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

Summer 2022
No. 67

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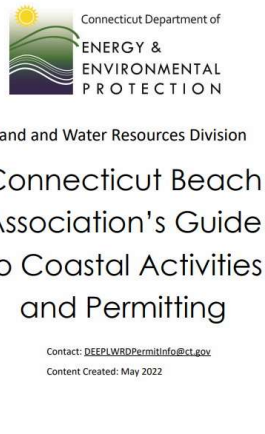
Beach Association's Guide Provides Information on a Wide Range of Coastal Topics

The Land and Water Resources Division (LWRD) has developed another valuable resource, the **Connecticut Beach Association's Guide to Coastal Activities and Permitting**, to help protect coastal resources and avoid potential violations of the DEEP's coastal regulatory programs.

First Impression: Adelaine McCloe, DEEP Land and Water Resources Division



Similar to the **Coastal Property Owner's Guide**, the goal of this guide is to educate members of beach associations about the federal, state, and local permits that may be required before they undertake certain activities on their property. The information contained in the guide regarding common activities such as beach raking and storm response will hopefully protect against future enforcement actions and will protect coastal resources from adverse impacts associated with unauthorized activities, such as fill in tidal wetlands or coastal waters.

Although the guide was developed with beach associations in mind, we strongly encourage *Sound Outlook* readers to view the guide, which also provides general information on interesting topics such as protecting dunes, nesting shorebirds, and horseshoe crabs. When we know better, we can do better.

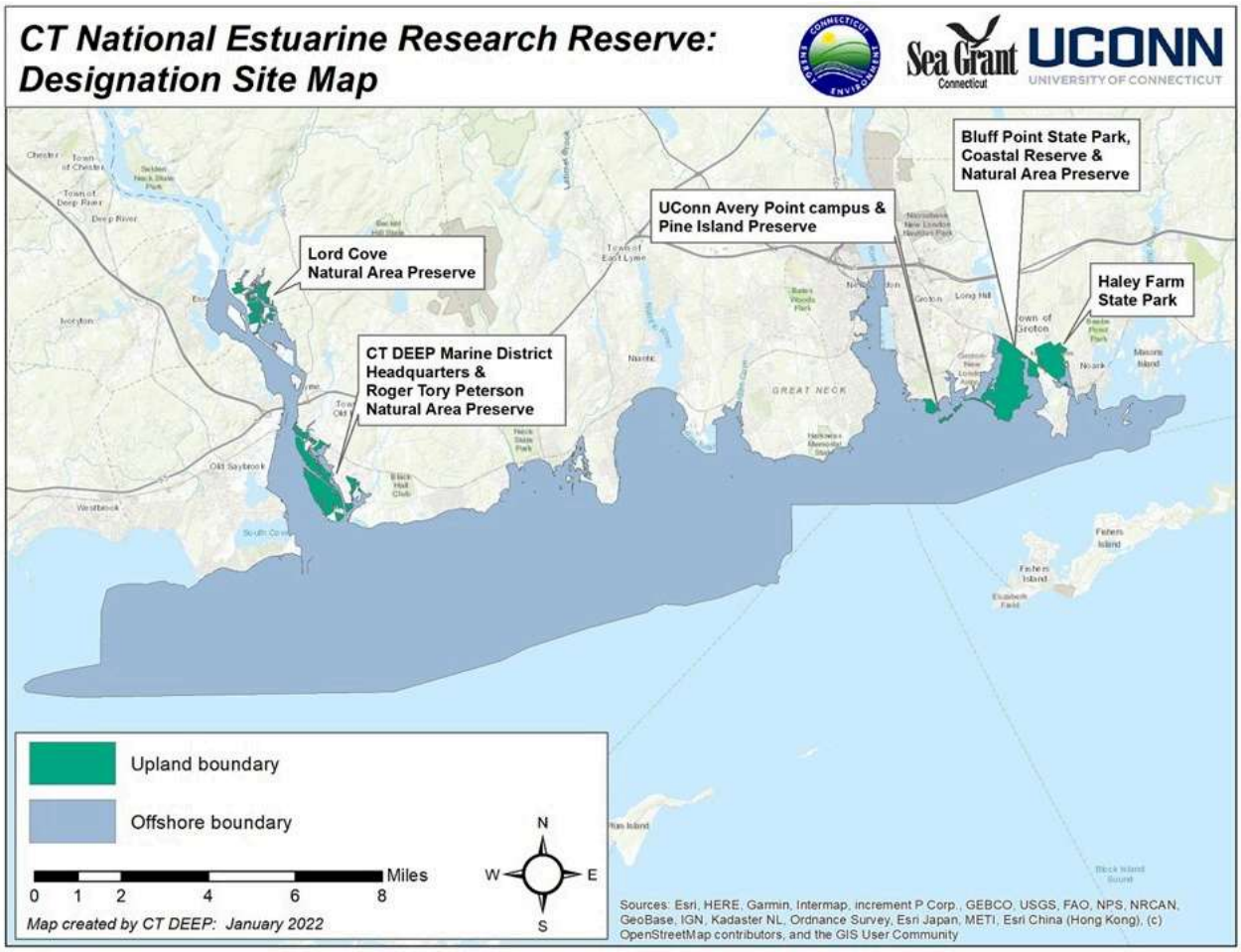
SPOTLIGHTED COASTAL RESOURCE: National Estuarine Research Reserve Update

