

# SoundBites

## Winter 2021

Protecting and Restoring Your Local Rivers  
Climate and Equity in the CT Legislature  
Curt's Corner: Hope and Local Action  
No Auction for Plum Island



*In December, Congress passed a federal budget package that repealed the language which initiated a sale of Plum Island.*

*Photo credit: Bob Lorenz*



# Save the Sound<sup>®</sup>

Action for our region's environment.



# Advocating for Your Environment at the CT Legislature

## *Protecting your land, air, and water*

We're nearly midway through Connecticut's legislative session and fighting to combat climate change, protect your clean water, and ensure everyone has access to our natural resources and open spaces.

### **Combatting Climate Change**

We're advocating for your clean air and combatting climate change by pushing to:

- Require that the state consider greenhouse gas reduction targets in decision-making;
- Establish a citizen suit provision for enforcement of the Global Warming Solutions Act;
- Codify Governor Lamont's 100% clean energy goal so it can be used in regulatory decision-making;
- Ratify the Transportation and Climate Initiative;
- Transition the state fleet and school buses to 100% electric by 2040;
- Expand Electric Vehicle rebates to achieve 20% zero-emission vehicles by 2030 and 95% by 2050.

### **Protecting the Sound and Its Rivers**

We're advocating for your right to clean water through:

- A strengthened Sewage Right to Know Act that notifies downstream communities of sewage spills promptly and completely;
- A municipal option and other funding mechanisms that allow towns to generate revenue and invest in climate resilience, flooding, and water pollution abatement;
- state issued resilience funding for green infrastructure and living shorelines to manage flooding and limit sea level rise impacts;
- The Long Island Sound Blue Plan, which will protect the Sound's many uses and resources.

### **Ensuring Environmental Equity for All**

Everyone deserves a clean and healthy environment. This year we're fighting to strengthen Connecticut's Environmental Justice Law by:

- Ensuring a permit that would worsen environmental or public health impacts in an overburdened community isn't approved, unless it would also benefit that community;
- Using environmental justice impact statements in decision-making;
- Improving the ability for public to weigh in on decisions;
- Adding a citizen suit provision for failure to comply with the environmental justice law.



*Before COVID-19 moved everything virtual, your climate team spent a majority of the legislative session at the Connecticut State Capitol.*

## Connecticut Commits to Climate Action

### *Lowering carbon emissions and creating transportation equity*

Climate change is the single greatest threat to our communities. In December, Connecticut officially joined the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) after being involved with its planning since 2018. This is a big step in the right direction, since transportation accounts for 38% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions—the single biggest source. Now the state legislature must ratify the initiative.

TCI is a regional cap-and-invest program modeled on the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which has been reducing emissions from the electricity sector for 15 years. **It will help build a cleaner and more efficient transportation system, a stronger state economy, and healthier air for our most overburdened communities.**

## A Word About Your Donor Advised Fund Gifts

Thank you! Your contributions through Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) are caring and generous gifts to our region's environment. Did you know that sometimes a gift through a DAF arrives at Save the Sound without the donor's name on it? That means we don't know who the gift came from and we can't say thank you. If you've made a gift to Save the Sound through a DAF but have not received a call or letter expressing our gratitude, please contact Director of Leadership Giving Andrea Kerin at [akerin@savethesound.org](mailto:akerin@savethesound.org). We'd love to recognize your kindness and thank you personally for supporting a healthy and clean environment

# Donor Spotlight: Barbara O. David

## *Ensuring the future of your legal team*

As both a conservation leader and one of our longest serving board members, Barbara O. David has been a supporter of Save the Sound for over 30 years.

Barbara's love of nature took root during her childhood in Merion, Pennsylvania. She and her brothers would often explore the local park, turning over rocks to see what was hiding underneath, and moving rocks around in the small stream to alter the flow.

As she grew older she enjoyed sailing with her family: "I loved reading the water ahead for the 'williwaws' of the wind gusts ruffling the water and then waiting, guessing where I would first feel them on my face or where my hair would first start to blow."

