beyond the most basic engagement are because doing so can (a) result in better, well-informed decisions and outcomes, (b) lead to stronger buy-in among those who will need to work with project outcomes, (c) build political support for the outcome and subsequent work, and (d) strengthen relationships that are essential now and in the future.

The following examines these reasons to consider deeper stakeholder engagement in more detail. In this description, we draw on our experience and that of others in marine spatial planning and other related efforts where outcomes could potentially affect a great number of people.

Well-informed outcomes – In complex systems with many different human interests, economic and environmental concerns, gathering information from as many perspectives as possible generally makes for the best outcomes. This is because multiple perspectives are more likely to produce a relatively complete set of potentially available data and information and a greater set of good ideas (e.g. options for management decisions). The Advisory Committee’s finite number of participants cannot be expected, by themselves, to give voice to the many different insights, experience, and perspectives of people who care about or are engaged in each Long Island Sound sector. No one person can represent all the issues that people who recreate on Long Island Sound might hope for or be concerned about, for example. The same applies to trying to represent all fishermen or ports or coastal communities. By providing ongoing opportunities for a wide variety of other people to provide meaningful input, a more complete understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in marine spatial planning in Long Island Sound will be generated, leading those making decisions to make better, more deeply-considered, decisions.

Buy in from the public and key sectors – People who understand and have the chance to participate in a process in a meaningful way are much more likely to support the final outcome than those who do not. They are more familiar with the work that led to a final outcome, as they may have contributed their own time and resources to it at key points. Because (in this

case) they will have heard from each other and seen the Blue Plan form, they may better understand why an outcome may be both imperfect from their perspective yet, perhaps, the best possible outcome given the effort to shape as good a collaborative result as possible. Developing a complete understanding about something by following it over time and contributing thoughts and ideas means that active participants should be able to support outcomes and credibly share their understanding with friends and colleagues, thus helping to build more support for implementation.

Political support for outcomes – Those people who are truly involved in a process, whose participation and ideas are welcome, are less likely to fight about outcomes afterwards. This can reduce litigious and other arguments against project results after the process is completed. Spending the time and energy upfront to work with people who care about the topic at hand can reduce the fires that need to be put out after any important changes are adopted.

Stronger relationships – In projects that are place-based, relationships matter now and into the future. Neighbors, business partners, families, community and state leaders who care about the Sound are all likely to continue being involved and engaged (professionally, politically and socially) at different levels over time. For the Blue Plan to contribute to the lives of the people who care about the Sound, great care must be taken to build trust and understanding and, when possible, personal connections that will foster relationships among different sectors and people. Trusting relationships can mean people share insights and information early and easily, can lead to smoother implementation of project outcomes and can foster pleasant, smooth transactions of all kinds. On the other hand, relationships in which people feel as though they have been ignored, disrespected or mistreated can lead to not only inaction but active resistance to outcomes or implementation, withholding of information, or general impeding of progress.

Categories of Long Island Sound Stakeholders

What types of stakeholders might those managing the Blue Plan process consider involving? The Interim Framework Report Executive Summary says “A broad range of stakeholders should be engaged in MSP; in LIS these could include but are not limited to sectors such as the marine trades; conservation organizations; energy; commercial and recreational fishing and boating, shellfishing, commercial boating/shipping, telecommunications; tourism and recreational industries; recreational interests; ports and waterfront businesses; local municipalities; non-traditional aquaculture interests; defense; academic interests; and others. Tribal nations, which in many cases have standing as governments, could also be considered stakeholders.”

A list of stakeholders understood to be important to Long Island Sound was generated and is included as Appendix A. This list could serve as a snapshot of the variety of human interests that may be affected by a Blue Plan and therefore who may be important to consider for engaging in some way during the process.

III. Summary of Stakeholder Interview Findings

In early 2016, we asked 25 people about the aspects of Long Island Sound they most care about and how they and others in their particular sector would most want to be engaged in the Blue Plan process. For full information, please see the Interview Assessment Report completed as part of this project. We

have considered many of the key messages conveyed by these interviewees into our development of the options found in this document. These points were:

- *Engage and inform people early and often to build trusting, transparent relationships* - Those interviewed highlighted the importance of informing potentially interested parties of the Blue Plan process early and often; they suggested minimizing the potential to catch people off-guard or surprise them with unexpected outcomes. In addition to describing the Blue Plan process, outreach should inform people how public engagement will be structured, when and how they can be involved, and how their participation may (or may not) have an impact. Interviewees commented that this crucial early, transparent engagement would help Blue Plan officials build trusting relationships for sustained engagement.
- *Use existing networks and communicate with sector leaders to ensure all stakeholders are informed and consulted* - Interviewees indicated that strong networks already exist for many of the sectors that work in or around Long Island Sound and suggested that the managers of the Blue Plan process use those networks as primary channels of communication to distribute or collect information, as well as to coordinate and convene in-person events.
- *Be strategic about when to engage various audiences* – Choose the right moments and topics on which to engage various stakeholder groups. To the extent possible, engage varied audiences strategically at specific times on specific portions of the plan, as opposed to asking for input on the whole plan. Different sectors may require different engagement approaches at different times: For example, energy companies may need to be engaged early in stakeholder engagement scoping to ensure they can participate in the process in a way that is consistent with their business models and the regulated nature of their business.
- *Balance local knowledge and scientific data* – Several people indicated that they think it is important that the Blue Plan be developed using both local knowledge collected from people who are active in and on the water and scientific data. They understand it can be difficult to capture local knowledge in a spreadsheet, and expressed how important it is that this information be taken seriously.
- *Focus on getting the work done* – Several people indicated that outreach efforts should be synched with overall goals of getting the Blue Plan process done in a timely and efficient way.
- *Talk with stakeholders where they meet* - Interviewees suggested many different conferences, events, and meetings where those working on the Blue Plan could provide information, seek feedback, and engage in constructive dialogue with stakeholders. Events suggested by interviewees may be organized annually, quarterly, monthly, or on special request. See Appendix D of the Interview Assessment Report for a list of potential events.
- *Use a variety of engagement activities to reach varied audiences* – Different audiences may prefer or be more likely to participate via different engagement approaches. For example, email updates, a well-organized and user-friendly website, and public information sessions may suffice for stakeholders who mostly want to remain informed of what is happening. Other stakeholders will want a hands-on experience in which they can make a difference or contribute significantly to the development of the plan. For this type of audience, plenary discussions and small group work during public meetings or thematic workshops, or coordinating activities with other Sound related events (e.g. beach clean ups) might meet their needs and interests while enabling Blue Plan managers to distribute or collect information or engage in constructive dialogue. Partnering with maritime high schools or graduate programs could be a good avenue for collecting input from younger generations. Additionally, methods should be provided to collect input and feedback asynchronously and remotely when participants are unable or unlikely to attend in-person events. Some commented that people in their industry may or may not use a particular

type of communication method or may be less likely to engage in certain ways (e.g. participating via an online forum or webinar).

- *Focus on the quality of engagement and facilitation* - To elicit meaningful input from in-person meetings, interviewees noted that the quality of the meeting (agenda, approach used, and facilitation) are all important. Blue Plan officials should find ways to enable everyone to participate without feeling overwhelmed or that their ideas may be disrespected by others. Opportunities to participate in meetings should vary between full plenary presentation and discussion and small group discussions on focused topics. Providing participants with specific things (e.g. draft documents, hypothetical situations, or existing issues etc.) to react to at each meeting could help to ensure a constructive and focused discussion. Technology that allows for anonymous and immediate responses to questions in meetings can help get a sense of the room on particular questions (bypassing the shyness and limited air time limitations). This can also help with maintaining participation over several years of work.
- *Look to other successful engagement programs for suggestions* - Several interviewees suggested it would be useful to emulate and/or build upon successful outreach and engagement activities conducted for the Long Island Sound Study and the Northeast regional ocean planning.

IV. Stakeholder Engagement Process: Design & Management

What are the options for *managing* stakeholder engagement? Some person or group must plan and organize any effort to communicate with and convene individuals beyond those on the Blue Plan Advisory Committee. Who should it be? Blue Plan officials may have several choices, some of which are described in this section.

