

SoundBites

Spring 2021

Reopening Rivers, Restoring Life

Empowering Youth for Environmental Protection

New Look for Our New York Office

Curt's Corner: Saving Local Rivers



Save the Sound[®]
Action for our region's environment.

Pond Lily began rebounding after we successfully completed a dam removal in 2017. Now it's a healthy and thriving environment.

Fighting Environmental Battles in Your Backyard

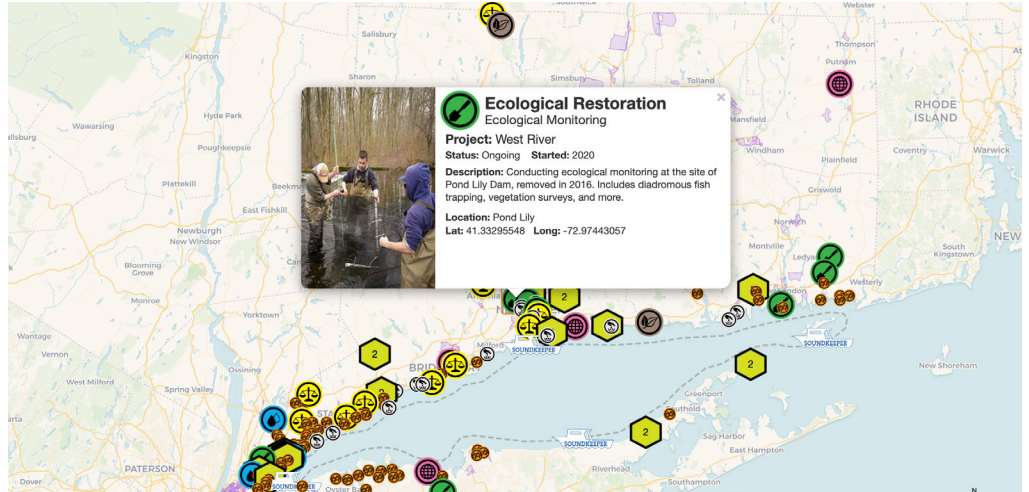
New online tool to help track what matters to you

Ever wonder about what great things Save the Sound is up to in your area? For the first time, Save the Sound is able to present the breadth and variety of our work in easy to understand and accessible format. Check out our newly launched interactive Impact Map at www.savethesound.org/about-us/impact-map for a look into all of the different actions we are taking to protect your air, land, and water. From Climate & Resiliency and Healthy Waters to Protected Lands and Ecological Restoration, plus the patrols of our Soundkeeper fleet, the Impact Map will show you how your support and our dedicated staff are making an impact all around the Long Island Sound region each and every day.

When viewing the map you can search for anything that interests you—whether that's legal battles, water monitoring, or cleanups—zoom in to where you live in

New York or Connecticut, and find what's happening in your backyard. For information on the different actions, simply click on the icons on the map and a pop-up will present

you a synopsis of the project, including relevant statistics and details. We hope everyone explores all of the wonderful work you're making possible!



The new impact map allows you to zoom in on your neighborhood and shows you all of the projects happening in your own backyard.

Wishing Well to Two Environmental Leaders

Save the Sound's Chris Cryder and Andrea Kerin retire

Land Campaign Manager Chris Cryder and Director of Leadership Giving Andrea Kerin have retired after a combined 16 years with Save the Sound. They've both played irreplaceable roles in protecting our Long Island Sound region's land, air, and water. We'll miss them deeply, but wish them well in their retirements.



Chris spent over 13 years fighting for your natural resources and precious open spaces.

In his 13 years with Save the Sound, Chris has been a part of many transformational successes including the restoration of Bride Brook in East Lyme, Connecticut, resulting in a quarter-million more river herring swimming up its channel; the permanent protection of the 1,000-acre coastal forest at The Preserve, in Old Saybrook, Essex, and Westbrook, Connecticut; and most recently the repeal of federal legislation that was driving the sale of Plum Island, New York to the highest bidder, opening a path for permanent conservation. We will fondly remember Chris' quiet sense of humor and big smile; outstanding presentation style; and organized, focused, and dogged coalition building and willingness to take on new challenges.

During her three years as Director of Leadership Giving, Andrea reached out and developed meaningful relationships with so many people who love Save the Sound and taking action for our region's environment. She organized and led the Soundkeeper Task Force, a group of dedicated supporters who have generously invested their time, talent,



Andrea spent years fostering incredible relationships to protect our environment.

and treasure to ensure that Soundkeeper Bill Lucey has the resources he needs. We will miss Andrea's passion; sincere and easy rapport with people; and her special connection to all of our winged, finned, and four-legged neighbors who make our woods, rivers, and Sound their home.

