

# SoundBites

Minneford Marina, City Island, NY

## Creating a Clean Water Community

Long Island Sound covers a total area of 1,300 square miles, with a 600-mile-long coastline. That's an estimated 18 trillion gallons of water to keep clean, vibrant, and healthy. It takes a village to monitor and protect that much water—and that's why **we coordinate the largest EPA-funded community science monitoring program in our region.**

Launched in 2017 by Save the Sound, the Unified Water Study: Long Island Sound Embayment Research (UWS) is a water quality monitoring protocol developed for citizen scientists and local clean water advocates around Long Island Sound to collect comparable data on the health of our bays and harbors. This data is incorporated into Clean Water Act Assessments and informs specific state and local management actions to protect your bays and harbors.

**The study fosters a unique culture of collaboration and knowledge-sharing on Long Island Sound.** Local monitoring groups receive support from Save the Sound staff, the study's Marine Science Advisors, and its funders. We provide monitoring equipment, training, standard operating procedures, a custom study design for their monitoring locations, and all other resources they need to successfully collect high quality data.



*The Bronx River Alliance participates in the UWS water sampling.*

Since its inception, the UWS has grown immensely—testing more water quality parameters and covering more areas of the Sound. Two years ago, there were 12 monitoring groups in 24 bays, now there are 22 monitoring groups covering 39 bays. This year we also held our first Unified Water Study Summit, with 62 scientists and participants, to re-cap the successful monitoring season and plan for the future of the study.

As the program expands, it's your waters that are benefitting. We are creating a road map showing which of your bays will require intervention to remain healthy and better support aquatic life.

**When it comes to protecting your clean water, we need all hands on deck.**

"As we look to the future, we're going to expand our reach by adding new groups to reach every corner of Long Island Sound," said Director of Save the Sound, Tracy Brown. "We're also working to bring our data to you, so that you can check on the health of your corner of the

Sound. In 2020 we'll be publishing **our first report card with the UWS data**, giving you the inside scoop on what's happening in your backyard."

We're excited to bring people from all over the Sound together in one community for a common cause—clean water. [Read more about the UWS and this year's results on our blog at \[www.ctenvironment.org/media-room/our-blog\]\(http://www.ctenvironment.org/media-room/our-blog\).](#)



*A water quality intern testing water quality parameters for the UWS.*

## Monitoring Through the Cold



*Your Soundkeeper is staying in the water all winter to track down pollution at its source—because protecting your clean water is a year-round job.*

The frigid weather setting in across our region, won't keep your Soundkeeper from tracking down pollution on Long Island Sound. For the first time ever, Soundkeeper Bill Lucey is spending winter on the water. Storm drain overflows, deteriorating sewage infrastructure, and nitrogen pollution don't stop for the cold. So Bill will be out on the water, because he knows your Sound needs him.

# Local Students Unleash Their Creativity

Thanks to a grant from REI, our Ecological Restoration team extended and improved the Mill River Trail with help from local students. The project culminated in an event at 'Lost in New Haven,' local artist and collector Robert Greenberg's collection of New Haven artifacts, where supporters explored the city's historical relationship to the water before taking a tour of the newly restored trail segment. Along the trail, participants saw storm drain art created by 4th and 5th grade students from John S. Martinez School and Cold Spring School in New Haven. A special thanks go to Robert Greenberg, REI, Lots of Fish, and the teachers from both schools for making this happen!



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In this issue...

Fight for Plum Proves Power of Activism

Our Largest Restoration Project Yet

Curt's Corner: Q&A with Youth Advocate

Charging Into a Fossil-Free Region

Fostering a Clean Water Community

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# GreenSheet

Photo: Eric Rennie

Dead Man's Swamp, Cromwell, CT

## Leading the Way to a Fossil Fuel-Free Region

The United Nations warns that if we are going to survive the climate crisis, we need to reduce our global emissions by 25% by 2030. That change starts on a local level, and in Connecticut, the transportation sector is responsible for 38% of our greenhouse gas emissions.

You've been advocating for policies that lower carbon emissions and fight climate change—and **it's starting to pay off.**

**Connecticut is taking major steps to transition from dirty fossil fuels to renewable energy.** With a new wind procurement, a freshly minted shared solar program, and an evaluation of the value of renewable energy in improving air quality and creating green jobs, Connecticut is making policy that will fight climate change.

