The Health of the Sound: What You Should Know

Save the Sound publishes the Long Island Sound Report Card to track and report on the health of Long Island Sound and encourage action where the sound needs it most. Since the first edition in 2000, we have provided annual grades and an assessment of the health and quality of the Long Island Sound—everything from sewage treatment plants to temperature. This year’s Report Card shows progress and challenges.

Nitrogen pollution remains a major threat to a healthy Sound. This impact is often shown in degraded seagrass beds, inhibited growth of fish populations, and negative effects on wildlife. In our report, we examine nitrogen levels in the Sound, and discuss the current state and the actions we need to take to improve it.

To download the 2022 Report Card, visit www.SoundHealthExplorer.org.

Dive into the Data and Take Action on SoundHealthExplorer.org

www.SoundHealthExplorer.org

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How Can We Protect the Sound?

By supporting grassroots action, you can make a difference. Save the Sound has long worked with communities, organizations, and individuals to protect the Sound. Visit our website to find out how you can become an advocate for the Sound in your community.

Reduce Water Usage

Plants Native

Keep Litter Out of Waterways

Make Your Voice Heard

Eliminate or Reduce Fertilizer Use

Long Island Sound Report Card 2020

Participate getting more active during the 2011 International Habitat Council at Sherwood Point, Connecticut.
Save the Sound publishes the biennial Long Island Sound Report Card to track and report on the ecological health of the Sound, including trend lines showing patterns over the past 12 years. In this year’s report, for the first time you’ll also find data for many of the bays found along the margin of the Sound.

Nitrogen pollution remains a major threat to a healthy Sound. The impact is often more visible in stressed bays which experience episodic fish die-offs and large seaweed blooms. Readers may be surprised that water quality in the bays cannot be predicted by water quality in adjacent portions of the open Sound. For example, Wequetequock Cove in the relatively pristine Eastern Basin (A+) receives a D-, while New Rochelle Harbor, situated on the border between the Western Narrows (F) and Eastern Narrows (C), receives a B-. This emphasizes the importance of local conditions and the role communities play in degrading or improving their coastal water quality.

Coordinated investments in conservation and improvements in wastewater treatment have helped clean the Sound over the past decade. Despite this, the open waters of the Sound show a slight decline in some regions when compared with the 2018 Report Card. These changes are associated with higher levels of chlorophyll $a$ and dissolved organic carbon, likely attributable to annual changes in weather. Because rising temperatures exacerbate water quality problems, it’s even more critical we continue to reduce nitrogen input in the coming years in order to protect and continue the progress we have made in improving water quality in the Sound.

We envision this Report Card empowering community members and elected officials with information you can use to protect and restore Long Island Sound for all who call it home.

**Dive into the Data and Take Action on SoundHealthExplorer.org**

Good data can engage communities and drive action. Sound Health Explorer is an interactive tool that couples recent and historic data from your local bay, beach, or open Sound region with things you can do that will help make a difference. Explore how sea level rise will impact your community. Explore the health of Long Island Sound at SoundHealthExplorer.org.
How Are The Scores Calculated?

Save the Sound and its Science Advisors grade water quality indicators using scientifically derived scales developed with a Technical Advisory Committee of scientists and water managers from agencies around the Sound. Some indicators are used for both the Sound and the bays while others are unique to the deeper Sound or the shallower bays, reflecting the differences in these types of systems. For more information on the scoring methods, visit: www.soundhealthexplorer.org/fishable/

Why Are Bays Different?

Our bays differ from the deeper waters of the Sound and from each other. Their shapes, sizes, and depths; the rivers that feed them; and their coastal population and land use practices all impact their water quality. They are shallower areas where light often reaches the bottom, allowing nuisance seaweed to flourish when nitrogen from their streams and rivers is high. Water moves through each of them differently, with some very open to and influenced by the deeper Sound waters and others less so.
The Health of the Sound: What You Should Know

Save the Sound publishes the Long Island Sound Report Card to track and report on the ecological health of the Sound. This is a 2019 update to our previous report, the first time the index scores for the Sound’s health were compiled. The report is based on data gathered from a network of over 100 Long Island Sound “report cards” from various sources. This report ranks the nine Long Island Sound “health categories” based on their average score. For a more detailed description of the Sound’s health, visit www.SavetheSound.org.

How Can We Protect the Sound?

Reduce Water Usage

Recycling water in the yard and patio, using low-water use plants, and planting to reduce water use is essential to the health of the Sound. Make your own rain barrels and use them for watering your garden. Think about using conservation practices in your landscaping.

Maintain Your Sewers

If you plan to sell or rent your home, check for leaks in your plumbing system. If possible, try to make sure your sewer system is in good condition. Keep your septic system healthy by following the guidelines provided by the local health department.

Plant Native

Native plants reduce the need for water usage in yards. They also attract pollinators and other wildlife, helping to maintain biodiversity in the Sound. Native plants are adapted to your local climate and soil types, which makes them more resistant to disease and pests.

Long Island Sound Report Card

Dive into the Data and Take Action on SoundHealthExplorer.org

2019 Beach Grades Updated at the Long Island Sound Explorer site

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Take Action

Our waterways are a mirror of how we live on the land, so you have a direct role in the health and well-being of the Sound. Join the movement to protect and restore Long Island Sound by taking these important actions.

**Reduce Water Usage**
Lighten the load at overtaxed water treatment plants and reduce wear and tear on pipes.

**Plant Native**
Native plants reduce water usage in yards, help filter pollutants along waterways, and provide food and shelter to wildlife.

**Maintain Your Sewers**
Private sewer lines and septic systems should be regularly inspected, repaired, and pumped out. Install septic systems that remove nitrogen.

**Make Your Voice Heard**
Tell elected officials you want policies that support clean water. Use your purchasing power to reward companies that put the environment first.

**Keep Litter Out of Waterways**
Use less plastic. Reusable bags, straws, water bottles, and cups keep harmful plastics out of oceans and away from marine life.

**Eliminate or Reduce Fertilizer Use**
Use half the amount, only around Labor Day or Memorial Day. Leave grass clippings on the lawn as a natural fertilizer.

[www.SoundHealthExplorer.org](http://www.SoundHealthExplorer.org)

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