Regular readers of *Sound Outlook* are no doubt aware that Connecticut's National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) for Long Island Sound was officially designated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on January 14, 2022, becoming the nation's 30th National Estuarine Research Reserve. (Please see the **Summer 2021** and **Fall/Winter 2021** issues of *Sound Outlook* for more information.)

We are pleased to announce that as of July 2022, the University of Connecticut (UConn) has transitioned into the lead management role for the NERR. UConn Marine Sciences Professor George McManus will serve as interim manager of the Reserve, and Marine Sciences Professor Jamie Vaudrey is the Reserve's Research Coordinator. (Please see the **October/November 2017** issue of *Sound Outlook* for an article on Dr. Vaudrey's research on the effects of nitrogen on coastal embayments.)

UConn is currently adding more staff to the Reserve. In fact, the posting for the **Coastal Training Program Coordinator position** closes on October 2, 2022. The Reserve hopes to start providing programming this fall.

For more information about the May 21, 2022 ceremony celebrating the designation of Connecticut's NERR, please see the **Connecticut Sea Grant article** about the event, posted by Judy Benson, Sea Grant Communications Director.



SPOTLIGHTED PUBLIC ACCESS: The Updated Coastal Access Guide Contains Several New Sites, Including the Quinnipiac River Tidal Marsh Trail

The 2022 version of the Connecticut Coastal Access Guide is bigger and better than ever! This most recent version of the guide has grown to over 350 diverse

places to visit and enjoy Connecticut's coast. Several new sites have been added, and updated information, photos, and map guides have been provided for many existing locations.

One of the new sites added to the guide is the **Quinnipiac River Tidal Marsh Trail**, a half-mile hiking trail located in North Haven, Connecticut that follows the eastern shore of the Quinnipiac River. The site is clearly marked and accessible behind the Target located on Universal Drive N.

The trail is fairly level, is well-maintained by the North Haven Trail Association, and features stunning views of the Quinnipiac River and its wetlands. It also offers an opportunity for outdoor activities including bird watching and fishing. Dogs are allowed on-leash and biking is permitted. For directions and a full list of permitted activities, please see the site fact sheet.

You can also visit the **DEEP's Coastal Access webpage** for more information relevant to public access to Long Island Sound in Connecticut, and email **coastal.access@ct.gov** with questions, comments, or additional information about coastal public access.

And of course, for information about the other 350+ places to visit on Connecticut's coast, please visit the **Connecticut Coastal Access Guide**.

The trail provides benches, shade, and educational signage
All Photos: Adelaine McCloe, DEEP LWRD

Stunning views of the tidal marsh and the Quinnipiac River

CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE: DEEP Climate Resilience Fund

Governor Lamont has **announced** the launch of the **DEEP Climate Resilience Fund (DCRF)**, kicked-off by a **webinar event held September 23, 2022**. Remarks were given by DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes and members of the Governor's Council on Climate Change, followed by an overview presentation of the DCRF. More webinars explaining the DCRF are scheduled throughout the rest of September and October, and you can view **the full engagement schedule here.**

The initial round of the DCRF includes $10 million for planning and project concept design to help communities in the state plan and prepare for the effects of climate change. The fund is an historic state-level investment that will help communities initiate planning and envision projects for community climate resilience that can be implemented and constructed with federal funds. At least 40% of the funding will be prioritized for vulnerable communities, including environmental justice communities that will feel the effects of climate change first and worst.

The DCRF has two funding opportunity tracks:

- Track 1 – Planning: Will provide funding for comprehensive climate resilience planning at either the regional, municipal, or neighborhood (hyper-local) level.

- Track 2 – Project Development: Will provide funding for municipalities and other related entities to advance identified resilience projects to the concept stage and to be ready to apply for federal funding for implementation.