**The only way Connecticut will meet our climate mandates and clean up our air is to transform our current transportation model to include more electric vehicles, including buses, and the expansion of clean mass transit for all our residents.**

- Charles Rothenberger

We must continue converting our electric grid to a cleaner, more renewable one. But we must also ensure that people move from cars into mass transit, and encourage zero emission vehicles.

Just recently, the state released the draft Electric Vehicle (EV) Roadmap, which includes expanding access to EVs for low and moderate income individuals, increasing EVs within the public transportation fleet, and supporting the

EV charging infrastructure necessary to support these vehicles.

"The only way Connecticut will clean up our air is by transforming our current transportation model to include more electric vehicles, and expanding clean mass transit options for all our residents," said Climate and Energy Attorney Charles Rothenberger. "The EV Roadmap highlights policies that will assist in accelerating the shift to electric cars and buses, and ensure sufficient charging infrastructure that benefits all residents. Diligent implementation of these policies will be critical to achieving our goals."

Many of CFE/Save the Sound's policy recommendations were included in the draft roadmap. We're working to ensure that the final report is even more robust and with your support, we're getting ready for a smooth drive into a clean future.

**This is a battle that needs to be fought on a regional scale—because air pollution does not respect state lines.**

Thanks to your advocacy, Connecticut is leading by example both locally and in

partnership with other states. Connecticut is working with eight states across the country in a Multi-State ZEV (Zero-emission Vehicles) Action Plan to increase access to EVs across the country. Connecticut is also part of the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI), a collaboration of 12 states from Washington D.C. to Maine with the goal of reducing carbon emissions from the transportation sector, and assisting with the transition to a clean energy economy. TCI has a strong focus on environmental justice, which will direct funding from the corporations polluting our air to the people who are closest to the pollution.

CFE/Save the Sound will ensure that Connecticut remains a strong player in national and regional efforts for a better, cleaner, transportation system. As these plans turn into action, we'll be pushing for even stronger emission standards, and rebates on used EVs to accelerate the switch to clean transportation in our region.

We're on the road to a fossil fuel-free transportation future, and you're driving the electric car that will get us there.



### LEAVE AN ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY

You've cherished and protected a healthy, vibrant environment your whole life. By including Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound in your estate plans, you'll protect the land, air, and water of Connecticut and the Long Island Sound region for generations to come.

Please contact Chief Development Officer Alicia Sullivan at 203-787-0646 Ext. 109 or [asullivan@ctenvironment.org](mailto:asullivan@ctenvironment.org) to discuss the possibilities. Thank you!



# One Hundred Thirty Five Acres Restored

Once a fractured ecosystem, Sunken Meadow State Park is now a vibrant and resilient habitat. **It was our largest-ever restoration project.** Thanks to support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, New York State Parks, our project partners, and volunteers like you, we put transformative ideas into action to save a local ecosystem.

**Together, we improved the equivalent of over 102 football fields of critical marsh habitat.**

Sunken Meadow Creek and the surrounding marsh had been largely cut off from Long Island Sound since the late 1950s. Without flushing from daily tides, the once-healthy salt marsh began to deteriorate under pressure from invasive species and polluted runoff from the nearby parking lots and roadways.



*Before and after aerial shots of Sunken Meadow State Park.*

“We're giving nature a gentle boost to speed up the recovery process and benefit not only the local ecosystem but also nearby communities that depend on Sunken Meadow State Park...”

- Gwen Macdonald

After Super Storm Sandy opened Sunken Meadow Creek to tidal flow for the first time in over 50 years, we received a grant in 2015 to join with other organizations to continue the work the restoration team had started. We began a three-phase project that included marsh restoration, environmental education and stewardship, and the installation of

green infrastructure to capture and treat stormwater.

Immediately, our team, along with volunteers like you, went to work removing invasive plants and planting native ones in areas of the marsh. **Thanks to you, the marsh began to recover.**

“It’s incredible how resilient nature is when we just give it a fighting chance at survival,” said Ecological Communications Specialist Anthony Allen.