After moving to Connecticut she became interested in land preservation and soon became involved with Save the Sound.

"I support Save the Sound because of its care and attention to justice," said Barbara. **"Our policy-making skills are the best in the state and our coalition building is strong and honest.** Coalitions have helped us to be successful; first in defeating Broadwater, a massive 20-story natural gas facility proposed

"I always had a keen sense that nature was in charge: we are just spokes on her wheel, strands in her web. We must consider carefully what and how much we take from her. The balance is fragile—our very lives depend so much on what nature provides for us."

- Barbara O. David

for the middle of Long Island Sound; then in saving land in The Preserve; and most recently, in helping prevent the auction of Plum Island."

She's most excited about Save the Sound's legal work, and in 2018 established the Barbara Osborn David Endowment for the Legal Director.

**"Our lawyers work with passion, understanding, and respect for the way the natural world works,"** said Barbara.

"They are gentle and persuasive at first, often settling with a client instead of taking them to court; they are patient, often waiting for years before successfully closing an important case. And they are persistent, knowing how to best work the system. All of this makes for good policy that outlasts our generation."



Barbara O. David with her grand boys.

## Defending Your Clean Water

### *An update from your legal team*

Our legal team has been hard at work safeguarding your clean water, most recently in Westchester, Fairfield, and New Haven Counties. It might be surprising, but our expert attorneys try to stay out of the courthouse, in favor of working collaboratively with towns of concern whenever possible. However, when litigation is necessary they will take polluters to court.

They work in conjunction with your Long Island Soundkeeper and water quality monitoring team to identify and address sources of pollution. Once identified, they partner with local municipalities to correct the issue by coming up with future targets and next steps. Litigation is a last resort.

**In the last five months, they successfully reached settlements with Darien, Connecticut, and the Village of Rye Brook, New York to address their sewage issues and prevent future overflows.** They're also collaborating with Bridgeport to address its sewage overflows.

The team also scored a significant victory for environmental justice when they opposed a plan to require an already overburdened, low-income community of color to accept a transfer station that would handle the waste created by neighboring more affluent towns. The withdrawal of the plan by the applicant came after three hearings where the legal team presented substantial evidence regarding the negative impacts on the neighborhood and the Quinnipiac River.

## You Can Safeguard Our Future

Environmental laws are meaningless without enforcement. That fact has driven our legal team for four decades, propelling the work that protects our region's land, air, and water.

We need your help to expand our legal team, tackle existing legal enforcement work, and take on critical new environmental challenges.

With your support we can combat climate change, keep our waters clean, and protect our last remaining wild and open spaces.

Forward-thinking donors like you have enabled our legal team to create a 40-year legacy of transformative environmental results. **Please help us continue to rise to the urgent challenges of our world today.** Contact Chief Development Officer Alicia Sullivan at [asullivan@savethesound.org](mailto:asullivan@savethesound.org) or 203-787-0646 x109 to give.



# Restoring Rivers and Freeing Fish

*Taking steps to protect your natural resources for generations to come*

Your ecological restoration team is expanding. Recently, the Long Island Sound Futures Fund fully funded two new projects, one in New York and one in Connecticut. And due to the generosity of Robert and Libby Alexander, we are hiring a New York Ecological Restoration Program Manager with the goal of expanding our work using nature-based solutions to make our rivers and coastlines more resilient. **It's an exciting year to be a Save the Sound member!**

## Drawing up Designs for Migratory Fish Access at Long Pond

Our ecological restoration team has begun laying the ground work for a fishway that would make Long Pond Dam in Ledyard, Connecticut passable to alewife and other migratory fish species. **Removal of Long Pond Dam, on Whitford Brook where we removed Hyde Pond Dam in 2015, would open up 137 lake acres of habitat for alewife and resident species like brook trout.**

"It's always exciting when we can build on past restoration projects and work within the same river system over several years," said Assistant Director of Ecological Restoration Anthony Allen. "We've been monitoring fish and vegetation populations upstream of where Hyde Pond Dam once stood, and have seen fish and native vegetation return in force. It's a testament to the resilience of nature. Long Pond Dam is the next step in the journey, for us and for the fish."