Donor Spotlight: Robert and Libby Alexander

Advancing the New York Ecological Restoration Program with lead staff

Thanks to a generous gift from Robert and Libby Alexander, longtime supporters of Save the Sound, we recently hired Katie Friedman, New York Ecological Restoration Program Manager, to move forward on nature-based restoration solutions in Westchester County, New York.

The Alexanders care deeply about Long Island Sound, having lived in both Westchester and Fairfield counties where they learned of the range of issues working against a healthy ecosystem.



Libby and Robert spend much of their time sailing on Long Island Sound.

"In the beginning, Rob and I never thought of ourselves as environmentalists," said Libby. "We both are lifelong sailors and have spent much time over the years sailing west to east and back again on Long Island Sound. Naturally, the idea of a healthy, vibrant ecosystem resonates with us."

Libby is a former board member, and both she and Rob are very involved on the Soundkeeper Task Force. With their decade-long engagement and support of Save the Sound, they were able to identify a way to enhance our ability to positively affect the local Westchester environment.

"The team at Save the Sound is an incredible group whose talent and know-how are making a positive impact today," said Libby. "Effective environmental work requires legal expertise to influence policy, advocacy expertise to influence the decision makers, and environmental expertise to execute programs or projects and have positive impact. Save the Sound is so successful because they have it all."

The Alexanders have seen firsthand the impact of protecting and promoting a healthy environment. Last summer, they saw their first sea turtle right off the Larchmont harbor breakwater.

“It’s critical to address all of the ecosystems and unique habitats that connect with Long Island Sound. There are project opportunities right here in Westchester that can advance the health of Western Long Island Sound, right in our backyard!”

- Libby Alexander

"That was pretty cool and a sign that the health of Long Island Sound is moving in the right direction," said Libby. "But so much more work to be done, and if we can help make a positive impact on the health of Long Island Sound in our lifetime, well, that would be pretty cool too!"

This generous gift will enable Save the Sound to expand our ecological restoration work and further improve the watershed, building on recent successes like the restoration of 135 acres at Sunken Meadow State Park in Suffolk County, New York and the fishway installation at Pages Millpond Dam in North Branford, Connecticut.

New Look for Our New York Office

Move to Larchmont enables expanded water quality laboratory

Our upcoming move to 1385 Boston Post Road, Larchmont, NY will bring many improvements, including ample parking for volunteers and visitors and easy access for loading and unloading water quality monitoring equipment. The new office and lab are located just a few blocks from Mamaroneck High School and Hommocks Middle School, which presents the opportunity for local students to get involved in our work—plus there’s an IHOP next door! The building has easy access to Larchmont Flint Park where we could educate folks young and old about environmental issues in their area.

Months of planning and design have gone into utilizing the space efficiently. Besides simply having room for our expanding New York staff, we are also creating a state-of-the-art laboratory facility with brand new equipment capable of performing enhanced water quality testing.

We’ll be able to test for fecal indicator bacteria as well as for a number of different parameters of ecological health, including nitrogen, phosphorous, and chlorophyll-a, that we currently have to send out to be analyzed. Excess nutrient pollution can lead to harmful algal blooms and large-scale fish die-offs, and measuring these water quality

parameters provides a complete picture of your local waterways and allows us to better tackle the threats they face.

We are grateful for generous funding for the laboratory from the John and Daria Barry Foundation and also a wonderful team of volunteers and pro bono assistance. Special thanks go to Timon Malloy, Evan Heller, architect Kevin Davignon, real estate agent Ian Ceppos, electrical engineer J. Walter Williams, and lab cabinetry consultant Brian Foresta.

Note: Our regional headquarters remain at 900 Chapel St., New Haven, CT 06510.

Fish Return to Healthy Habitats

Fish swim upstream barrier free

Dams are a complete barrier to the migration of fish like alewife and shad, denying them access to adequate spawning habitat. Since these species—called forage fish—are a critical food source for other fish, birds, and mammals, the decline of their populations due, in part, to habitat loss also contributes to the decline of others. Both before and after our team removes a dam, one of the most important things we monitor for is the presence of alewife, shad, and other migratory species in the waterway.

It can take time for the fish to return—only three alewives were recorded upstream of the Pond Lily Dam site in 2017, the year after removal. By 2020, that number reached 50 alewives, and our team also recorded 11 other species, several of them migratory. Given their lifecycle, we expect that, with the right conditions, these numbers will continue to increase in the coming years.



Above: Alewives are just one of the species that has rebounded upstream of the Pond Lily Dam site since the dam was removed in 2016. Below: A Save the Sound team monitoring fish runs at Pond Lily in 2018.