The largest component of the project included renovation of a 17 acre parking lot. We installed eight bioswales to naturally catch and filter stormwater, and filled each one with native plants for vital pollinator habitat. Two large constructed wetlands were built and planted with

native plants to capture and filter large amounts of runoff, keeping pollutants out of the recovering marsh.

**These bioswales and constructed wetlands will capture and treat 8.5 million gallons of stormwater every year.**

“We’re giving nature a gentle boost to speed up the recovery process and benefit not only the local ecosystem but also nearby communities and park visitors that depend on Sunken Meadow State Park as a wonderful resource,” said Director of Ecological Restoration Gwen Macdonald. “This project is a great illustration of what can happen when state agencies, nonprofits, and committed volunteers join forces.”

## Dam! What's Next?! Freeing Waters for Migratory Fish

With fish swimming freely and a marsh recovering at Sunken Meadow State Park, your Ecological Restoration team is gearing up to modify a dam at Phillips Mill on the Nissequogue River. This will restore access to historic spawning grounds upstream for migratory fish and work to restore more of the Nissequogue River to its natural state. Stay tuned as throughout the year for updates and photos!





# YOU'RE PROVING THE POWER OF ACTIVISM

About a mile from Orient Point lies the 840-acre Plum Island, home to over 200 bird species and a refuge for many animals. This unique island is at risk of being sold, putting its incredible habitats in grave danger. **You're leading the crusade to protect it.**

Our fight to preserve Plum Island is one of our longest land campaigns to date, and the only one that's crossed state lines and engaged an entire region. **There has been one thing fueling our fight this past decade—you.**

Over the years, our movement has engaged over 7,000 people. **Together, we're demonstrating what a grassroots movement looks like!**

And recently, you've been accomplishing even more:

## Envisioning a Future Together

The Preserve Plum Island Coalition, coordinated by Save the Sound, recently completed a year-long process to Envision Plum Island that brought together over 160 stakeholders to create a viable vision and transfer plan for the island's future. The vision will include the potential to create hundreds of jobs, engage thousands of people in environmental education, and save numerous species and their habitats.

## A Heightened Focus on Local Action

We learned that Governor Cuomo has the power to protect Plum Island, ensuring that it remains with the public forever. And thanks to your activism, we're one step closer to getting his sign-off.

We're using many tools to advocate, including videos to tell the story of Plum Island's connection to New York and ask Governor Cuomo to use his powers to protect it. We're grateful for the help of two dedicated volunteers, Thomas Halaczinsky and Petrina Engelke, who have worked tirelessly to produce these compelling stories. View the videos and send a message to the Governor at [www.preserveplumisland.org](http://www.preserveplumisland.org).

## Protecting Plum's Waters

Governor Cuomo officially signed a new law that designates the waters around Plum Island a Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Protection Area, strengthening

our argument for preservation. We are grateful to Governor Cuomo, and New York's legislature, particularly Assemblyman Englebright and Senator Martinez, for this increase in habitat protection for marine mammals and sea turtles around Plum Island.

## A First for the Senate

Exciting news came from Congress, in December, when, for the first time ever, Plum Island legislation made it out of the Senate. The budget bill that was passed will prevent the federal agency that owns the island from using its funds for marketing or selling the island for one year. While there is still a long fight ahead, this is certainly a move in the right direction!

You've done so much recently to protect this unique island, and together we'll continue to push until Plum Island is safe.



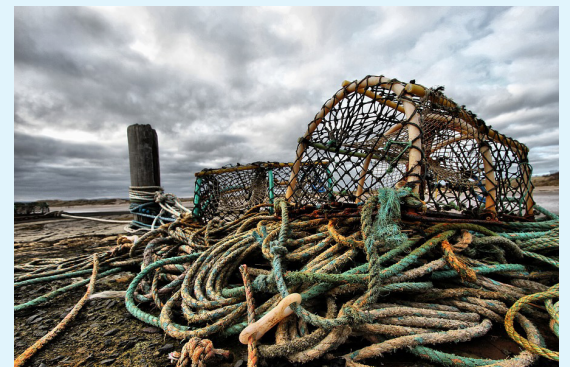
*The Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Protection Act will make it easier to protect the seals in Plum's waters. Photo credit: Bob Lorenz*

## Tracking Down the Sound's Ghost-Fishers

When your Soundkeeper isn't monitoring sewage spills, he's searching for another type of pollution in your Sound—lobster pots! Many lobster pots were abandoned after the great lobster die-off, as fishermen transitioned out of the fishery—yet they continue fishing on the bottom of the Sound. **It's estimated that there are over 1 million lobster pots on the bottom of Long Island Sound.**

In the last nine years, Cornell University has retrieved over 20,000 pots, 90% of which were capturing fish and lobsters. This "ghost fishing" interrupts the delicate food webs at play in our waters, and harms local ecosystem health.

