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

**Summer 2023  
No. 69**

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LWRD Wetlands, Watercourses,  
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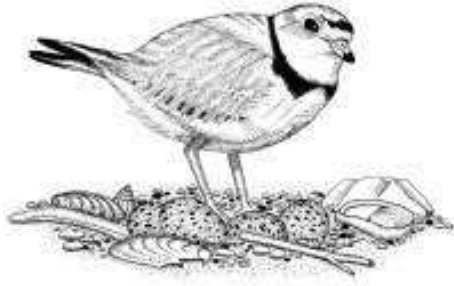
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The Land and Water Resources Division (LWRD) has developed another valuable resource, the online [LWRD Wetlands, Watercourses, & Coastal Complaints Form](#), to more effectively investigate and address complaints relating to Wetlands, Watercourses, and Coastal Waters in Connecticut.

## First Impressions: Brian Thompson, LWRD Director



**Date and time of violation\***  
Default response is current date and time. Please edit to reflect the date and time of the observed violation.

6/27/2023 11:46 AM

**Town where violation occurred (or for which an administrative complaint is being made)\***

**Geolocation**

Select the location on the map where you observed the violation (if an administrative complaint, use the location of the town/city hall)\*  
The map will attempt to use your device's location to place the point. Please tap or click the map once to move the geopoint, and drag the map with a finger or mouse to change locations.

Find address or place

Hartford Waterbury Bridgeport Providence New Bedford Rhode Island

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LWRD directly regulates activities in tidal wetlands and activities waterward of the Coastal Jurisdiction Line (CJL) in coastal, tidal, and navigable waters of Connecticut. LWRD also administers the state's Inland Wetland and Watercourses program. This form can be used to report violations observed in Connecticut's Inland Wetlands, Watercourses, Tidal Wetlands, and Coastal, Tidal, or Navigable Waters waterward of the CGL, or to report an administrative complaint about a municipal Inland Wetlands Agency/staff.

The form will allow the public to inform DEEP of the date and time of the violation, geolocation, address, and the type of complaint. The form also enables one to upload images or videos of the violation and add additional comments and descriptions. Complainants may provide their name and contact information if they wish to be contacted, or choose to remain anonymous. This form will help streamline the process of addressing complaints and allow LWRD analysts to better locate and track violations in Connecticut's waters.

## 50 Years of the Endangered Species Act

This year marks an important milestone in environmental legislation and conservation: the 50th anniversary of the passage of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973.

On February 8, 1972, President Richard Nixon addressed Congress in a special message calling for legislation to make the taking of an endangered species a federal offense and to allow protective measures to prevent certain species from extinction. President Nixon called for

stronger legislation than the previously passed Endangered Species Preservation Act (ESPA) of 1966, later amended and renamed the Endangered Species Conservation Act in 1969.

*It has only been in recent years that efforts have been undertaken to list and protect those species of animals whose continued existence is in jeopardy. Starting with our national symbol, the bald eagle, we have expanded our concern over the extinction of these animals to include the present list of over 100. We have already found, however, that even the most recent act to protect endangered species, which dates only from 1969, simply does not provide the kind of management tools needed to act early enough to save a vanishing species.* -President Richard Nixon

A year later, on June 12, 1973, Senator Harrison A. Williams (D-NJ) introduced the Endangered Species Act in the U.S. Senate on June 12. The Senate unanimously approved the bill on July 24, and the U.S. House approved a version of the bill on September 18. By December 19, a joint conference committee reported a bill reconciling the two versions, and it was approved by the House and Senate the same day. On December 28, 1973, President Nixon signed the bill into law. The ESA was strongly bipartisan, with unanimous approval in the Senate and a 355-4 vote in the House.

Since its inception 50 years ago, the ESA has been a huge conservation success. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior, 99% of listed species are still with us today thanks to collaboration between federal, state, local, and Tribal governments, as well as conservation organizations and private citizens.