The team will be designing a nature-based fishway for the site, which will mimic a stream in its appearance and execution as it goes up and over the dam. This approach will allow many species to use it while also minimizing disruption of the natural landscape around it.

Upstream from Long Pond Dam is Lantern Hill Pond, where the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation constructed a fishway a few years ago. Once Long Pond Dam is passable, migratory fish will be able to utilize this entire 137 lake acre stretch of valuable habitat.

Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has estimated that **Long Pond could provide spawning habitat for 250,000 alewife.** It is one of the few natural cold water ponds in the state with sufficient depth to serve as a unique and critical haven for alewife, brook trout, and other species in the face of drought and warming waters our region is experiencing due to climate change.



*Fish Biologist Jon Vander Werff has been monitoring fish runs upstream of the former Hyde Pond Dam, where populations have begun to return in force.*

*You have the power to restore 137 lake acres of habitat in Whitford Brook.*



## Creating a Watershed-Based Plan to Restore the Hutchinson River

**Water pollution and sewage spills have long made the Hutchinson River dangerous and inaccessible to some of New York's more vulnerable communities.** Our Long Island Sound Report Card has shown significant water quality problems in the Hutchinson River for years, and several of its segments are listed by the New York State DEC as impaired for recreation and aquatic life due to the presence of pathogens and low dissolved oxygen. Likely sources include urban stormwater runoff, CSOs, and industrial pollution.

"We're excited to expand our watershed planning into New York with this critical project," said Watershed Coordinator Nicole Davis. **"This process is both a mark of achievement by our Water Quality and Legal teams who have helped highlight the problems on the Hutchinson River, and a jumping off point for our ecological restoration team to identify nature-based solutions to those problems."**

*This is a great opportunity to empower the community to plan and take action for their clean water.*

- Tracy Brown, Regional  
Director of Water Protection

We're collaborating with local partners to create a comprehensive watershed plan for the area of the Hutchinson River Watershed in Westchester County, from Mount Vernon to Scarsdale. Over the next two years, we'll be identifying sources of pollution and talking with residents, municipalities, and other stakeholders to come up with potential projects to address these issues.

"This is a great opportunity to empower the community to plan and take action for their clean water," said Regional Director of Water Protection Tracy Brown. "We're eager to build off the work we've already done with the Boys and Girls Club of Mount Vernon to engage youth in environmental protection for their community."

Once complete, the watershed plan will make it easier for Save the Sound and other local groups to secure funding for projects that will improve your water quality. We're laying the foundation for future projects to restore the Hutchinson River to its once thriving state: clean and clear water that supports a thriving ecosystem of fish and other marine wildlife.



*Creating a Hutchinson River Watershed plan will allow us to build on the water quality monitoring work we've been doing with the Boys and Girls Club of Mount Vernon.*

## Funder Spotlight: The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

*Sustaining, restoring, and enhancing the nation's fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats for current and future generations*

Lead funding for the Hutchinson River and Long Pond projects comes from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF is a private nonprofit organization that protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF leverages public funds to raise private dollars and awards those funds to projects that will do the most good across a wide range of landscapes.

Since 2005, the NFWF Long Island Sound Futures Fund (Futures Fund) grant program has supported 24 different Save the Sound projects. These include more than a dozen ecological restoration projects—from dam removals and fish passage installations to tidal marsh restoration—as well as pilot funding for the Unified Water Study, thanks to which Save the Sound and 23 partner groups now monitor the water quality of Long Island Sound bays and harbors. LISFF grants are leveraged by private matching contributions from grantees, thereby increasing their total conservation impact. Learn more at [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org).