Recently, Save the Sound/Soundkeeper and the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk have partnered to create a strategic plan to remove these ghost-fishing pots. If there's something strange in Long Island Sound, who ya gonna call? Bill Lucey!



## Empowering the Next Generation of Environmental Activists



As the global youth movement takes center stage in the news, I am eager to speak with and learn from youth advocates. Here are highlights from

a conversation with our own Climate Policy Intern, Katharine Lange, a graduate student at UConn's Public Policy program. Katharine will be coordinating actions between CFE/Save the Sound and the regional youth climate movement.

**Curt Johnson:** *Why is this the most talked about environmental issue of your generation?*

**Katharine Lange:** Because it's not just an environmental issue; it's cross-sectional, in your face, and will affect everyone, everywhere. The scientific community is unanimous in documenting that we are living on the brink of a massive climate crisis that will affect every corner of our world, including right here in our forests, towns, rivers and shoreline.

**CJ:** *It's true that many scientists have not agreed on a single thing since discovering fire. But, there is some doubt about this youth movement. Why are youth the ones who should be leading this fight, and why do they seem so angry about it?*

**KL:** Well, to answer your first question—youth are leading this charge because we have the most to lose. As the threat

looms closer, our conversations grow more urgent, but government and corporate action doesn't. Although we didn't cause it, we're living through the worst environmental crisis our planet has ever seen.

We're angry that the typical avenues for change have failed us, so we've been forced to take our future into our own hands. But this movement is so much more than the eye-catching headlines. We're writing and calling our legislators. We're testifying at our state Capitol and continuously working to turn current emission reduction targets into actionable plans. We're putting in the work where no one else was. So my question to you is, how do you see CFE/Save the Sound joining and enhancing our movement?

**CJ:** *Well, as someone who's been an environmental activist for over 40 years, it's incredible to see your generation so passionate about saving our environment. I've been in your shoes, and I can't wait to share what I've learned over the years to help propel this movement forward.*

*We will offer resources and do whatever we can to support a new generation of activists, and work collaboratively to have the maximum positive impact to stop climate change now. We can help you gain valuable lobbying skills and train you on how to talk to reporters. Our expert climate attorney and lobbyists can help you identify the next big*

*opportunity to supercharge climate results here in this state—either in the legislature or before the Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA) where critical climate battles play out. Our established track record can propel you forward on the path you're already on to protect our region, and ultimately our planet, forever.*

**KL:** *We're all in to fight the climate crisis, and I'm glad that CFE/Save the Sound is too. I'm glad to be helping combine your experience with our passion to maximize results now. See you on the streets and up in Hartford!*



Katharine Lange participating in a Connecticut climate rally.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Webinar: How We're Going to Save Plum Island • Thursday, February 6 • 12 p.m.**

Hear from our Land Campaign Manager Chris Cryder, and New York Natural Areas Coordinator Louise Harrison, about the Envision Plum Island process, our viable vision for the island, and how we're going to get there. RSVP at [www.ctenvironment.org/webinars](http://www.ctenvironment.org/webinars)

**Webinar: Shorter Name, Same Mission • Tuesday February 25 • 12 p.m.**

Hear from our President, Curt Johnson, and Communications Director, Laura McMillian, about the factors that went into our decision to unify the two names, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save Sound into one—Save the Sound. We'll be answering your questions and welcome a discussion. RSVP at [www.ctenvironment.org/webinars](http://www.ctenvironment.org/webinars)

**New Haven: Earth Day Environmental Trivia • Wednesday April 22 • 7:30 p.m.**

Join us for environmental trivia to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. We're hosting a series of events throughout the month to kick-off Earth Day 50 celebrations! Find more information about trivia and all of the Earth Day events in your neighborhood at [www.ctenvironment.org/EarthDay](http://www.ctenvironment.org/EarthDay).