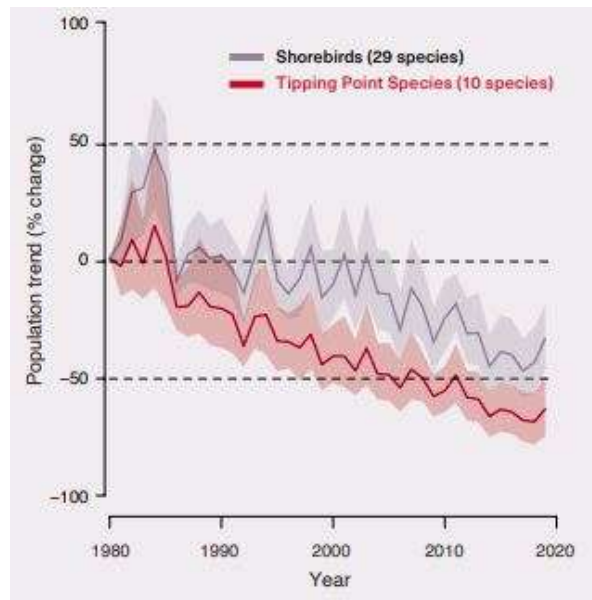
Connecticut adopted additional legislation in 1989 to further conservation goals in the state, with Public Act 89-224, “An Act Establishing a Program for the Protection of Endangered and Threatened Species.” The goal of the legislation, codified in Connecticut General Statutes Sections 26-303 through 26-317, is to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance any endangered or threatened species and their essential habitat. The law required the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to develop lists of [Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern](#) species.

The Endangered Species Act and Public Act 89-224 are two key pieces of legislation that have helped prevent several endangered and threatened species from becoming extinct or extirpated from the Long Island Sound area. See our [Spotlighted Coastal Resource](#) article below for more info on the endangered and threatened species of the Connecticut coast and why their protection is more important than ever.

### **SPOTLIGHTED COASTAL RESOURCE: The Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species of Coastal Connecticut**

According to NOAA, Connecticut’s coastal area is home to 2.2 million people, accounting for 61% of the state's total population. The shores and waters of Long Island Sound are also home to endangered and threatened species who rely on our coastal resources for shelter, nesting, and migration. With the dense population and land use within the coastal area, and the number of sensitive species that rely on sharing that small space with us, the protection of endangered and threatened species for which Connecticut’s shores are essential to their life cycle is as important as ever.

Many state or federally recognized endangered and threatened species found in Connecticut's coastal area are nesting shorebirds. The [2022 State of the Birds Report](#), released by the U.S North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), has painted a dire picture for shorebirds in particular. Since 1970, shorebird populations have declined by 33%. Among "Tipping Point" species such as the state threatened [least tern](#) and [seaside sparrow](#), those losses can exceed 70%. A "Tipping Point" species is a species on current trajectory to lose another 50% of their remaining population in the next 50 years.



Source: [U.S North American Bird Conservation Initiative](#)



Snowy Egret  
Photo: Braden Lynn/DEEP LWRD

The [great egret](#) and [snowy egret](#) are members of the heron family that rely on coastal habitat in Connecticut for breeding. Both species are listed as state threatened and were hunted for their feathers for the millinery trade (the hat-making business) throughout the 1800s, with snowy egrets extirpated from the state by the end of the century. Thanks to protective laws, which put an end to the plume trade, and increased conservation efforts, both species can now be observed along the coast, visiting and breeding in Connecticut in low numbers. You can tell the two species apart by their size, bills, and feet; snowy egrets are smaller with black bills and yellow feet, whereas great egrets have yellow bills and black feet. While feeding, the snowy egret (pictured left) uses one foot to stir up the bottom of shallow marshes and ponds and flush prey into view.



The [piping plover](#) is a threatened species at the federal and state level that has struggled with habitat loss due to development. They rely on beach dunes and tidal creeks for nesting and feeding, both of which have been fragmented by shoreline development, recreational beaches, and pedestrian traffic. You may see shorebird habitat delineated by DEEP and coastal towns along coastal beaches to protect piping plover nests from destruction by both humans and predators. On some beaches, DEEP installs welded wire fencing (called exclosures) around piping plover nests. These exclosures, pictured to the left, are removed after the chicks hatch. The [American oystercatcher](#), which is listed as threatened in some Connecticut counties, also relies on this shoreline habitat.



A piping plover nest delineated by an exclosure at Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport. Note the plover in the red box at the bottom-right. Photo: DEEP LWRD

Some state-endangered species rely on freshwater rivers and wetlands within the coastal area of Connecticut, including the [American bittern](#), [king rail](#), [pied-billed grebe](#), [sedge wren](#), [common moorhen](#), and the owl-like [northern harrier](#) (often called the marsh hawk). The state threatened [least bittern](#) also relies on freshwater, saltwater, or brackish marshes.