Blue Plan officials have several possible ways to form and manage stakeholder and public engagement. Because of their central role in the Blue Plan process, it is likely that **CT DEEP staff** will be foundational to the planning and management of stakeholder engagement in coordination with **Advisory Committee members and their New York counterparts**. Beyond that, there are several types of additional support that may be available to help design, implement and oversee this engagement process. These options could be used individually or in different combinations. The task for any of these groups would be the same: to help design and implement whatever stakeholder engagement options make the most sense for the Blue Plan process.

Support could be sought from:

1. **Contractors** – This would involve hiring paid consultants from the non-profit, academic, or business consultant fields who focus on facilitation and community engagement or who have technical marine spatial planning expertise and are also able to effectively convene and manage others. Advantages of hiring contractors are that there can be very clear lines of authority and scope. Disadvantages can include cost and finding people with the right set of skills.
2. **The CT-NY Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group** – This option would include leaning on the Working Group, an informal body composed of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, trade organizations, and others who have been collaborating to enable and prepare for marine spatial planning in Long Island Sound. They have worked together for several years and are dedicated to providing capacity to the Blue Plan process that might not otherwise be available. This group currently has a stakeholder engagement team thinking about

engagement issues which could continue to contribute support on the topic of stakeholder engagement. Advantages of using this Working Group include that the group is already formed and dedicated to marine spatial planning in Long Island. It has found different resources (both financial and in contributed time) to support the effort thus far. Disadvantages could include uncertain levels of support over time if financial resources become limited or members of the working group have their attention drawn elsewhere.

3. **A (Bi-State) Stakeholder Process Team** – DEEP staff and the Advisory Committee could choose to form a stakeholder process team that would assist them in shaping or conducting the public engagement process. This could be a small group of 3-5 people who are experts in public engagement or it could be a larger group of 10-15 people who are knowledgeable about stakeholder engagement and people from various Long Island Sound sectors (including as appropriate sectors not represented on the Advisory Committee itself). This option could include individuals from both Connecticut and New York and could be conducted on a bi-state basis with staff/leadership and participants coming from both Connecticut and New York. A stakeholder process team would help ensure that those managing the engagement didn't overlook key opportunities to work with particular sectors or reach out to appropriate groups across the full geographic region.

Stakeholder Engagement Process: Design and Management

This chart shows options of groups that could support the design and management of stakeholder engagement.



Drawing on other New England examples of how stakeholder engagement has been managed, the Rhode Island Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) had the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resource Center and Rhode Island Sea Grant manage their stakeholder and public process. In the Northeast Regional Ocean Planning effort, stakeholder engagement has been managed by project staff

with consultant support, including facilitation, technical support from consultants, and informal consultation with the group of people developing the plan (Regional Planning Body members).

Best management practices for marine spatial planning consider development of a stakeholder engagement plan to be a valuable approach for clarifying the design and management of the actual process. A stakeholder engagement plan describes how engagement with the public and different sectors will unfold over the course of a project. This effort, which would typically be conducted in the early stages of the Blue Plan process, would describe the key activities that the Blue Plan would seek to undertake involving the public over the course of the process. Such a plan could also be developed in phases, with a plan completed prior to, for example, a given phase or year of the Blue Plan process, allowing for evolution and adjustment. One best practice for developing an engagement plan is to seek feedback from members of the public themselves on how they would like to participate. The round of interviews conducted with 25 stakeholders as part of this project provides some initial insight into how this might prove useful. (See *Section III. Summary of Stakeholder Interview Findings.*) A stakeholder engagement plan could establish expectations, aid in transparency, and build trust. It could be designed to be responsive to changing project needs over time. Finally, an engagement plan could include a sub-component focused on communication and messaging regarding how the project would raise awareness about the plan and process overall. Those managing the UK's Marine Planning effort developed a Statement of Public Participation, which did just what is described here. In other places where there has not been a clearly laid out process, some stakeholders have expressed frustration at that lack of clarity (for example, in Washington State's Marine Spatial Planning and the Northeast Regional Ocean Planning effort).

Any of these three options for volunteer or paid staffing could help Blue Plan officials and New York counterparts to develop an outreach and engagement plan that is tested with key audiences. In addition to providing input on the general approach, any of these three (consultants, the Bi-State Working Group, or a Stakeholder Process Team) could also help participate in or run public workshops of various kinds. See also the Interim Framework Report referenced above for more on Stakeholder Engagement Plans.

Finally, the people designing the stakeholder engagement approach will be selecting a combination of techniques and will need to consider both the purpose of the different techniques and their overall capacity in terms of resources, staff time, and skill set. The objective will be to engage people to the extent possible within the realities and constraints of the situation.

V. List of Stakeholder Engagement Techniques

This section provides brief descriptions of some of the many ways that stakeholders and the public can be engaged in marine spatial planning. The descriptions include some indication of what purpose each technique can best serve. For those interested in better understanding a particular technique, please see some of the many other comprehensive resources on engagement techniques. Some of these materials are listed in Appendix C.

Stakeholders can be involved in a process like the Blue Plan through techniques that provide opportunities for them to: provide comments or data, deliberate with colleagues from the same sector, discuss project content informally with colleagues and project staff, comment in a public forum, deliberate with people representing other sectors, learn about the project from a website or webinar, answer a survey, or contribute technical expertise on a workgroup. In practice, these techniques are

used differently in every context; the broad, general ideas presented would be tailored to a particular situation. In considering whether to undertake any of these techniques, it makes sense to review how they worked in other marine spatial planning efforts. We have added some simple notes about where various techniques have been used or lessons learned, but there would be much more to think through for each technique and that type of research could be very illuminating.

Grouping of Engagement Techniques

While the techniques are not listed in order of priority, we have grouped the techniques into four categories:

- (A) *Communication about the Blue Plan to the public.* These are generally one-way communications from the project to the public about what is happening and do not provide opportunities for stakeholder input.
- (B) *Seeking individual input.* These techniques provide opportunities for individuals to share information, data, opinions, thoughts, and ideas. While some include people being in the same place at the same time, in those cases individuals are not deliberating or in extensive dialogue together, but are rather sharing from their own perspective sequentially.
- (C) *Engagement with small groups or sectors.* These are opportunities for people to collectively deliberate at key points or on key topics. They tend to be structured in a dialogue form to elicit ideas and give people a chance to explore them together, thinking through pros and cons, and building on each other's suggestions. They may also provide a chance for the same group of people to talk together over time.
- (D) *Engagement with the public in large groups.* These larger meetings are designed to engage people in a more extensive, deliberate way than public hearings (e.g. where people have their three minutes at the microphone but no opportunity for discussion), sometimes working in small groups or having open discussion all together to elicit ideas and input from participants.

The following table shows the list of techniques that are described in more detail in this section.

List of Stakeholder Engagement Techniques

A. Communication about the Blue Plan to the Public	B. Seeking Individual Input	C. In-Depth Engagement with Small Groups / Sectors	D. Engagement with the Public in Large Groups
Creating a listserv and communicating through existing associations	Providing project contact information	Assessing key sectors	Holding day-long stakeholder forums
Hosting webinars or conference calls	Conducting individual engagement	Consulting with identified stakeholder groups	Hosting two-hour regional listening sessions
Creating a website (simple, regularly updated)	Hosting open houses	Attending existing meetings of various sectors	
	Providing public comment opportunities at Blue Plan Advisory Committee meetings	Conducting focus groups (sector- or topic-specific meetings)	
	Hosting public hearings (during the devpt of & upon completion of the Blue Plan)	Creating a multi-stakeholder consulting group	
	Conducting surveys	Creating working groups on particular topics	
	Creating and managing a website (more robust, vibrant, interactive)		

Adjustments in a Bi-State Process

The techniques below are not described as state-specific (appropriate for either Connecticut or New York), and most would work similarly whether held in one or both states. For example, web communication, phone contact, and email contact would all stay the same. However, a process that includes both Connecticut and New York would require more logistical consideration and coordination due to the greater number of potential stakeholders and a bigger geographic area. Managing a bi-state process requires planning by a team that adequately represents the needs of the agencies, project leaders, and stakeholders in each state. A bi-state process might involve holding parallel or joint meetings in both states (whether planning meetings or public or stakeholder meetings). While the coordination for a bi-state process might be more complex, there are distinct advantages to simultaneously engaging stakeholders from both states in discussions on marine spatial planning for Long Island Sound.

