

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

August 27, 2013

Dear Administrator McCarthy,

Congratulations on your confirmation by the US Senate! We look forward to working with you and your administration in the years to come on our mutual goals of protecting our nation's water, air, and natural resources. Toward that end, we urge you to continue your support for the restoration and conservation of Long Island Sound, an Estuary of National Significance, and for the continued upgrading of our nation's wastewater infrastructure. **In particular, we respectfully request that you include \$10 million for the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Acts and \$1.468 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) in your Fiscal Year 2015 Budget request.**

As you know firsthand, Long Island Sound is a critically important national treasure whose watershed covers all or part of six states and an important driver of our regional economy. Ten percent of Americans live within an hour drive of Long Island Sound, and the Sound provides countless recreational opportunities for millions of people each year through its numerous coastal parks, boat ramps, marinas, waterfront hotels and restaurants. It should be no surprise that Long Island Sound contributes more than \$9.8 billion annually to the regional economy, supporting thousands of jobs in clean water dependent businesses including boating, commercial and recreational fishing, shellfishing, and tourism.

Recognizing its significant and unique ecological and economic value, the Sound was one of the first three estuaries recognized in 1985 under the National Estuary Program. Due to the region's long history of urbanized development, however, the estuary's watershed hosts some of the oldest wastewater infrastructure in the nation that is exceeding its design capacity leading to significant water quality impairments and diminished ecosystem health. These outdated facilities are a major source of the two major water quality impairments facing the Sound – low dissolved oxygen levels (hypoxia), and bacterial pollution that causes beach closings, which have tripled over the past two decades.

The States and local municipalities of New York and Connecticut have invested billions of dollars to restore the Sound's water quality and protect its coastal resources. Increased support from the federal government is urgently needed to match these state commitments to reach the goals of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) and a clean Sound. The CCMP was developed by the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) in 1994 and is currently being updated to reflect new and emerging threats and to prioritize restoration actions.

Congress has enacted two authorizations to target federal funding towards the most pressing needs identified in the CCMP. The first is the Long Island Sound Restoration Act, authorized to provide up to \$40 million per year for projects to reduce nitrogen loading and improve and monitor water quality. The second is the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act, which is authorized to provide up to \$25 million per year for land acquisition and other efforts to protect and promote access to important ecological and recreational sites around the Sound. In addition, the CWSRF provides significant resources to Sound communities to construct needed sewage treatment plant infrastructure upgrades, and undertake new 'green' infrastructure solutions.

Unfortunately, federal appropriations have not come close to authorized levels for these important programs, and, in recent years, these programs have been targeted for disproportionate cuts. The Administration's FY14 budget proposes a 25% funding cut to the Long Island Sound program from \$3.956 million (FY12) to \$2.962 million, which is a nearly 60% cut from the \$7.0 million appropriated in FY10. This greatly reduces the ability to address the major impairments to the Sound, and is especially troubling when other ecosystem programs are proposed to receive funding increases under the same budget. The Administration's FY14 proposed budget also contains a 25% cut to the CWSRF, from \$1.468 billion (FY12) to \$1.095 billion. This will have a direct impact on regional job creation, as it is estimated that 30,000 to 47,500 jobs are created for every \$1 billion invested in the CWSRF.

These federal investments not only improve the health of the Sound, they help the region realize significant economic returns. It is estimated that every federal dollar invested in these programs leverages \$70 in state and private investments. These programs have also led to significant milestones, including the reopening of 2,500 acres of shellfishing beds in Hempstead Harbor, New York in 2011 that had been closed for nearly 40 years, restoration of Long Beach West in Stratford, significant additions to the Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington and the permanent protection of the 42-acre Griswold Airport property adjacent to Hammonasset Beach State Park in Connecticut - all of which provide public access to the Sound while enhancing critical nesting habitat for migrating birds.

Having made such significant gains, we cannot afford to lose momentum. State and local governments need adequate federal support to upgrade sewer infrastructure and restore Long Island Sound. Any further reductions in federal funding will cause costly delays to projects will improve the Sound's ecosystem and put people to work modernizing wastewater infrastructure.

Once again, as you begin to craft EPA's FY 2015 Budget request, we strongly urge you to dedicate \$10 million for Long Island Sound restoration, \$1.468 billion for the CWSRF and improve the programs' administration by requiring that states use 30% of this funding to provide grants, principal forgiveness, or negative interest loans to eligible applicants. This level of funding will ensure we can continue to put people to work restoring one of America's most significant estuaries.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Signatories listed alphabetical by organization

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