A juvenile loggerhead sea turtle is released after being captured in the Deep River section of the Connecticut River  
Photo: R. St. Amand/DEEP Marine Fisheries

It isn't only shorebirds that rely on our conservation efforts in Long Island Sound. Out in the Sound, several species of sea turtle use Connecticut's coastal waters as migratory routes during warmer months, including the federally and state-endangered [Atlantic ridley](#) and [leatherback](#) and the federally and state threatened [Atlantic green](#) and [loggerhead](#) sea turtles. Reasons for decline for these species include habitat loss due to development, boat propeller strikes, ocean pollution, and commercial fishing and shrimping activities. Fortunately, federal legislation now requires all shrimp trawlers in the Atlantic Ocean to use [turtle excluder devices](#) (TEDs) year-round.

The federally and state-endangered [Atlantic sturgeon](#) lives in salt water during its adult life and enters freshwater rivers to spawn. They are found in Long Island Sound but aren't known to breed anywhere in Connecticut due to their demise in the state as a result of dam building, overfishing, and pollution. The [shortnose sturgeon](#), also federally and state-endangered, spends most of its life in the Connecticut River and its estuary, occasionally straying out into Long Island Sound and neighboring rivers.



An adult Atlantic sturgeon  
Photo: Connecticut DEEP

Protections for endangered and threatened species are just as important today as they were when the Endangered Species Act passed 50 years ago. While Connecticut's shorebirds are in decline, they may have been at a much higher risk of extirpation or extinction without federal and state efforts to preserve them. Not all populations of endangered or threatened species are declining—there are also plenty of endangered species who were able to reverse course thanks to federal and state protections.

Of course, the first success story that probably comes to mind is that of the [bald eagle](#). The bald eagle was in danger of extinction and was extirpated from Connecticut by the 1950s. When the ESA passed in 1973, it was declared an endangered species. In Connecticut, the bald eagle was classified as endangered in 1992 when the first official state list of endangered species was created. That same year, the first successful nesting since the 1950s was documented in the state. Since then, nesting and wintering eagle populations in the state have been slowly increasing, and the bald eagle has been downlisted to a state-threatened species and delisted federally. FirstLight Power, owner and operator of the Shepaug Hydroelectric Power Station in Southbury, offers bald eagle viewings, among dozens of other raptors and waterfowl, at the [Shepaug Bald Eagle Observatory](#) each winter.



The Travelers Tower, a frequent nesting spot for peregrine falcons  
Photo: Braden Lynn/DEEP LWRD

The [peregrine falcon](#) was similarly listed as endangered by the ESA and had been completely extirpated from the eastern United States by 1975 as a direct result of organochlorine pesticides such as DDT. However, breeding populations had been declining in Connecticut since the early 1900s. In the late 1940s, the last documented nesting in Connecticut for almost half a century occurred on the Travelers Tower in Hartford. Thanks to reintroduction efforts, small breeding populations were restored to the area and the bird was delisted from the federal endangered species list in 1999. In 1997, a pair [successfully nested 3 chicks](#) on the Travelers Tower once again, and today they nest across Connecticut in small numbers.

The [purple martin](#) was downlisted from a state threatened species to a species of special concern in 2015, thanks in part to conservation efforts increasing the number of purple martin houses in Connecticut, in cooperation with private land owners and the DEEP Wildlife Division. If you would like to learn more about the purple martin monitoring program or are interested



in hosting purple martin housing on your property, visit the [DEEP website](#) and the [PMCA \(Purple Martin Conservation Association\) website](#).

While shorebirds and other endangered species continue to struggle with population decline and sharing their limited habitat with human development, the ESA and Connecticut endangered species legislation are vital tools in the conservation of these species and may be the reason they are still around the shores of Long Island Sound today. We hope next time you spot a snowy egret wading along the shore, a piping plover nest fenced off at your local beach, or a bald eagle pair nesting above a Connecticut river, you reflect on the importance of conservation efforts and legislation to protect these delicate species.

### **SPOTLIGHTED PUBLIC ACCESS: Charles Island and Duck Island**

In this section, regular readers are probably used to learning about public access sites they can visit. This issue, we are going to spotlight two public access sites that you cannot access—well, only from late May to early September. In light of the federal and state conservation efforts highlighted in this issue of *Sound Outlook*, we understand why access is limited!