Specification in legislation

In the stakeholder technique material presented below, where “specified by legislation” is noted in parenthesis, the technique being discussed is outlined or specified in the legislation that created the Blue Plan.

Note that because the group that will be developing the Blue Plan has been named the Advisory Committee, we are not using the term “Advisory Committee” for any other groups that could be formed to assist or advise the “Advisory Committee.” Instead, we use other terms for such potential groups to reduce confusion.

A. COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE BLUE PLAN TO THE PUBLIC

Techniques grouped in this category serve primarily to enable those running the process to let the public know about the process. These techniques would not provide opportunities for the public to participate or engage with those involved in the Blue Plan process.

Creating a listserv and communicating through existing associations – One simple technique for good engagement is to construct an extensive contact list of people to inform about a process. This would be created by inviting people who attend Blue Plan or related events to sign up to be on this (email/ mailing) list, as well as by compiling contact information of individuals who are known to be engaged in different sectors. Designating individuals included in the project database by sector or sectors makes it possible for Blue Plan officials to, for example, sort the list to reach out to specific interest groups, such as those involved in yacht clubs or with ferries or those interested in economic development. Creating this list would go hand in hand with Blue Plan officials sending out regular general updates, perhaps every 60 days, to the full contact list. Useful updates such as this are generally brief, perhaps the length of a screen or two, with links for how to find more information, and include updates on key activities since the last message and information about upcoming activities. The interviews with 25 Long Island Sound stakeholders revealed a high level of support for regular communication via email through a big listserv and through emails sent regularly through existing networks in the region. Interviewees also indicated that it could be very effective for Blue Plan officials to share information with different sectors through sector-specific newsletters, publications and other print media.

Level of effort & skill set – minimal, with low-level ongoing maintenance for the listserv and a commitment to a regular schedule and a reasonable internal review process for text or graphics. Some experience with web or customer relationship management technology is necessary.

Hosting webinars or conference calls – Webinars and conference calls can provide a way for people to discuss a particular topic in real-time. They are low cost for participants in terms of both time (people can participate from their home or office rather than traveling to a meeting) and technology (most people with a standard computer can participate with relative ease). They are best for communicating information to a group, but less suitable for nuanced discussions, especially with a large number of participants. They are also ideal for situations in which state agency staff may have travel restrictions that prevent them from traveling out of state. In the interviews with Long Island Sound stakeholders, most people said they prefer in-person meetings to meetings held via phone or webinar; however, some appreciate the reduced travel time and cost aspect of webinars. These techniques work best with people who are accustomed to the technology and are comfortable using and participating at a distance. One example of webinars in marine spatial planning is Washington State’s Marine Spatial Planning effort, which included a series of MSP101 presentations.

Level of effort & skill set – minimal or medium, depending on the technology required, the number of participants, and the frequency. The content preparation would be similar to that of an in-person meeting. The commitment of time and energy is low for one-off webinars or calls. Some experience with webinar technology, remote facilitation, and general meeting facilitation, as well as content expertise for any presenters.

Creating a website (simple, regularly updated) – A website at its most straightforward can provide great one-way communication about an initiative such as the Blue Plan. At this simplest level, it would likely include: information about how to contact Blue Plan officials, key information about the Blue Plan process, an overview of Advisory Committee membership and roles including New York counterparts as appropriate, updates on current activities, materials developed to date, information on how the public can be involved, and a project timeline. The stakeholders interviewed noted the importance of a website that is easy to use and visually appealing, with minimal amounts of “dense” text. The website should also be accessible on multiple devices.

Level of effort & skill set – medium effort early on to select content, structure, and design layout. Ongoing medium level of effort to continually keep it updated and, perhaps, provide ways for people to comment online. There can be complex coordination needs to get approvals for things to be posted on a website, and communications expertise is helpful to make language and graphics appropriate for a general audience. There is a current webpage now located at www.ct.gov/deep/LISBluePlan.

B. SEEKING INDIVIDUAL INPUT

The techniques grouped in this section are primarily designed to elicit individual input from members of the public and different stakeholder groups, not to hear groups of individuals deliberate together.

Providing project contact information – Providing easy to find project contact information for those members of the public who want to share their thoughts via email, phone, snail mail, and online is a simple way to help members of the public feel like there is some way to reach out to Blue Plan officials. In this case, contact info could be provided for key Blue Plan officials and/or individuals identified to be on-point for receiving contact from the public. A designated email that is staffed by several Blue Plan officials could also work. It could be posted on a project web site and other venues. This technique builds trust with very little effort during outreach; however, it can backfire if the point people are not willing or able to take the time to respond to messages and calls and to track the input in a meaningful way.

Level of effort & skill set – low to set up, medium to manage ongoing. The level of effort would depend in part on how to track all the comments received. No special skills required for providing the contact info, but skills in responding respectfully to a range of comments and views would be helpful for any point people who are on the receiving end of public communications.

Conducting individual engagement – There may be times when it makes sense to work extensively with individuals from specific sectors or with particular expertise one-on-one to develop and review Blue Plan products. For example, as part of the Northeast Regional Ocean Planning Effort, there was substantial outreach to individuals in the commercial fishing sector to figure out what data could most accurately represent activities on the water while still maintaining confidentiality about proprietary information. This technique would most likely involve many phone calls and some individual, in-person conversations. People we spoke with during our stakeholder interviews generally said they would be glad to receive phone calls from Blue Plan officials when needed.

Level of effort & skill set – medium, to identify topics that need on-the-ground input from a particular sector and conduct outreach. Skills needed include attention to detail, a good ear for listening, non-defensiveness, and a willingness to dedicate significant time to reaching out, traveling to people, and an ability synthesize the results in a way that they can be used easily by Blue Plan officials.

Hosting open houses – Open houses would provide opportunities for members of the public to share their thoughts one-on-one with staff on particular data, maps, or questions. This sort of informal situation can generate many more confidential, exploratory discussions and pieces of detailed feedback than can a larger public meeting (where many people are not comfortable speaking up and fewer staff may be on hand to engage informally). Because maps and other project information are informally presented by project staff, people may raise questions or concerns that they wouldn't offer up in a large group.

Level of effort & skill set – medium. Materials and agendas need to be prepared and enough staff or other Blue Plan representatives would need to be present for the public to speak with to make casual conversations possible. Then, information gleaned during the open houses needs to be compiled. There may need to be several different open houses held on the same topic in different places or to reach different audiences. Skills include layout and technical content development, then good facilitation skills to guide a large group of people to engage well at the events.

Providing public comment opportunities at Blue Plan Advisory Committee meetings – If Blue Plan Advisory Committee meetings allow for it, it could make sense to provide a time for public comment at every meeting and for those managing the Blue Plan process to capture public comment in the meeting summaries. Public comment periods like this would provide an outlet for people who might not have an opportunity to address the Advisory Committee directly in any other context. Such comment periods can also help the people involved in the Blue Plan track sentiments on key issues as the plan process moves from early goal setting to identification of options and approaches. Public comment periods like this are fairly standard in day-long committee meetings of all kinds. They provide an outlet for communication from the public while enabling the primary committee to work uninterrupted for most of the meeting. They also enable members of the public to get into the formal record of a meeting, which can help ensure that they feel their comments will be taken seriously.

Level of effort & skill set – minimal, a note taker and a time-keeper and time on each agenda, plus some management of a sign up list in advance. Skills include note taking and summary writing.

Holding public hearings (during the development of and after the completion of the Blue Plan) (specified by legislation) – The Blue Plan legislation requires that at least three public hearings be held to collect comments and written submissions from the public. It says these meetings must occur in different regions of the state. One hearing must be held east of the Connecticut River, one must be held west of the Housatonic River, and one must be held between the Connecticut River and the Housatonic River. Hearings often refer to opportunities for the public to come up to a microphone, one at a time in sequence, and speak uninterrupted for a particular length of time, with their comments being recorded essentially verbatim.

