Environmental and Management Goal Setting for the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan

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Over the past 3 years the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) has been developing a revised Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), the blueprint for the protection and restoration of the Sound for the next generation. Long Island Sound is located within the most densely populated area of the US. Nearly 9 million people live within the watershed and 23 million live within 50 miles of the shoreline. The Sound and its watershed have undergone profound changes since European settlement in the 17th century. Under the National Estuary Program, the LISS developed its initial CCMP In 1994. Typical of estuarine management plans at that time, it was structured around specific drivers and pressures that degraded the environment (toxic substances, hypoxia, pathogens, etc.). Using this framework, Connecticut and New York have made significant progress in reducing pollutant inputs to the Sound and improving environmental conditions. To meet remaining challenges, the updated CCMP takes a holistic ecosystem approach, integrating actions around four broad management themes: waters and watersheds, sound communities, science and management, and habitats and wildlife. The updated CCMP sets 21 quantifiable long-term trajectory or numeric ecosystem level targets, each accompanied by a description of its management basis, responsible entities, and measurement methods to assess progress in achieving the target. Two-way stakeholder-expert elicitation methods were utilized to develop the indicators/targets through a number of public events as well as with experts on the CCMP development team and their associated state and federal colleagues. The ecosystem targets are tied to strategies and actions as well as management metrics so that as the CCMP is implemented success can be gauged by evaluating progress toward achieving improved ecosystem condition as quantified by the indicators and targets.