Charles Island in Milford and Duck Island in Westbrook are closed to the public from Memorial Day Weekend to September 9th to prevent disturbances to nesting birds. The islands have both been designated by DEEP as Natural Area Preserves. The islands provide important nesting habitat for several state-listed birds, including snowy egrets, great egrets, glossy ibis, and little blue herons.



Great Egret  
Photo: Braden Lynn/DEEP LWRD



Little Blue Heron  
Photo: Braden Lynn/DEEP LWRD

The [Connecticut Audubon Society](#), which is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year, also designates the islands as Important Bird Areas.

“Protecting wildlife and their habitat is one of DEEP’s most critical functions,” said DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes. “We coordinate closely with conservation organizations, and work to educate the public about the importance of preserving these bird populations here in Connecticut.”

DEEP is enlisting the public’s help and cooperation to protect these vulnerable and declining shorebird populations. We ask that the public respect the closure of these islands, as disturbances can lead to abandonment of nests and possibly of the entire colonies. Signs are posted stating the closure of each site, and DEEP Environmental Conservation Officers will be patrolling the islands. The islands are entirely closed and the landing of watercraft on the shoreline is prohibited. The public can help protect nesting birds by reporting any observed violations by calling DEEP’s 24-hour dispatch center at 1-800-842-HELP (1-800-842-4357).

DEEP is also asking beach visitors and boaters to respect fencing and yellow signs warning of piping plover and least tern nesting sites along the Connecticut shoreline, as both are state-threatened species. Each spring, DEEP Wildlife Division partners with coastal towns to delineate nesting habitat and identify the fragile nesting locations of these shorebirds.

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](mailto: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](#).



Piping Plover  
Photo: Kaiti Titherington, USFWS



These yellow warning signs indicate bird nesting habitat. Photo: DEEP Wildlife



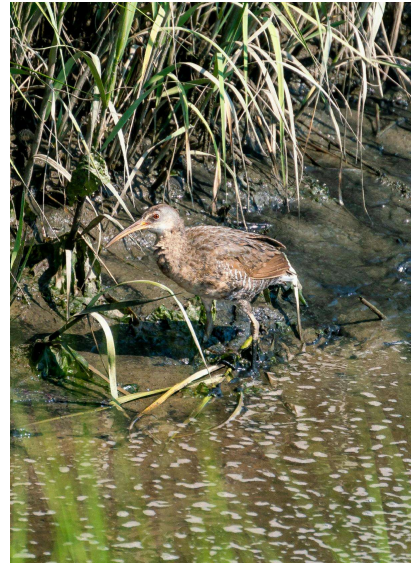
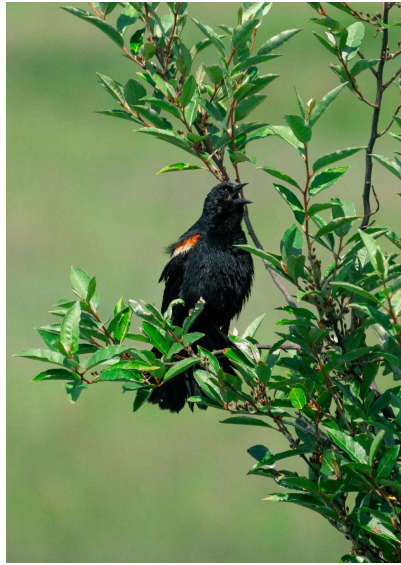
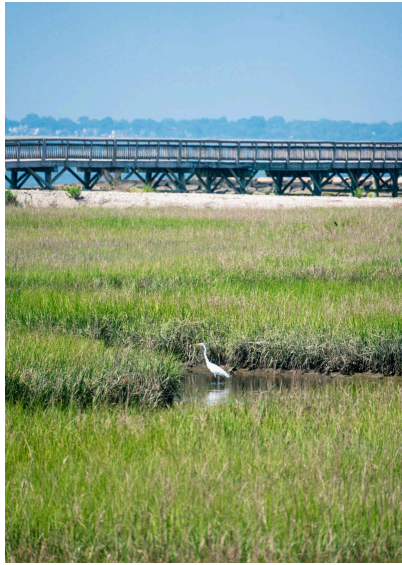
Charles Island  
Photo: Braden Lynn/DEEP LWRD



Duck Island  
Photo: Long Island Sound Study



While Charles Island will be closed to the public, you can still enjoy the flora and fauna of [Silver Sands State Park](#), which also offers great views of the island. The birds below were photographed at Silver Sands.