Together, these two funding tracks will create the climate resilience project pipeline, composed of plans and project concept designs that can win competitive federal grants to substantially fund implementation and construction. In fact, funding under this program may be used to prepare those federal grant applications. Accordingly, implementation and construction are not eligible activities under the DCRF.

All grantees are required to develop a local match funding strategy to meet the non-federal match requirements of federal funding opportunities. The local match strategy may include using the stormwater authority and climate resilience board expansions authorized under **Public Act 21-115**.

Creation of the DEEP Climate Resilience Fund was an action initiated by **Governor Lamont's Executive Order 21-3**, which he signed in December 2021 and was implemented at the recommendation of the **2021 Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) report**.

Application materials and more information are available at the DCRF website.

- Track 1 applications are due on November 10, 2022.

- Track 2 applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis beginning October 21, 2022. The final deadline for all Track 2 applications is December 1, 2022.

If you have additional questions, please contact:

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First Impressions: Adelaine McCloe, DEEP Land and Water Resources Division

The update of the Coastal Access Guide featured in this issue of *Sound Outlook* was a Herculean task undertaken by Adelaine McCloe, an environmental analyst in the Technical Services section of LWRD. It's no surprise that public access to the outdoors is a topic near and dear to Del's heart. In fact, you could say her **First Impression** was personal and deeply rooted from a very early age:

I don't remember a time when I wasn't outside. Growing up, my brother and I worked a farm in Avon, Connecticut that was cooperatively owned by my mother and grandparents. My mother didn't like processed food—we didn't even have a microwave—and this definitely had a degree of influence on me. When I was younger, I didn't always think it was a positive influence, especially when the cucumbers were overflowing and we had to harvest them in 98 degree heat!

Luckily, Del's summers working in the farm fields were balanced with holiday trips with her dad to the Bahamas, where she and her brother snorkeled around the coral reefs:

Those were always the best vacations! And snorkeling the reefs in Bahamas produced the first item I ever put on my "Bucket List": visit the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

Del enjoying the Nache's Peak Loop Trail near Seattle and Mount Rainier

Del and her loyal hiking buddy Evie taking a break at Galeshead Mountain in New Hampshire

Del's mom moved the family to Vermont when Del was five years old, and Del continued to work in the backyard garden and help make jams and breads, in keeping with her mother's fresh food philosophy. She noticed as she grew older that this lifestyle wasn't the norm for a lot of the kids she knew, and it became even more apparent when the family moved to North Carolina:

In North Carolina I noticed there was a marked change in attitudes about health, about the environment and the outdoors from when I lived in Connecticut and Vermont. In my

Vermont elementary school, community service was required, even at seven and eight years old. We had a community garden that all the kids participated in. We weeded the garden, tidied-up campgrounds. But that was not the attitude in North Carolina. There was a very big shift in focus, and I struggled with that, in a way. I didn't realize it at the time, but when I tried to make friends, my family's lifestyle was a divisive factor.

Del's mom did recognize this, and she enrolled Del in an all-girls private middle school starting in sixth grade. The school was somewhat experimental, having been started by a parent whose daughter had been bullied in public school. The classes were small at first; with merely six students in Del's sixth grade class, students were provided significant one-on-one attention. The curriculum was largely community service oriented, and even the younger students were expected to contribute 30 hours of community service per school year. For example, students volunteered at a local food bank twice a month, and more frequently during the holidays, helping with food distribution. Del's interest in equity and environmental justice issues took hold from these experiences, and the school's strong interactive component helped Del achieve her **First Environmental Step**:

We attended a sea camp in Florida as a school trip, and it combined a classroom curriculum with field work. We collected water samples, either aboard the camp's 12 boats or by SCUBA diving. The classroom component drove home concepts about sea water temperatures heating up, sea levels rising, and coral reef bleaching. A lot of those topics could be depressing for a kid my age, but the camp made us feel that we were participating in the research being conducted at the host facility, that our water samples were being incorporated into their work, and that we were contributing to something larger in some small way. That camp experience definitely had an impact on me. And I learned that I really liked the marine biology aspect of what we were learning.

From there, Del attended a small, non-traditional high school, the **School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville (SILSA)**. Located in the basement of Asheville High School, the school's curriculum had a strong science focus and was oriented to real-life applications of science:

I absolutely loved SILSA. A lot of my friends from middle school were attending, and although we had to pay tuition it was a more-affordable alternative to private college prep high schools in the area. SILSA was edgy, interactive and collaborative, where students worked on school-wide projects to incorporate a green approach and drive home real-life application concepts.

