



Long Island Sound Study

A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

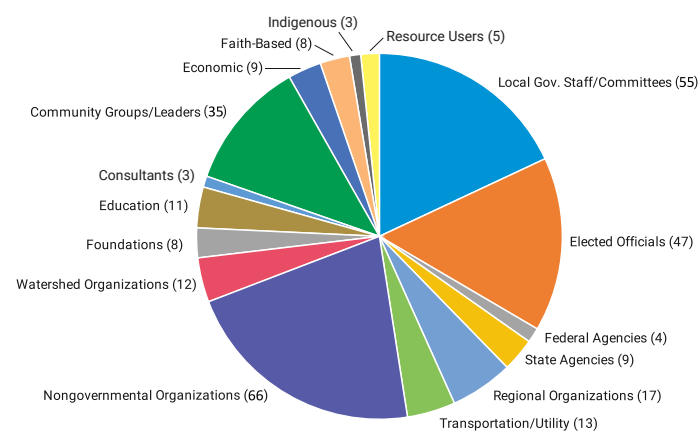


A Regional Needs Assessment to Help Build a Sustainable & Resilient Long Island Sound

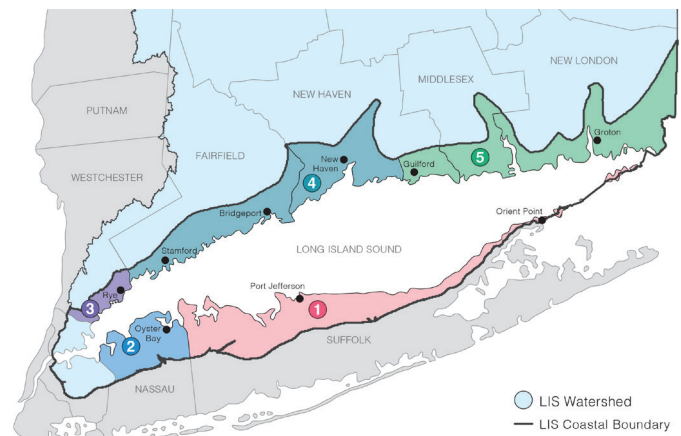
In 2022, a team of CT and NY Sea Grant Sustainable and Resilient Communities (SRC) Extension Professionals conducted an informal needs assessment of coastal Long Island Sound (LIS) communities to better understand the environmental threats and hazards that they are most concerned about, what communities may already be doing to address these issues, and what barriers they are facing when it comes to implementing projects and taking action.

The goal of the SRC team's work is to help LIS communities anticipate and overcome disturbances caused by a changing climate while achieving well being for all. Their work is guided by a Long Island Sound Study SRC Work Group and a five-year work plan. **For more information, visit LISStudy.net/SRC.**

This factsheet presents a brief overview of the SRC team's findings from their informal needs assessment.



The SRC team had over 300 conversations with stakeholders during 2022. This figure shows the breakdown of stakeholder entities reached for the needs assessment.



A team of five SRC Extension Professionals based in Suffolk County, NY, Nassau County, NY, Westchester County, NY, Western CT, and Eastern CT are working to advance sustainability and resilience in Long Island Sound coastal communities.

Top Environmental Threats

The SRC team identified **stormwater and associated flooding as the primary environmental threat** faced by communities region-wide.

The following were also identified as issues for a number of communities:

- ▶ Sea level rise/coastal flooding
- ▶ Extreme weather and storms
- ▶ Water quality
- ▶ Coastal erosion
- ▶ Habitat loss and/or degradation
- ▶ Invasive species
- ▶ Tree loss
- ▶ Impacts from development

The Long Island Sound Study, an EPA National Estuary Program, brings together local, state, and federal governments with communities, NGOs, universities, industry, and user and environmental groups to improve the health of Long Island Sound.

Challenges and Barriers to Implementing Sustainability & Resilience Initiatives

Four main categories of challenges/barriers were identified through the SRC team's informal needs assessment. Generalized quotes below represent common challenges the team heard.

Limited Capacity

- ▶ Lack of staff, technical expertise
- ▶ Limited and/or ineffective coordination across levels of government, stakeholder groups

"We are a small municipality with very few employees - there is no bandwidth to move projects along, or apply for grants."

Governance Challenges

- ▶ Lack of political will, leadership, action
- ▶ Frequent leadership changes can hinder sustained momentum
- ▶ Codes and ordinances can be difficult to update and enforce

"Different interests can lead to nothing getting done."

Funding

- ▶ Grant requirements can be burdensome and hard to navigate
- ▶ Limited opportunities for long-term funding, capacity-building, maintenance, private landowners

"We've applied to XYZ grant multiple times with no success, it's not worth the effort."

Institutional Inequities

- ▶ Lack of inclusion from all communities
- ▶ Disconnect and/or lack of trust between communities and government/institutions

"Opportunities for public involvement generally do not enable participation by communities with environmental justice and equity concerns."

Next Steps from the SRC Team

Ultimately, the SRC team aims to promote the implementation of high-impact projects in communities and to educate and train community decision-makers to enable a better regionally-coordinated response to climate change and other environmental challenges.

Needs assessment findings are now being used by the SRC Extension Professionals to inform their work, including:



Training & education programs to help build capacity and provide technical guidance.



An online **LIS Resilience Resource Hub** that identifies the most relevant tools and funding opportunities for implementing projects.



Breaking Down Barriers to implementation, including programs to reduce capacity barriers that communities may face when applying for competitive funding opportunities and implementing projects.



An **annual bi-state workshop** to bring together government and decision-makers across both New York and Connecticut to promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