Left to right: great egret (yellow bill!), red-winged blackbird, clapper rail  
Photos: Braden Lynn/DEEP LWRD

See also: [Common Shorebirds of Connecticut: An Identification Guide](#)

### **CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE: Governor Lamont Announces \$8.8 Million in State Funding to Support 21 Climate Resilience Plans and Project Development Grants**

Governor Ned Lamont announced that the State of Connecticut is awarding \$8.8 million in grants through the inaugural round of the [Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Climate Resilience Fund](#) (DCRF).

Through the DCRF, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is providing critical planning support to local governments, nonprofits, and others seeking to advance climate resilience projects, with the goal of enabling the recipients to in turn seek federal funding for construction and implementation phases. DEEP is utilizing DCRF funds to catalyze Connecticut's resilience project pipeline and ensure our communities are competitive for federal resources, which are at historic levels as a result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act.

In this first round of funding, more than 90% of the funds will go to vulnerable communities that will feel the effects of climate change first and worst, including 10 municipalities that are designated by state statute as "environmental justice communities." This funding more than doubles the initial goal set in Governor Lamont's [Executive Order 21-3](#), which called for the creation of the DCRF and required that at least 40% of funds support vulnerable communities.

"Investing in reducing climate-changing emissions and preparing for future extreme storms and events by building community resilience is critical to Connecticut's future, particularly for our most vulnerable communities," DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes said. "Through this funding, DEEP is providing planning support to municipalities and nonprofits, and building the state's resilience project pipeline to ensure our communities are well-positioned to compete for the

historic federal funding available, that projects get built, and that our communities are better protected from climate-related impacts.”

Resilience Planning Grants, which provide funding for comprehensive climate resilience planning, have been awarded to these coastal towns and applicants:

**Groundwork Bridgeport, Inc., \$249,816:** Groundwork Bridgeport, a community-based organization in Bridgeport, will develop a neighborhood-level plan to reduce heat island impacts in the East Side neighborhood. The plan will identify cool corridors (travel routes) for reducing urban heat island effect and the team will also coordinate with the City of Bridgeport on street upgrades to support cooling.

**City of Bridgeport, \$250,000:** The City of Bridgeport will conduct a comprehensive climate risk and vulnerability assessment, and develop a prioritized list of strategies, actions, and projects. The city will also identify funding opportunities, assess municipal level match funding, and identify implementation strategies.

**Town of Groton, \$200,000:** The Town of Groton will develop a town-wide climate resilience plan that looks at all hazards. The plan will accompany a town-funded climate mitigation plan.

**City of Norwalk, \$246,283:** The City of Norwalk will develop a citywide flood resilience workplan to prioritize and execute resilience strategies, related land-use planning, and identify site-specific projects to mitigate climate impacts. The plan will also provide a framework of nature-based solutions that, if implemented will increase community resilience and improve water quality.

**City of Stamford, \$210,750:** The City of Stamford will develop a neighborhood-level plan for the Downtown, West Side, and Waterside neighborhoods for addressing heat risk and resilience, including identify longer-term planning, policy, and regulatory strategies, and develop near-term actions to complement ongoing emergency preparedness and response efforts.

Resilience Project Development Grants, which provide funding to advance identified resilience projects with an end goal of successfully applying for federal funding that pays for construction implementation, have been awarded to these coastal towns and applicants:

**Metro Council of Governments, Bridgeport, \$400,000:** The MetroCOG will conduct engineering studies and other analyses, and conduct community engagement for a proposed living shoreline and transportation infrastructure alternatives along Johnson’s Creek in Bridgeport’s East End Neighborhood.

**Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, \$689,181:** The NVCOG will develop and advance culvert replacement and drainage system improvement projects in nine municipalities to reduce stormwater flooding, with the outcomes including preliminary designs and cost estimates.

**Town of Hamden, \$567,500:** The Town of Hamden will develop and design a pump station replacement in the lower Pardee Brook watershed and nature-based green infrastructure in the upper Pardee Brook watershed using a collaborative design process to reduce flooding in the Meadowbrook Co-Op neighborhood.

**Greater New Haven Water Pollution Control Authority, New Haven, \$506,000:** The Greater New Haven WPCA will conduct studies on street flooding and sewer back-ups in the Westville neighborhood, and identify and evaluate options for potential projects that include nature-based solutions.