This model permits everyone to have their comment recorded, but there are many things this technique does not allow for that other forms of meetings make possible, such as group deliberation or meaningful discussion. Several other models for meetings at which the public is invited to come together to share thoughts during the Blue Plan process are described in section C (In-depth engagement with small groups/sectors) and section D (Engagement with the public in large groups).

If these hearings are the only public meetings held for the Blue Plan, it might make sense to stagger them throughout the duration of the process, at a minimum once a year (early on, at a mid-point, and toward the end of the process), so members of the public can share their thoughts at different stages of the project, not just in three places all at one point in the process. It would be helpful if Advisory Committee members were encouraged to attend these hearings.

The DEEP commissioner must make a draft of the Blue Plan available for a 90-day public review and comment period. This comment period could include one or more public meetings (see various approaches for public meetings below) plus opportunities for commenting online, submitting written documents, and possibly by responding to particular questions about the draft on which the Advisory Committee is seeking input. Blue Plan staff could then synthesize key feedback to share with the Advisory Committee for their consideration in making adjustments to the draft plan.

In addition to the three hearings during the development of the Blue Plan, the Blue Plan legislation specifies that after the Blue Plan is finalized, a joint-standing committee of the General Assembly must conduct a public hearing. This must occur within 45 days of the start of the next legislative session following receipt of the plan. This hearing would presumably serve as a formal opportunity for members of the public to share final words of support or remaining concerns prior to the committee submitting the plan with their recommendation for approval or disapproval to the Connecticut General Assembly.

Level of effort & skill set for in-process hearings – medium because each hearing would need to be organized and planned by Blue Plan officials, including development of meeting agendas, work to reach out and publicize events, then work to synthesize input into a summary that would be useful for the Advisory Committee. Skills needed include facilitation or planning to create good agendas, public outreach, and synthesis or summary writing.

Level of effort & skill set for public comment process – fairly low in terms of providing a space for people to come give public comment. Medium or high in terms of compiling public comments and grouping them in such a way that they can be easily considered by the Advisory Committee. The primary skill set is listening and writing.

Level of effort & skill set for the final hearing to the joint-standing committee of the General Assembly – relatively low, focusing primarily on general logistics of space and timing and publicizing the hearing. There might not be any write up here, so no one skill set is needed during or after the event.

Conducting surveys – Depending on the topics addressed in the Blue Plan process, it could make sense to conduct occasional surveys of particular sectors or the broad public. These could be open to anyone during a particular period of time or could be more driven by data needs and gaps. At public events, there could be simple questionnaires for people who don't end up speaking in front of a full group but want to pass along their ideas to fill out and submit. Surveys can include questions regarding the stakeholder engagement effort, so that people who come to public meetings have a chance to say what they liked about the meeting and what they would recommend doing differently – giving the project team a chance to be responsive and adjust their stakeholder engagement approach if something is not working. Those we interviewed had mixed responses to the idea of a survey as a way to get meaningful input. They said they'd be willing to complete a survey, but only if it fit into their schedule, or was focused on a specific topic, and if they were able to complete it quickly. Christine Ann O'Connell's dissertation used a survey approach and also collected perspectives on and support for marine spatial planning from stakeholders in Long Island Sound.³

Level of effort & skill set – low for online surveys, which can be simple to conduct. Getting extensive responses can take some legwork, as can compiling and analyzing the collected information. Skill sets for developing surveys include coordination among Blue Plan officials to clarify what is needed and

³ Christine Ann O'Connell, "Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP); An ecosystem based approach to conservation and management in Long Island Sound" (Dissertation, Stony Brook University, 2013).

some experience developing surveys that target the right level of information in a way that is not off-putting to participants. Depending on the type of data collected, statistical or other analytical skills could be useful.

Creating and managing a website (more robust, vibrant, interactive) – This type of website could have videos providing quick, compelling updates on the Blue Plan. It could have surveys or use other tools to get input on maps, documents, or key questions during different phases of the Blue Plan process. It could have an interactive map showing existing data layers or compelling infographics that explain important perspectives or information. It could be easy to use on mobile phones or tablets as well as on computers. It could use simple, friendly language and be an accessible channel for members of the public who are not familiar with the process and project jargon. At its most sophisticated, the website could include animations about the process or what the Blue Plan will accomplish, numerous tools enabling users to share new ideas, provide their input on and refine other peoples’ ideas, opportunities for people to vote on draft content or proposals, indicate preferences on a map, and generally provide meaningful feedback.

Level of effort & skill set – high to make a sophisticated, engaging website that is actively maintained and has numerous ways to share what is happening and let people contribute meaningfully. Skills needed include writing and development of web graphics and an overall effect as well as creation of interactive tools that fit well with the needs of Blue Plan officials.

C. IN-DEPTH ENGAGEMENT WITH SMALL GROUPS / SECTORS

The techniques described in this section are designed to give opportunities for those involved in the Blue Plan process to learn from different sectors or small groups.

Assessing key sectors – An in-depth study of each of the major sectors listed in Appendix A conducted toward the beginning of the Blue Plan process could provide essential information on user groups and the issues that matter to them. This could be done in several ways, including some desk research about different industries and the role they play in Long Island Sound as well as interviews or focus groups with people from particular sectors. Results could be captured in reports or data layers or something similar and be made available publicly, shared with Blue Plan officials as well as with the public. An assessment could help give voice to important stakeholder groups and could draw Advisory Committee attention to the role they play in the region, as well as providing a method for early identification of issues, hopes and concerns. The information gathered can prove very useful to those trying to understand issues and, eventually, make recommendations, and the request of participants is relatively light (participating in a phone call or a meeting). In the Northeast Regional Ocean Planning effort, staff worked with consultants to produce white papers based on desk research and focus groups for the sectors of energy, aquaculture, and maritime transportation.

Level of effort & skill set – high to conduct assessments or develop white paper reports for multiple sectors. One way to reduce overall effort would be to choose a few key sectors to assess where the Advisory Committee wants to better understand their role, hopes, and concerns. Skill sets include good listening, conducting confidential interviews, and writing up reports that pull together themes and interests while respecting confidentiality and respecting all interviewees.

Consulting with identified stakeholder groups (specified by legislation). The Advisory Committee is required to consult with DEEP, the telecommunications industry, waterfront businesses, two federally recognized tribes, the tourism and recreation industry, and, to the extent feasible, New York state agencies and the Connecticut New York Bi-state Marine Spatial Planning Working Group prior to making the draft available for public comment. It does not say when they are required to do this. Best practices

for consultation include engaging early, getting to know key individuals in these sectors, letting them know about the overall Blue Plan process and how those involved in the Blue Plan would like their input, and reaching out several times over the duration of the project. It is possible that some of the approaches described in this section could be useful for conducting this consultation.

Level of effort & skill set – medium, because outreach to specific sectors and/or individuals requires Blue Plan official time and commitment, possibly over months or years. Skill sets for this include thoughtful planning of outreach (to whom? For what purpose? What should the outreach look like?) and comfort talking and meeting with a wide variety of stakeholders, as well as the ability to bring back important information to the full suite of Blue Plan officials.

Attending existing meetings of various sectors – There is a real opportunity for Blue Plan officials to use strong existing networks, associations, and coalitions within sectors to build relationships and share and gather information. One of the simplest ways to reach a lot of people in person is to attend their meetings instead of hosting Blue Plan-specific meetings. This could mean running a session at a local conference or asking for 20 minutes on the agenda of a group that meets monthly. It could mean asking someone in a leadership role to convene a special session of their group to just share thoughts on the Blue Plan. Interviewees we spoke with indicated that meeting with people in person was far and away the most meaningful way for them to be engaged, and indicated that having Blue Plan representatives attend existing meetings would make participation easiest in most sectors. For example, the following were named by multiple people in our stakeholder interviews as potentially useful associations or groups: The Southern New England Fisherman’s and Lobsterman’s Association, the Connecticut Maritime Association, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, and the local chambers of commerce.

Level of effort & skill set – low to medium. This requires time and commitment over a project’s duration, but doesn’t require very many people be involved. It could, with relatively low effort over time and good intentions lead to strong relationships and a substantial pool of people who know about the Blue Plan and have weighed in at one time or another. Skill sets include non-defensiveness, a genuine interest in hearing from varied stakeholders, and the ability to cogently explain technical topics that are relevant to different groups in the right way at the right time.