We are incredibly grateful for NFWF's ongoing support through the Futures Fund—made possible through its funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Long Island Sound Study, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others—not just for Save the Sound projects, but for our partners throughout the Long Island Sound region. Over the past 15 years, the Futures Fund has generated \$63 million to protect and restore the Sound. These investments have led to 200 million gallons of stormwater treated, 773 acres of important coastal habitat restored, and 105 miles of river corridors improved for fish. That impact represents incredible progress toward a shared vision of "clean and clear waters, accessible shorelines, litter free beaches, abundant and diverse fish and wildlife, and resilient coastal communities." We are proud and thankful to play a part in delivering on that vision.

# Restoring Fish Passage on the Naugatuck River

*Bringing together your soundkeeper, legal team, and ecological restoration team*

**It takes a village to save a river.** Save the Sound's legal team, ecological restoration team, and Soundkeeper Bill Lucey are all working with local activist groups, non-profits, and municipal partners to restore fish passage on the Naugatuck River.

The Kinneytown Dam is the first barrier to migratory fish on the Naugatuck River, blocking access to over 32 river miles of spawning habitat. Currently, fish are unable to pass the dam due to improper hydropower operations and an ineffective fish ladder.

Many dedicated local groups have worked tirelessly over the last several decades to restore the river and clean up the pollution that once plagued it. Now, the river is home to trophy trout fishing, osprey nests, and a bald eagle nest—but the work is not done.

Since the Kinneytown Dam is the first geographic barrier to migratory fish, it is negating several large-scale habitat improvement efforts made upstream of the dam. These include five dam removals, instream fish habitat enhancement projects, culvert replacements, brown field cleanups, and massive sewage plant upgrades. **Without efficient fish passage at Kinneytown, the now clean free-flowing Naugatuck will never realize the restoration potential of healthy fish runs that benefit many other species of wildlife and human economies.**

Together these projects cost millions of dollars including a recent expenditure of more than six million dollars on a fish bypass project at Tigue Dam just upstream of the Kinneytown.

Last year, Save the Sound joined with the Naugatuck River Revival Group (NRRG), 19 municipalities represented by the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, and other community partners to form the Naugatuck River Restoration Coalition and work to restore access to this critical habitat.

"We're fighting to restore the largest historical spawning and rearing habitat for Western Long Island Sound," said Kevin Zak of the NRRG. "The importance of this Naugatuck River restoration project is far reaching, correcting a 176-year environmental wrong and carrying the potential to improve economic conditions for an entire region."

We're working with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that the dam owner is held to their legal requirement by ensuring safe, timely, and effective fish passage at the site.

The Naugatuck River's potential is vast. If fully restored, **it could support an annual run**

**of around 50,000 shad and river herring, plus sea run trout, eels, and striped bass.**

From 2014 to 2019, only 25 individuals from all these species combined were counted passing the fish ladder. With an average of five per year passing and a target of over 50,000 per year, it is obvious that we have a long way to go.

"The best way to restore rivers for migratory fish is to remove the barriers altogether," said Soundkeeper Bill Lucey. "Ultimately, we just want fish passage that is supportive of the restoration potential of the Naugatuck River, whatever it takes to get there."

Visit [www.savethesound.org/kinneytown-dam](http://www.savethesound.org/kinneytown-dam) to learn more.



*With your help, we can open river habitat that will support fish runs of 50,000 per year.*

## Protect our land, air, and water for generations to come

Did you know that a planned gift can be as simple as naming Save the Sound as a beneficiary on a retirement plan account, life insurance policy, or bank account? You maintain control of the asset, can spend it if you wish, and there's no cost to you now. Any funds remaining after your lifetime will transfer to Save the Sound to protect the environment that you love. For more information, contact Chief Development Officer Alicia Sullivan at [asullivan@savethesound.org](mailto:asullivan@savethesound.org) or 203-787-0646 x109.



# Curt's Corner: Moving from Defense to Offense

## Hope for the next four years

Oftentimes over the last four years we found ourselves playing defense, safeguarding your land, air, and water from over 100 environmental rollbacks by the federal administration.

**Now, there is a different story to tell and an opportunity to move the ball forward.** To clean our air and protect our children. To assure that every brook, beach, and bay is clean and abundant. To protect critical threatened lands. To assure that federal and local climate action is cohesive.