**Norwich Public Utilities, \$650,000:** Norwich Public Utilities will design and scope a wall to protect the Bean Hill Substation from river flooding. The substation serves the trauma center, industrial park, and 6,000 residential customers in Norwich.

**Norwich Public Utilities, \$485,000:** Norwich Public Utilities will conduct numerous site and engineering studies, along with necessary federal grant application studies, related to relocating the Shipping Street sewage pump station out of the floodway of the Thames River.

**City of Stamford, \$481,125:** The City of Stamford will conduct modeling, identify alternatives, and develop conceptual designs for reducing stormwater flooding in the Cummings Pond watershed in the Cove and East Side neighborhoods.

**City of Stamford, \$598,125:** The City of Stamford will evaluate flooding issues in the Toilsome Brook watershed, specifically in the Ridgeway-Bullshead, Turn of River-Newfield, and Glenbrook-Belltown neighborhoods, and develop concept-level flood mitigation recommendations that will include drainage system improvements, stream daylighting, and relocating or elevating structures and infrastructure.

**City of West Haven, \$669,900:** The City of West Haven will develop preliminary designs for reducing flooding in the Sanford Street Basin, in the Allintown District, including new piping, culverts, a structured wetland, and a new outfall path to the Cove River. The city will also conduct a feasibility study for a stormwater authority.

For more information on all of the resilience projects funded, please read the [full press release](#).

### **First Impressions: Brian Thompson, DEEP Land and Water Resources Division Director**

This column features the "First Impression" that set someone on his or her path to environmentalism. We hope *Sound Outlook* readers will relate to these "First Impressions" and recall their own experiences that led them to appreciate and care about Long Island Sound.

Some people can easily identify the first impression that set them on their environmental path. Perhaps it was at summer camp when they first went overnight camping and visited the nature lodge. Perhaps it was a school field trip to a museum where they saw life-size replicas of an African elephant or a blue whale. It also might come from a parent who is a biology teacher or environmental educator. For Brian Thompson, Director of the Land and Water Resources Division at DEEP, it was a simple feeling that drove him to explore nature and start his environmental journey: boredom.

*One of the driving factors for me, and this probably sounds kind of funny, was boredom. There's a line of thinking in child development about the importance of kids being bored. That's sort of changed a lot because now there's no time to be bored, there's always something available to keep them busy.*

It might not sound like the most exciting **First Impression**, but when you really think about it, being bored is one of the most important opportunities that we have in childhood. Boredom fosters imagination and exploration, and leads kids to create games, adventures, and stories out of sticks, rocks, and leaves. Brian's father owned a sailboat and would often take him down to the boat yard for several hours at a time, and he would get bored. It was being bored that pushed Brian to go explore the environment around him.

As Brian says, environmental consciousness at a young age is all about opportunity.

*We were in a suburban area with lots of woods and swamps and we were close to the coast. My father owned a sailboat so we used to go out sailing, and so I had that exposure. My mother*



*was really environmentally focused, which at the time was not necessarily a common thing for people to be. So they exposed me to things in my surroundings and made [the environment] available to me.*

While his father worked on the boat, Brian would pass the time by exploring the docks, boats, and wetlands around the boat yard, or catching killifish. He and his friends would play in the forests and freshwater wetlands around their neighborhood and go on impromptu camping trips. For him, there was no one impression that set him on his way, but rather an awareness of the environment that was always with him due to the opportunity to be exposed to it from a very early age.

For those of us who have had the opportunity to have access to nature for as long as we can remember, it can be hard to pinpoint the moment where we took our **First Environmental Step** towards environmental awareness. For Brian, perhaps it came when he took a summer job working at an apple orchard and worked outdoors while learning about agriculture. Maybe it came in high school when he realized he enjoyed his science classes. Or perhaps it wasn't until he enrolled in St. Lawrence University and spent time in the Adirondacks, majoring in geology.

*Somewhere along the line I tried out geology, and I liked geology. At one point I was going to be a double major in geology and physics, because I was pretty good at physics in the first year. And then I started taking the second year of physics, and I realized it's a lot different and you've got to be really good at math. So I dropped out of the physics part and became a geology major. But I still wasn't thinking strictly environmentally.*

Whenever his first few steps had been taken, it was probably the thought of the professional world that triggered in him a greater environmental awareness that pushed him towards a career in the environmental field. This **Behavior Change** came when he was trying to decide his next steps after graduation.