Conducting focus groups (sector- or topic-specific meetings) – This technique involves identifying a subset of people (often but not always from a particular sector) to talk within (often) invitation-only settings. Focus groups can be a couple of hours or a full day. They work well for individuals who speak most freely with like-minded individuals rather than at larger public forums. These might include, for example, meetings at each of the key ports, or with different types of recreational users. The purpose of a focus group (or a series of them) would be to understand the needs of specific user groups. People we interviewed were very open to the idea of focus groups for them and their colleagues at relevant moments in the Blue Plan process. The Northeast Regional Ocean Planning effort did a series of five half-day focus groups with ports across the region to learn about maritime transportation issues and concerns and three focus groups with different subsets of the energy sector.

Level of effort – medium to high because of the work figuring out who to meet with, scheduling and planning those meetings, and staffing them and compiling results appropriately. Skill sets include meeting planning, event logistics coordination, meeting facilitation, and summary writing so results can be shared with Blue Plan officials.

Creating a multi-stakeholder group – In addition to the group that makes up the Blue Plan Advisory Committee (which includes representatives from different sectors), another group with wider stakeholder representation could be formed. (Options presented for stakeholder engagement in the Interim Framework Report included this as a key concept for consideration). This multi-stakeholder

group could include representatives from sectors not included on the Advisory Committee and/or representatives from various subgroups of the same sector (for example, different types of fishing or shipping or recreational users). The purpose of this group would be based on who and how it was formed, but would generally be expected to provide greater form and organization for a wider set of stakeholders than provided by the Advisory Committee alone and potentially to facilitate greater stakeholder access and input into the Blue Plan process. Its role could include deliberating about key subject matter that is being developed for the Blue Plan and, providing advice, input, guidance, and possibly work products to the Advisory Committee. A group like this could be formed in different ways. A group of interested stakeholders could self-organize. The Bi-State MSP Working Group might also help form or manage a group like this, or this group could be a subcommittee of the Long Island Sound Study's Citizen Advisory Committee. Those working on the Blue Plan process could also help initiate formation of such a group if it was deemed to be helpful and appropriate. This type of formal group could, alternately, operate more as a loosely affiliated group of a large number of advisors (say 20-50) who Blue Plan officials could consult with informally during the process. In such a case, the Blue Plan officials would seek input when needed from different members of this team via email, phone, in person conversation or through other means. Convening of a group of team members would likely be need-driven and at the discretion of those managing the Blue Plan process.

Level of effort & skill set – low for Blue Plan staff if stakeholders organized themselves into a group that meets and provides input, medium to high for whatever group convened and managed such an effort. Resources would be needed to sustain such a group, which is part of the reason that it could make sense to undertake this as part of an existing group, network or effort. Low level of effort if this group is considered more of an affiliation of knowledgeable people to go to when their input would be helpful. Skills needed include convening and coordinating a multi-stakeholder group, communicating clearly with a group over time, scheduling and running meetings, and designing presentations or meeting content.

*Creating working groups on particular topics*⁴ – There could be a number of topics for which it makes sense to consult with a specific group of people over a few sessions. Technical working groups can supplement expertise provided by Advisory Committee members and consultants and include scientific and technical experts as well as key stakeholders, helping to both generate content and provide feedback. They could be formed on specific marine spatial planning topics like recreation, habitat, fisheries, or marine transportation. Because they formally become a working group, they have the time to learn together and explore complex topics that can't be discussed thoroughly in a single-session meeting. The subject matter should be complex topics that warrant focused attention and which would benefit from a group thinking together and learning from each other. A working group could meet only once or twice, or it could meet regularly for many months. In the Northeast Regional Ocean Planning effort, a working group was formed on ecosystem management. That topic was raised numerous times as being important to the process, but potentially with a longer-term timeframe than the planning process could address, so participants were invited to a workgroup that meets approximately quarterly. The public is invited to observe meetings and to listen in by phone. The Massachusetts Ocean Plan had six workgroups on topics including fisheries, sediment management, and marine infrastructure. The work of these groups fed directly into the Ocean Plan. The North Central California region had a Science Advisory Team to review draft products in the California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative.

Level of effort & skill set – medium to manage multiple workgroups effectively and ensure that their input contributes to the larger process at the right time and in the right way. Skills needed include planning for meetings, designing agendas, facilitation, and assisting working groups in the development of any products for the Blue Plan.

⁴ In other situations, such workgroups could be called advisory committees, but to reduce confusion among supplemental workgroups and the Blue Plan Advisory Committee, we are avoiding the term advisory committee.

D. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PUBLIC IN LARGE GROUPS

This section describes techniques that can be used to engage with the public in large groups where people can deliberate together using several different conversational and input structures.

Holding day-long stakeholder forums – Full-day stakeholder forums or public workshops are especially effective when held several weeks before formal committee meetings take place (in this case before Blue Plan Advisory Committee meetings). They occur once, in a central location, and work with a large number of participants (up to a hundred or more). They are designed to provide interested members of the public from across stakeholder groups an opportunity to deliberate on the topics that will be addressed soon by the more formal body. They require careful structuring, development of good agendas, a variety of methods for conversations (including things like small group discussions, topic-specific breakouts, and large group conversations), and strong meeting facilitation and note taking. Official members of the process (Blue Plan officials in this case), are encouraged to attend to be able to talk informally with people at the forum, and staff would write up a summary of the day for use by Blue Plan officials and members of the public who could not attend. Agendas could include time to talk about a variety of topics or could be focused on just one or two topics, as needed by the project. The participants at a forum serve as a sounding board collectively to respond to draft ideas and proposals and they can be very good at collectively identifying the strengths and weaknesses of subjects being discussed.

Level of effort & skill set – medium. Needs include good planning, organized outreach about the event, facilitation, and staffing support. However, each event is a stand-alone occurrence, which contains the workload. Finding good meeting venues for a possibly large meeting like this with appropriate breakout space can be tricky and costly. Skills needed include event planning and logistics management, meeting agenda development and facilitation for large groups, and summary writing.

Hosting two-hour regional listening sessions – There might be times in the Blue Plan process where Blue Plan officials will want to do their best to hear from a wide variety of people and are willing to travel around the region to do so. Listening sessions would be a series of 2-3 hour meetings, all with the same agenda, that are held in, say, 5-10 different locations within several weeks. Holding meetings that make it possible for members of the public to travel only a short distance to learn about the Blue Plan process and ask key questions or give some input will likely result in higher attendance by a more general public than will a day-long forum, which requires a lot of time and more travel. The goal is to reduce the barrier to participation by designing a brief session in places that are easy to get to. A summary would be produced for each round of meetings capturing lessons learned to share with Blue Plan officials.

Level of effort & skill set – medium, depending on the complexity of scheduling and logistics and staffing requirements. Developing a standard agenda, meeting materials, and presentations isn't a huge amount of work as it only has to be done once per round of listening sessions. Skills needed include event planning and logistics management, meeting agenda development and facilitation, and summary writing.

VI. Considerations When Combining Stakeholder Engagement Techniques for the Blue Plan

Packaging Techniques into a Single Option

Any stakeholder engagement process for a complex project will end up using several of the techniques described in Section V. Based on what we know about Long Island Sound and the Blue Plan process, as well as our experience in other places, in the next section (Section VII) we have packaged these techniques in a few different ways for consideration. We describe some of the pros and cons of each option presented. There are an infinite number of potential options that could be created by combining techniques in different ways .

It will be up to those leading the Blue Plan process to think through the different combinations of techniques described in Section V and select the option, whether it is an option found in this document or another not sketched out here, that best fits the circumstances surrounding the Blue Plan.