It's been less than three months under a new federal administration, but we have already seen a number of environmental victories come out of the White House. On his first week in office, President Biden re-joined the Paris Climate Agreement, halted construction of the Keystone XL gas pipeline, and stopped fossil extraction in sensitive wildlife

habitats. He also signed an executive order establishing a White House interagency council on environmental justice, creating an office of health and climate equity at the Health and Human Services Department, and forming a separate environmental justice office at the Justice Department. The order also directs the government to spend 40 percent of its sustainability investments on disadvantaged communities.

**I'm excited to see what we can accomplish on the local level with a stronger all at the federal level.** We can shift from defense to offense and fight to create real, lasting change for our farms, forests, and cities.

We can partner with our communities on environmental justice projects, not just to stop bad things from happening but also to make good things happen. We can make clean transit and electric vehicles accessible

to all, driving down our carbon emissions by bringing everyone into the solution. We can expand our rain garden initiative to cool down summer heat, keep polluted stormwater out of our rivers and harbors, and intercept and filter climate induced flood waters.

We can invest in Long Island Sound, using the power of dunes and marshes to protect our vulnerable communities from the effects of rising sea levels and storm surges—starting with Guilford's Chittenden marsh.

**Our future is bright. And the brightest star remains your support.** Your enthusiasm. Your willingness to engage in the common struggle to build a beautiful, equitable future free of polluted waters. Where every child can breathe easier in cleaner air. And every citizen of our region can enjoy clean, safe green space and renewable energy. Together we will get there.

# No Auction for Plum Island

## Pathway opens to conserve this unique island forever

After a decade of advocacy, we finally can announce: Plum Island is off the auction block. **Thanks to you, we all have the opportunity to preserve more than 600 acres of critical wild habitat for generations to come.**



Cover illustration from the *Envision Plum Island* report. Painting by Scott Bluedorn.

Plum Island, located at the eastern end of Long Island Sound, is a wild refuge for more than 500 plant and animal species, 111 of which are species of conservation concern. It also holds nationally significant cultural and historical resources, including lands traditionally used by Indigenous nations and a historic, decommissioned Army post—Fort Terry.

In December, Congress passed a federal budget package repealing the language that had initiated a sale of Plum Island in 2009.

**YOU made all of this possible.** It couldn't have happened without your impassioned advocacy, from emailing your senators and signing petitions to supporting the cause with your membership dollars.

"This is an incredibly exciting moment that makes us so grateful to all of our supporters," said Land Campaign Manager Chris Cryder. "And yet, most on my mind right now is the road still ahead. Now, we need to switch our attention to bringing New York State on board as a permanent conservation partner."

Our Plum Island team has been in numerous conversations with New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's top administration officials about the possibility of New York taking and conserving the island, preventing it from being sold to developers in the future, and bringing to life the region's vision of Plum Island Preserve.

We need your continued support and advocacy to assure the Island is protected forever, and we'll keep you updated every step of the way.

## Thank you!

This victory would not be possible without the priceless knowledge of our pro-bono attorney groups. Attorney Layth Elhassani with Covington & Burling, LLP and Attorneys Joshua A. Roy and Robert J. Baehr with Morrison & Foerster, LLP were all instrumental in helping secure bi-partisan support in Congress for taking Plum Island off the auction block.

# Taking out the Trash

## Totals from the 2020 cleanup season

Even amidst great uncertainty, you found innovative and safe ways to clean your local beaches, parks, and riverbanks. Nearly **1,500 volunteers** turned out for **41 safe cleanups** across Connecticut, and even more of you took part in new virtual cleanups in your own neighborhoods. **Together, you removed 605 bags of trash totaling nearly 7,500 pounds.** That's a lot of trash that will never make it to our waterways and natural environments. Nothing can stop your commitment to our environment—THANK YOU!



*As a dedicated community of cleanup captains and volunteers, you cleaned over 130 miles of natural habitat.*

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