One of the school-wide projects Del worked on was developing a successful proposal for a grant to install hand dryers in SILSA bathrooms to reduce paper waste. Another of Del's SILSA projects led to her **Behavior Change**, which in her case was the chance to flesh out the interest in marine biology that had started at the Florida sea camp:

All students had to complete a capstone project every year, and one of mine was a study of the impacts of sonar on marine life. I built a small sonar device with the help of a teacher, submerged it in a tank with fish, and observed the fish over a total of 30 days to see if there were differences in swimming patterns. This was a big thing for me, to incorporate scientific exploration into my study, and I loved it.

As college application time approached, Del decided to attend the University of Connecticut (UConn), in part because her grandparents still lived in the state. But she

wasn't entirely sure she would immerse herself in the marine biology curriculum; by then she had also developed an interest in environmental anthropology:

I started freshman year with an undecided major, and without a car on campus I realized I couldn't take a lot of the marine biology courses offered at Avery Point. So I focused purely on anthropology for one-and-one-half years. But I missed the environmental focus, so I decided to take a semester off to reevaluate my options.

Ultimately Del reapplied to UConn as an environmental engineering student. Even though she loved the science and environmental electives associated with that major, Del soon learned that math was not her strong suit. She turned to her academic advisor, who actually gave her some great advice:

My advisor suggested that I major in environmental science instead of engineering and pick a concentration. Since most of my environmental engineering class credits transferred, I was able to graduate from UConn with an anthropology degree, an environmental science degree, and a minor in Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

In addition to her coursework, the opportunities afforded to Del while at UConn helped shape her **Big Environmental Step**, which is working for a state environmental agency. An independent study that focused on the effects of environmental hazard events such as large storms and flooding on communities allowed Del to weave her environmental interests with her anthropology background:

The study looked at how we approach communities that have no experience with storms or significant flooding, and imbue them with a sense of urgency and a better sense of what they could expect in that situation. Because for many people, especially underserved populations, when they're told to evacuate they feel, "I've never had anything bad happen to me before so why should I uproot my entire life for this and go somewhere else?" What about the people who have pets, or who are older and don't want to leave their possessions? These are important factors, and when people are faced with these choices, it complicates things. How do you develop an evacuation plan to take all of these things into consideration if your goal is to evacuate as many people as possible? So we were brainstorming potential methods to make that experience, however awful it might be, more clear to them so that they can make the most educated decision in regards to their livelihood.

I can remember wading through knee-high water in the pouring rain to bring horses into the barn when my mother's farm property was flooded by the Farmington River. So it was a strange concept to me that people wouldn't be aware of the damage they could potentially face from storm events and other environmental impacts.

Del took advantage of another opportunity at UConn when she attended the inaugural session of the Climate Corps program led by Bruce Hyde and Juliana Barrett from the Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR). Because it was a new course, there were fewer than 15 students which meant more one-on-one attention and collaboration in developing the class project, a municipal storm remediation plan. After the class ended, Del was granted an internship with CLEAR to provide a student's perspective to add to the Climate Corps experience. She also assisted the Town of Old Lyme in their application for enrollment in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS), which would improve Old Lyme residents' eligibility for discounts on their FEMA flood insurance premiums. In developing the CRS application, Del worked very

closely with DEEP/LWRD's Diane Ifkovic, the state's flood insurance program coordinator, which piqued her interest in working for DEEP:

*I started at DEEP in January 2020, just before COVID hit, so I'm going on two-and-a-half years now which has flown by! I feel like I've learned so much, and then I feel like there's so much I still have to learn. I've worked on the **coastal access guide**, adding new sites, updating photos and directions, and maintaining the database of sites. I've also worked on the **Long Island Sound Blue Plan Ecologically Significant Areas Story Map** and the **Blue Plan map viewer**, and I oversee LWRD's biannual performance reporting to NOAA's Office for Coastal Management on our coastal management progress. And I'm very excited to started working on the DEEP's Equity and Environmental Justice working group.*

I always knew if I were to work in a government capacity, I would want to work at the local or state level so I could see the impacts and victories more closely. No disrespect to federal agencies, but I think real change starts at a smaller level, and I think local and state government have a better sense of the needs facing their communities. When you foster and grow and build those relationships over time, they coalesce into something that's much more impactful and more connected.

Connecticut's coastal communities and under-served populations will no doubt benefit from Del's passion for her work and her unwavering commitment to environmental justice. Because for Del, it's personal.

Del (right) and her DEEP LWRD colleague Brooke Gondek immerse themselves in their work by placing HOBO data loggers

to gather information on flood water levels

Published by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse.

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