*Senior year I started thinking about what I wanted to do. A lot of the graduates from the program were getting into oil exploration, because that was a big deal, but I didn't really want to do that. So I started thinking about grad school and ended up at the University of Rhode Island Marine Affairs Program. I knew I liked being around oceans and spent a lot of time on Long Island Sound as a kid, so I thought that it sounded like a pretty interesting blend of the science background I had and policy stuff. That was where I first started really thinking about an environmental career.*

After finishing the grad school program at URI, he began looking for jobs... and ended up at EPA Headquarters in Washington DC, working in the Municipal Wastewaters program.

*I did that for about 4 years, and being in DC is great at that stage of life. There's a lot to do there, it's a pretty important place, and environmentally there's a lot of agencies and non-profits that are there, so it seemed like there was a lot of opportunity there to make connections.*

Brian and his wife got married around the time he started that job. After 4 years, a variety of factors brought them back to Connecticut. He tried out a job as a private consultant, but after about a year he realized he didn't like that. However, he does credit it with exposing him to different aspects of environmental work outside a federal agency. While he had taken big steps towards deciding on an environmental career, perhaps the final **Big Environmental Step** towards a career in environmental protection was would come with his next job.



*I ended up finding a job with Aquarion Water Company in Fairfield County as an environmental scientist doing watershed and aquifer protection. That sort of expanded into other areas like environmental compliance, water quality monitoring and reservoir management, and I became a manager there. That office was in Easton, which is a pretty rural town. Probably 50% of the town is water company land. That was pretty nice, it was up in the woods and the Aspetuck River ran behind the office building I was in, which was a great place to go out for walks at lunch time and watch otters and stuff like that. That really cemented for me the kind of work I wanted to do. It was really environmental protection work, looking at land use issues and impacts on water supply, and working with municipalities in their development plans to protect water quality through aquifer protection plans. It was a lot of forestry, maintaining the land that the water company owned.*

Life in rural Connecticut and the variety of experience in environmental protection eventually led him to join us at DEEP.

*I did that for 17 years and then I saw the opportunity arise here, with a posting for the director job in the Office of Long Island Sound Programs and I thought 'that sounds pretty interesting'. I had no idea if I had any shot at it, but I ended up getting offered the job... It was a big decision, and I would say the hardest decision I've had to make, because I really liked my job.*

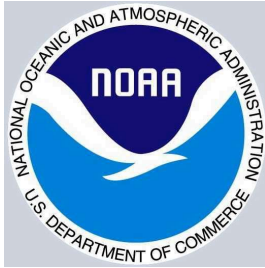
Moving back into the world of government work was, he admits, quite the culture shift. He had spent a couple years in the EPA, but after almost two decades of private work, it took some getting used to.

*There were a lot of different responsibilities, but really good people who knew what they were doing, and whose experience I could rely on. There were definitely times where I said "what have I done" but it all worked out and I've been enjoying it ever since. It's always a little different here, nothing's really the same day to day. Lots of variety, lots of challenges, some frustrations, but overall, it was a really good move for me and I don't have any regrets about it.*

Brian and his wife Colleen have 3 boys, one of whom is currently in grad school for Environmental Science & Policy. His kids grew up in a similar setting and Brian tried to give them the same experience and opportunity that he got as a kid. His kids would go off and explore, and he would take them on hikes, camping trips, and family vacations. I asked him if he noticed a difference in the opportunities for boredom that his kids were exposed to.

*I think they did have less opportunities for boredom than I did. My middle child, who ended up getting interested in the environment the most, was the one who also got bored the most. He wasn't very interested in video games, and he would get bored and go off and wander around. So I do think that's important to have the opportunity to be bored and go off and explore and be inquisitive and turn over rocks.*

However, even though increased access to technology and video games at a young age means children often grow up with far less opportunity for boredom than Brian did, he is optimistic about the younger generation's environmental awareness. He credits that optimism to the huge variety of organized opportunities to get kids exposed to the environment around them, such as summer camps, school programs, conservation trips, and other government programs like DEEP's [No Child Left Inside](#), to help get kids outdoors. As he said at the beginning of the interview, fostering environmental awareness is all about opportunity at a young age.



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Editors: Braden Lynn and Mary-beth Hart

Contributors: DEEP Office of Climate Planning

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