Engagement Principles

In thinking through options for stakeholder engagement, it could be useful for Blue Plan officials to consider developing what they consider to be essential principles for stakeholder engagement. Such principles can be used to guide their decision-making. Some ideas for principles in engaging the public and key stakeholders include the following, offered for consideration:

- *Be collaborative.* Recognize that there is no single group that can generate the perfect “answer” alone. Be willing to generate the ideas with others.
- *Listen.* Provide opportunities over the course of the process for all who care about Long Island Sound to share their thoughts.
- *Be flexible.* Conditions and needs may change over the course of the Blue Plan process. Be willing to be nimble and adjust the stakeholder engagement approach so it is as good as it can be.
- *Be transparent.* Let the public know about the Blue Plan process. Share information about the process, the likely products, how people are being engaged, and what will result from engagement and data collection efforts.
- *Respect multiple truths.* Respect the many stakeholders who care passionately about Long Island Sound, be sensitive to the fact that there can be many realities in the same place, and anticipate that people will have a variety of sometimes conflicting real interests and stories to share.

Selecting Among Options and Techniques

Blue Plan officials will be balancing various trade-offs when they select among their many options for stakeholder engagement. In particular, they will need to consider their capacity to conduct the overall effort in terms of staff, volunteer or other in-kind time, resources, skill sets and other realities that will shape what is possible. They will be striving to undertake activities that they can carry out well with the available resources. There is a real downside in stakeholder disappointment and frustration in over-committing and under-delivering stakeholder engagement, which supports the importance of choosing and communicating carefully about which activities to undertake. The more extensive the stakeholder engagement option selected, the more significant the work required to carry it out successfully. There may need to be numerous staff or contractors managing different pieces of an engagement effort,

making sure all the parts fit together, and ensuring that there is the capacity to adequately pull off successful engagement in all forms, often somewhat simultaneously. It can be a real challenge to manage many pieces while keeping them well organized and staffed, given financial- and staff-time constraints. There is also the risk of participant burn-out if the same stakeholders end up being asked to participate in multiple ways over time.

While considering the resources available to conduct stakeholder engagement, it will likely make sense to consider the different benefits of the various techniques described above and possible options for combining those techniques. For example, if it is important to have strong relationships with key sectors, it likely makes sense to factor in some effort to build relationships specifically with groups and people in those sectors rather than assuming that a stakeholder engagement option designed for the general public will also achieve that important benefit.

Overall, best practice is to do only what can be done well and to choose carefully which activities to undertake so that the experiences and engagement are well-planned and implemented.

VII. Five Possible Stakeholder Engagement Options for Long Island Sound

In order to help those developing the engagement approach for the Blue Plan process, five engagement options are offered to demonstrate how different techniques from Section V might be mixed and matched to meet specific needs or engagement parameters; this is not an exhaustive set of options. The options are organized loosely along a continuum. The first option (called in some places “thin engagement”⁵) is limited in scope, requires the least effort and resources to conduct, and focuses primarily on sharing information with the public and hearing from individual members of the public through formal comment opportunities. The middle options focus most on broadly engaging the public, while the last two options are designed to engage people from particular sectors or on particular topics. The middle and latter engagement options are considered “thick engagement,” in which people are consulted and involved more deeply, with real opportunities to share their ideas and even jointly deliberate on or develop outcomes and recommendations.⁶

Some Techniques Work Best at Specific Times

Some of the techniques described in Section V are most appropriate at particular stages of a marine spatial planning process. If the phases of the overall process are something like (1) clarifying hopes and concerns and introducing the Blue Plan process, (2) setting goals and the approach, (3) exploring key questions and gathering data, and (4) drafting then finalizing products, then it wouldn't make sense to get a website for the project going toward the end or to get a workgroup started during the first phase before the goals and approach have been selected.

Phasing of Stakeholder Engagement Techniques - It is best practice to engage stakeholders all the way through a process like this, beginning with clarifying hopes and setting goals at the very beginning. For

⁵ Tina Navatchi and Matthew Leighninger, *Public Participation for a 21st Century Democracy*. (2015).

⁶ “Public Participation Spectrum,” International Association for Public Participation, http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/Foundations_Course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum.pdf

example, UK marine planners sought input on their stakeholder engagement plan, a very early project product.⁷

When to Engage Particular Sectors - In addition to considering the arc of the Blue Plan process in considering when to use which engagement techniques, different sectors have different times of the day, week or year that best enable them to participate. For example, if a fishing or recreational boating high season runs from April to October, those are not good months for trying to hold sector-specific daytime meetings with people in the fishing or recreational boating sectors. Those might, on the other hand, be the time to go chat with people in person if you really need their input at that point. Representatives of some sectors are very comfortable talking on the phone or participating in a conference call, while others are not. Some of these constraints were highlighted through the stakeholder interviews; the details are captured in that report.

A sense of what could be involved in the different options is offered here, knowing that the details would be entirely up for deliberation and discussion. For example, Option 1 says that a public comment period would occur at every Advisory Committee meeting and each speaker would have a standard of two minutes. This is obviously an arbitrary definition but providing this specific definition is intended to help the reader better imagine the option.

⁷ *Options for Developing Marine Spatial Planning in Long Island Sound; Sound Marine Planning Interim Framework Report*, page 42.

Stakeholder Engagement Options for Long Island Sound Marine Spatial Planning *

Option 1: Specified Public Engagement & Providing Info	Option 2: Day-long Forums & Attending Existing Meetings	Option 3: Day-long Forums & Public Listening Sessions	Option 4: Engaging Key Sectors & Multi-Stakeholder Team	Option 5: Topical Working Groups
Primary audience: general public, named sectors (light)	Primary audience: general public (light) & key sectors (light)	Primary audience: general public (in-depth)	Primary audience: general public & particular sectors (in-depth)	Primary audience: audience from Option 1-4 selected plus those with topic-specific expertise (in-depth)
<p>Emails to a broad listserv every 1-2 months</p> <p>A simple website</p> <p>1-2 page project update reports produced every 4-6 months</p> <p>Consultation with groups identified in Blue Plan legislation</p> <p>3 public hearings in 3 locations</p> <p>Public comment opportunities at Blue Plan Advisory Committee meetings</p> <p>Public review and comment periods on the draft plan and after completion of the plan</p>	<p>Techniques in Option 1, plus: Hosting day-long public forums on timely Blue Plan topics every 6-12 months when no listening session series is being held. Public forums could possibly meet the requirement for public hearings in Blue Plan legislation.</p> <p>Attending existing meetings to inform key audiences about the Blue Plan process.</p> <p>Use existing networks.</p>	<p>Techniques in Option 1, plus: Hosting day-long public forums on timely Blue Plan topics every 6-12 months when no listening session series is being held. Public forums could possibly meet the requirement for public hearings in Blue Plan legislation.</p> <p>Seek input online on key questions, using the website in a robust way with polling technology and webinars.</p> <p>Hold 2-3 rounds of listening sessions in different places and times. Produce summary reports from each round.</p> <p>Hold 1 round early, 1 in the middle and 1 toward the end.</p>	<p>Techniques in Option 2 &/or 3, plus: Hold focus groups when input is needed on specific topics or from particular audiences. This could meet the requirement for consultation in Blue Plan legislation.</p> <p>Conduct robust outreach to leaders in key sectors on particular questions. This might also meet the requirement for consultation in Blue Plan legislation.</p> <p>Form a multi-stakeholder group to formally serve as a place for stakeholders not on the AC to provide input on the Blue Plan.</p>	<p>Techniques in any of the other Options (1-4), plus:</p> <p>Form a handful of working groups that focus on particular topics during a time-limited period when Blue Plan officials need input.</p>
<p>* These five options are intended to be illustrative, but not exhaustive, examples of how a combination of stakeholder engagement techniques might be employed to meet a specific objective or need for meaningful stakeholder engagement.</p>				

Stakeholder Engagement Option 1: Specified Public Engagement and Providing General Information

Option 1 contains relatively standard elements of a marine spatial planning (or other complex planning) engagement process. The techniques included are either specified by legislation or focus on simple outward communication to the public.

