

A Forum on Marine Spatial Planning for Long Island Sound



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University of Connecticut-Avery Point
1080 Shennecossett Road
Groton, CT 06340



Room 103, Seminar Room, Marine Science Building

The Long Island Sound Estuary

The Long Island Sound (LIS) Estuary, the “urban sea”, forms the southern boundary of Connecticut and the northern boundary of Long Island, New York. LIS is a significant environmental, economic, cultural and recreational resource for both Connecticut and New York, and the Southern New England region as a whole. Recognized for its beauty and value, LIS was one of the first “estuaries of national significance” to be designated by the US Environmental Protection Agency. More 8.8 million people live in the Long Island Sound watershed (7.2 million of them in Connecticut and New York portions of the watershed) and more than 4.6 million live within 15 miles of the coast. Diverse usage of the Sound includes recreation, commercial fishing, coastal aquaculture, marine trades and transportation, and recreational boating, tourism, as well as habitat for fish, shellfish, birds, wildlife and plants. The last update of the economic value of the Sound by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection indicates that the resources and uses of the Sound contribute \$8.25 billion per year to the regional economy.

For a relatively small water body, the Sound is maximally utilized. Ports and waterways support a wide range of commercial enterprises including marine transportation, fishing, aquaculture, and shipbuilding. In addition, the waterways and shorelines provide a venue for recreation and tourism, military activities, and particularly an ever increasing number of recreational boats and personal watercraft. It provides the highly-controversial means for transporting energy from New England to Long Island via submerged cables and pipelines, and was proposed as a location for an equally-controversial floating LNG terminal. The use and modification of offshore habitat for navigation channels, marinas and mooring areas, and aquaculture sites also modifies living resource habitat along the shore. Living resources are also at risk from over-fishing and the impacts of pollution. The addition of living resources is also presenting a problem with the introduction of invasive species to the Sound. Controlling pollution and restoring damaged habitat is an ongoing challenge for the agencies and organizations seeking to preserve the Sound’s water quality and ecosystem diversity.

Connecticut shares the Sound’s resources and management responsibilities with New York State. Intra- and interstate user-conflicts are inevitably abundant, ranging from energy groups to commercial fishermen vying for space with shellfishermen, to community concerns about the impacts of aquaculture gear on recreational boating and sensitive habitat, to recreational angling versus commercial fishing interests.

Marine Spatial Planning

Many scientists have advocated reforms centered on the idea of ecosystem-based management to mitigate the degradation of the marine environment and establish sustainable use of the ocean. Managing “places”, including the range of activities affecting them, is a key characteristic of ecosystem-based management and is a marked departure from existing approaches that usually focus on a single species, sector, activity or concern. To date, however, ecosystem-based management is still more a concept, widely discussed at scientific forums, but with few examples of actual practice. A key challenge of ecosystem-based management is to take it beyond the

conceptual level, and one practical way to do this is through marine spatial planning. While various measures are needed to implement the multiple objectives of ecosystem-based management, a focus on the spatial and temporal components can make this process more tangible.

Marine spatial planning is a process of analyzing and allocating parts of three-dimensional marine spaces to specific uses, to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives that are usually specified through the political process. Essentially, marine spatial planning is a future-oriented activity informing on what goes where and when. Analogous to the land-use planning process, marine spatial planning usually results in a comprehensive plan or vision for the marine region. This comprehensive plan, developed in consultation with stakeholders, is used to create and establish a more rational and informed organization of the use of marine space and the interactions between its uses and to balance the demands for development and conservation.

Objectives of the Forum

With increasing uses and conflicts over LIS, marine spatial planning offers a potential approach to management. The purpose of the forum is to:

- Share information and educate stakeholders on the concept and practice of marine spatial planning;
- Identify good practices that illustrate how marine spatial planning can help implement an ecosystem-based approach to sea use management in LIS;
- Discuss and identify if marine spatial planning is a viable alternative management approach for LIS.

Agenda

0900-0915 Welcome and Introductions – Sylvain De Guise, Connecticut Sea Grant
0915-0945 Long Island Sound: Multiple Uses/Multiple Conflicts - Brian Thompson, CT DEP
0945-1015 Long Island Sound: Management Approaches – Karen Chytalo, NYS DEC
1015-1030 Discussion
1030-1045 Coffee Break
1045-1200 Overview of Marine Spatial Planning – Charles ‘Bud’ Ehler, Ocean Visions
1200-1300 Lunch
1300-1400 Marine Spatial Planning: Experiences and Applications - Charles ‘Bud’ Ehler,
1400-1415 Coffee Break
1430-1530 Breakout Group Discussion on Marine Spatial Planning in LIS
1530-1615 Discussion of Output from Breakout Groups
1615-1630 Wrap-up and Next Steps – Cornelia Schlenk, New York Sea Grant

This forum is organized and sponsored by Connecticut and New York Sea Grant.

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Breakout Group Discussion Guiding Questions

1. Is there a need for MSP in LIS? What types of problems and opportunities could MSP address?
2. What are the ecological, socio-economic and governance principles that a regional MSP process should follow? What might be the key goals of a LIS MSP process?
3. How can the boundaries for MSP be identified? What jurisdictions should be included? What should the time frame for the planning component be?
4. Given the existing state and federal coastal and ocean management processes, should MSP be integrated to develop a regional perspective? How is a 'nested' approach appropriate? What is the appropriate institutional structure for MSP?
5. What is the key information needed for MSP? Does the needed ecological, environmental, oceanographic, use, socio-economic information exist? What is appropriate from a regional perspective?

Marine Spatial Planning Websites:

Marine Spatial Planning Initiative (UNESCO)

www.unesco-ioc-marinesp.be/marine_spatial_planning_msp

Massachusetts Ocean Management Initiative

www.mass.gov/czm/oceanmanagement/index.htm

The Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force Interim Report

www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/09_17_09_Interim_Report_of_Task_Force_FINAL2.pdf