The techniques included in this option are:

1. A **listserv** and **regular emails** to a large listserv of interested people, perhaps every month or two, reviewing recent progress and activities and sharing information on upcoming opportunities for participation and other key project milestones.
2. A **website** that is simple and regularly updated with relevant documents, opportunities for participating in Advisory Committee work, and an overview of the Blue Plan process as a whole. This website would contain contact information, including an email address, phone number and mailing address, so people know how to get in touch with those managing the process. The current website could be updated to serve this function: www.ct.gov/deep/LISBluePlan.
3. A brief **project update report** released every 4-6 months in a simple 2-page form. This report would be something that could be easily duplicated and widely distributed at events, sent as an attachment to an email, and would help people who are not keeping tabs on all the details of the effort to understand what is underway and what to expect next.
4. **Consultation with identified stakeholder groups** (as specified in legislation). In this Option, the consultation could be relatively informal and could be designated to particular Advisory Committee members in addition to their role consulting with their own sector. The same could also be carried out by New York advisory counterparts to assist with coverage of New York stakeholder groups.
5. Three **public hearings** during the Blue Plan process to be held in three different geographic locations (as designated in legislation). These would include brief presentations and then significant time for members of the public to speak to those present and share thoughts, ideas and feedback in a particular amount of time at a microphone.
6. **Public comment opportunities** at all Blue Plan Advisory Committee meetings. This could be brief and depend on the duration of the Advisory Committee meetings. It could be a standard format of two minutes per member of the public who wants to speak to the committee, and those producing the Advisory Committee summary would capture these comments in the meeting summary.
7. Public **review and comment period** on the draft Blue Plan (as specified in legislation). Like the public hearings, these periods would be formalized in terms of when and how the public can comment and how their input would be collected and used.

Discussion of Option 1

Pros – This option fulfills all of the engagement requirements specified by the Blue Plan legislation (as do each of the five Options described here). It also covers some basic and generally manageable communication strategies, including setting up a basic website, sending out general emails regularly to a

large group, and producing brief project update reports two or three times a year. It provides input opportunities through a public hearing process with which many people are familiar and comfortable. And it requires consultation with some sectors that are not otherwise represented on the Advisory Committee. This Option would be one of the simplest to manage for the staff or others who are managing stakeholder engagement.

Cons – While this suite of activities contains some important elements, it is fairly basic. Because there are few opportunities for one-on-one or small group conversations among those developing the Blue Plan and people who care about what happens on Long Island Sound, this particular option is unlikely to build trust or relationships between those carrying out the planning process and key sectors. Blue Plan officials will have minimal opportunities to test and explore ideas with particular sectors or individuals. Limited opportunities for discussion with stakeholders could mean this option is unlikely to gather sufficient local wisdom and data to help those developing the plan. This could mean that the plan will suffer by not having been vetted in any depth by stakeholders. Finally, there may not be strong political support or buy-in for Blue Plan outcomes as a result of this level of engagement.

Stakeholder Engagement Option 2: Day-long Forums and Attending Existing Meetings

Option 2 contains the techniques in Option 1 plus two additional techniques that would offer more relationship-building with particular groups and more opportunities for the public to deliberate together.

The techniques included in this option are:

1. All the techniques described in Option 1.
2. Hosting day-long **public forums** for discussion of timely Blue Plan topics at least every six to 12 months, perhaps in those periods of time when there are no other public hearing or public comment opportunities. Blue Plan officials would be encouraged to attend the forums to talk and work side-by-side with interested members of the public.
3. **Attending existing meetings** to inform key audiences about the Blue Plan process. These could include brief presentations about the Blue Plan process or requests for input on key questions that Blue Plan officials could deliver at an evening meeting or during a day-long conference among key associations or coalitions. In our summary of the interviews conducted in parallel to the development of this document, we list some examples of groups that could be good to host such presentations or discussions.

Discussion of Option 2

Pros – In addition to the “pros” listed under Option 1, and in contrast to Option 1, a greater number and variety of people are likely to learn about the Blue Plan process and be provided with an opportunity to ask some informal questions of Blue Plan officials through the effort to attend existing meetings. Members of the public will see in-person presentations on the Blue Plan even if they do not go to Blue-Plan specific meetings. The day-long public forums would provide a chance for Blue Plan officials to hear and discuss thoughtful input from a wide variety of stakeholders interested in the Blue Plan process, and

would provide feedback and key concerns to the Blue Plan process through a carefully written meeting summary. These two additional elements are relatively manageable in terms of staffing; (they would depend on staff availability to plan (for the forums) and develop content (for both techniques), and possibly some support for running the forums if they are expected to be large meetings). Both of these additional techniques will likely build some trust and some relationships among Blue Planners and members of the public.

Cons – This option doesn't yet offer members of the public a chance to participate easily in diverse locations (though the three required public hearings must occur in three different geographies). It also does not provide for in-depth conversations with particular sectors or deep work over time with a group deliberating on a complicated topic. Because it does not set up standing working groups or series of meetings, it is lower intensity than some other options in terms of management, but also does not provide the opportunity for cross-learning in those other options.

Stakeholder Engagement Option 3: Day-long Forums and Public Listening Sessions

Option 3 contains the techniques in Option 1 plus several additional components for reaching the general public. In contrast to Option 2, it focuses on more meetings for the general public rather than meeting at existing associations or conferences with particular sectors.

The techniques included in this option are:

1. All the techniques described in Option 1
2. The day-long **public forums** as described in Option 2.
3. **Seeking input online** on key questions via surveys, asking for comments on draft documents, and using the website in a robust and lively way. This could include hosting a few webinars on the Blue Plan process at key points and using polling technologies or other approaches to let people upload data and comments.
4. Holding 2-3 rounds of **listening sessions** at different places and times. In each round, several 2-3 hour meetings would be held over a short (several week) timeframe that would be the same meeting held in different places to increase participation by making travel and meeting timing easy for the public. These might include a round toward the beginning of the project to get input on Blue Plan goals and objectives, a round in the middle on key topics Blue Plan officials would like input on, and a round toward the end to hear thoughts on the plan that is being drafted. Unlike the public forums listed in Option 2, the listening sessions are more geographically diverse and less of a time and travel commitment for participants, but also provide less time to engage fully.

Discussion of Option 3

Pros – This is the most robust of the options in terms of the different ways members of the general public can participate. It includes big general meetings (forums) where everyone can hear everyone in one place and people can go in-depth on key questions. It also includes more diverse geographical placement of meetings at key points (during the rounds of listening sessions), which means that people

who might not have the time to travel to one central location for the forum might be able to get to an afternoon or evening meeting that is much closer to where they live or work. In addition, having a more active website and soliciting input that way will likely capture input from people who can't attend meetings but are interested in the process. Many big hopes and concerns would be identified for Blue Plan officials during a process like this. There didn't seem to be a huge appetite for web input from those we spoke with in our stakeholder interviews, yet those who mentioned it said it is essential for certain groups of people.

Cons – This option does not provide for any but the required outreach to particular sectors, which could mean very minimal outreach to groups that have a lot to say about the future of the Sound. Participants may not share freely at these big meetings (as compared with some of the techniques in Options 4 and 5). We have found that there are few members of the general public who are interested in participating in public meetings on marine spatial planning – it is such a specific topic – especially when there is no crisis forcing the meeting to happen. So engaging primarily “the public” may lead to less than desirable project input compared with focusing on more targeted audiences. It could also leave those groups feeling somewhat left out. Managing a website that stays current and uses more than basic information-transmitting technology takes some expertise, time, and attention. Finally, running a set of listening sessions around the geographic area the Blue Plan wants to engage can be a heavy lift logistically in terms of moving materials, finding available staff and volunteers, coordinating with venues, and getting the word out in a timely fashion.

Stakeholder Engagement Option 4: Engaging Key Sectors & Multi-Stakeholder Group

Option 4 contains the techniques in Options 2 and/or 3 plus several other techniques focused on in-depth engagement with key sectors and their leaders.

The techniques included in this option are:

1. **All the techniques in Options 2 and/or 3**, in order to hold a few day-long forums that are open to the public.
2. **Focus groups** with particular sectors at key points. This could be, for example, meeting with various aquaculture or recreational boating or ports groups to explore how the Blue Plan could benefit from their knowledge and potentially support their interests and what Blue Plan officials should be aware of. The key insights from these focus groups (for example, three meetings with people who work in ports) could be summarized without attribution for use by Blue Plan officials. Note also that focus groups could fill the requirement in Blue Plan legislation for consultation with particular sectors, thus not adding a new task but rather clarifying what that consultation might look like.
3. **Outreach to sector leaders** in order to build relationships, learn from them, and work to ensure that people in key sectors have good channels of communication with those developing the Blue Plan. This might also meet the requirement for consultation in the Blue Plan legislation.
4. Form a **Multi-Stakeholder Group** in order to have a group of named and committed participants representing a range of sectors who have a chance to deliberate together. This could be convened by the Blue Plan process or by Blue Plan stakeholders who want to supplement the process themselves or by another existing entity such as the Bi-state MSP Working Group or the

Long Island Sound Study's Citizen Advisory Committee. This group could serve as a sounding board for Blue Plan officials, whether they met formally or in smaller groups, and would provide cross-sector engagement and relationship-building in a way that the other elements of this option would not.

Discussion of Option 4

Pros – This option contains very robust work with different sectors. It provides opportunities for people developing the Blue Plan to engage deeply with those whose lives and livelihoods will be affected by Blue Plan outcomes. In this option there would be formal and informal time to discuss various ideas, gather data, and generally get onto the same page in a sometimes non-public space, which can help participants feel comfortable. This type of outreach to leaders and members of a sector can weave sound relationships in a way that large group engagement cannot generally do. A process like this one would result in deep understanding of stakeholder issues for those sectors who are involved and, likely, better information to incorporate into the project (and thus better outcomes). Blue Plan officials and others would have the opportunity to hear from many different people and in many different contexts, likely generating rich and nuanced information. This option is perhaps the one that most follows the input we heard in our interviews to reach out to the right people at the right time, rather than relying on holding general public meetings.

Cons – It can take significant effort to design constructive, thoughtful, sensitive engagement with particular sectors, and to capture all the key ideas and insights offered during that outreach. Managing the multi-stakeholder consulting team, if that technique was chosen, could take many hours of ongoing management by whomever formed the group to sort out membership, purpose, authority, and then to convene and manage any meetings. This is all a staffing constraint. This option has fewer opportunities for general public participation than do some others, and it has a less robust website than some of the other options.

Stakeholder Engagement Option 5: Topical Working Groups

Option 5 provides great opportunities for people beyond the Advisory Committee to work together on topics of particular importance to the Blue Plan Advisory Committee. This option allows for flexibility about engagement of the general public and particular sectors, and it focuses specifically on the formation of working groups.

The techniques included in this option are:

- The techniques in any of the other Options (1-4), plus
- Forming one to four **working groups** focused on particular topics during time-limited periods when Blue Plan officials need input. Members could be either appointed or solicited, in either case with some clear criteria for who Blue Plan officials hope will make up the workgroup, what is expected of the workgroup, and their role related to that of the Advisory Committee in terms of developing recommendations or ideas. Members could be scientific and technical experts as well as key stakeholders, allowing for real sharing and joint development of products. One example of a complex topic appropriate for a working group might be underwater cables and pipelines.

Discussion of Option 5

Pros – This option provides a new strategy to support the Blue Plan process in which the Advisory Committee (potentially alongside their New York counterparts) form standing working groups on topics on which they need help. This would enable the Blue Plan process to engage knowledgeable people to assist in key aspects of work over time. They could learn together from experts and each other, build relationships and trust, and take the time to deliberate thoughtfully and discuss trade offs in more depth than a group convened for a single session can. This aspect of Option 5 would likely generate well-informed and potentially highly effective work products.

Cons – Unlike the other options, this one does not lay out a particular approach to engaging the general public or particular sectors. Forming working groups requires thoughtful preparation about when input would be useful and on what topics. It requires careful selection of participants, management of and communication with members, tight preparation for and facilitation of workgroup meetings, clarity on the group’s purpose and authority, and tracking and building upon the work that the workgroup does. It can be difficult to scope workgroup tasks clearly enough for a group to really understand how it can best contribute in a timely and relevant way.

New York and the Five Options

As noted elsewhere, running a stakeholder engagement process that is bi-state instead of contained in a single state need not be all that different. Increasing the scale and geography requires more time, effort and logistics for planning, but beyond that the primary functions remain the same.

If New York were folded more formally into the Blue Plan process, decisions would include how best to involve New York representatives in the planning and management of stakeholder engagement (described in Section IV) and how best to reach out to key stakeholders. At a minimum, it would likely make sense to do some initial outreach to and assessment of what is important to New York stakeholders, similar to what was done here with Connecticut stakeholders. Then, in considering different options for combining the engagement techniques, there would be considerations of travel distances and geographic equity (for example, holding listening sessions across the whole region, but perhaps moving full day stakeholder forums from region to region to vary who has to travel far to participate). There might also be more of a need to rely on some conference calls or webinars, though the in-person aspect of engagement can become increasingly important for trust-building and idea-sharing as relationships across a large geographic distance may be less-well developed to begin with.

Appendix A: Long Island Sound Stakeholder Categories

The following categories of stakeholders were developed to facilitate the work of this project and can also be considered when planning public engagement. Each plays an important role in the economic and cultural fiber of Long Island Sound. They are not listed in any particular order. This list was developed by the authors of this report with the Stakeholder Engagement Team and is intended as a starting point for consideration by those leading the Blue Plan. There may be other categories that need to be added.

1. Aquaculture
 - a. Finfish
 - b. Seaweed
 - c. Shellfish
2. Conservation and environmental
3. Economic development & real estate
4. Education and research institutions
 - a. Aquariums
 - b. Extension Programs
 - c. K-12 Schools (e.g. the Sound School)
 - d. Research institutions
 - e. Universities
5. Energy and Energy Transmission
 - a. Hydrokinetic
 - b. Nuclear
 - c. Oil and Gas
 - d. Wind
6. Fishing
 - a. Commercial
 - b. Party boat/charter fishing
 - c. Recreational
 - i. Bait and tackle shops
 - ii. Fish and game clubs and associations
7. Government and legislative bodies
 - a. Federal
 - b. Municipalities
 - c. Quasi-governmental (e.g. LIS Assembly)
 - d. Regional
 - e. State
- f. Tribal
8. Marine trades
9. Marine transportation
 - a. Commercial shipping
 - b. Ferry operators
 - c. Ports
 - d. Tug and tow
10. Other cross-sound linkages
 - a. Railroad (tunnel)
 - b. Telecommunications
11. Recreation and tourism
 - a. Excursion boating (e.g. SoundWaters)
 - b. Non-consumptive (e.g. beach-going, marine events and tournaments)
 - c. Power boating
 - d. Sailing & kayaking
 - e. Scuba diving
 - f. Wildlife tourism/tours/viewing
12. Regional ocean-related entities (e.g. NE RPB, MARCO)

Appendix B: CT-NY Bi-State Marine Spatial Planning Working Group

March 2016:

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Joe Atangan	US Navy
Nancy Balcom	CT Sea Grant
David Blatt	CT DEEP
Riobart Breen	NY DOS; ex officio
Karen Chytalo	NY DEC
Chris Clapp	The Nature Conservancy
Chantal Collier	The Nature Conservancy
Sylvain DeGuise	CT Sea Grant; Working Group Co-Chair
Charles deQuillfeldt	NY DEC
Syma Ebbin	CT Sea Grant
Nathan Frohling	The Nature Conservancy; Working Group Co-Chair
Tessa Getchis	CT Sea Grant
Jason Gunning	US Coast Guard
Jeff Herter	NY DOS; ex officio
Katie Lund	NROC
Daniel Martin	NOAA
Jen McCann	URI
Philip Mikan	US Coast Guard
Nick Napoli	NROC
Kevin O'Brien	CT DEEP
Christine O'Connell	Stony Brook University
Julie Rose	NOAA Fisheries
Leah Schmalz	Save the Sound
Tiffany Smythe	URI
Chris Squeri	Long Island Marine Trades Association
David Sutherland	The Nature Conservancy
Mark Tedesco	EPA, Long Island Sound Study
Brian Thompson	CT DEEP
Grant Westerson	Marine Surveyor, previously CT Marine Trades Assoc. rep
William Wise	NY Sea Grant
Charles Witek	Coastal Conservation Association
Vacant	CT Marine Trades Association

Appendix C: Stakeholder Engagement Resources

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