Reopening Rivers, Restoring Life

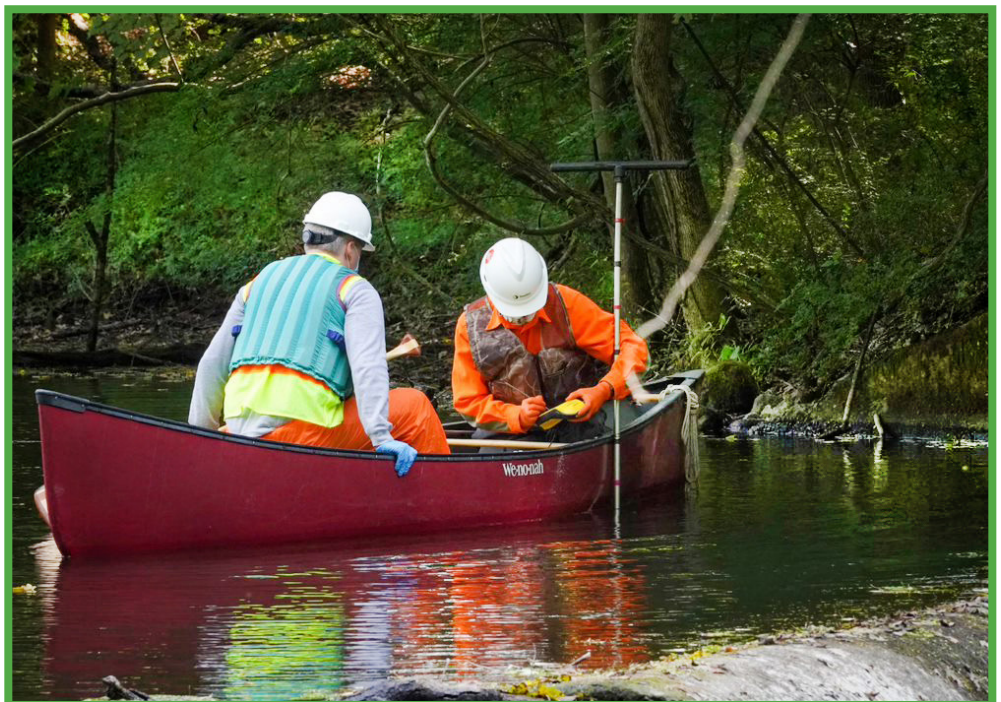
An in-depth look at the benefits of dam removal

“When we free our rivers, it’s more than just the fish that benefit—it’s the native plant species that rebound and plant their roots along the water, the native birds and animals that call the area home, and the communities that rely on the healthy ecosystems around them.”

- Director of Ecological Restoration Gwen Macdonald



Above: Ecological Restoration team members set up a fish trap to monitor the presence of target migratory species. Below: Design engineers use a hand auger to conduct preliminary site assessments at the dam site.



Regrowth Without Barriers

Wetlands rebound when rivers run free

A thriving wetland ecosystem of nearly 100 species of native grass, shrub, and tree welcomes visitors to the Pond Lily Nature Preserve on the banks of the West River in New Haven. Prior to the removal of Pond Lily Dam by Save the Sound in 2016, this area was almost entirely underwater.

When a dam is removed, its impoundment (the ponded area created by blocking the river) drains as the river once again flows free. As the ground is then exposed to sunlight and air, native seeds that have lain dormant often spring forth, creating restored habitat and landscapes like the emergent wetland at this site. In time, it is expected to transform into a young forest, providing shelter and habitat for wildlife and community members alike.



Native plants began to rebound at Pond Lily Nature Preserve after dedicated volunteers participated in a 2016 planting event.

Imagining Merwin Meadows

A view to a future free-flowing river

Imagine a child approaching the edge of the water on the wheelchair-accessible Norwalk River Trail and gazing into the free-flowing river. She wonders about the mysteries that its migratory fish and eels still hold for us. From the depths of the Atlantic to the streams feeding Long Island Sound, she has heard that these fish cover more distance than many people travel in a lifetime. Maybe she, too, has traveled a long way to get to this place, and feels a connection to the alewives for whom migration is an absolute necessity—or perhaps she has lived near the river all her life, and finds it mesmerizing to contemplate their long journey.

Now imagine another child, zipping along on the Danbury train line as it draws near to the Norwalk River, unaware that the surrounding forest cover and nearby riverbank were recently restored. Glancing away from his handheld screen and into the flickering sunlight, he briefly glimpses the other child across the water before turning back into his screen. There, he looks up

the river on a maps app and reflects on his journey along the Norwalk.

In this future, the children, the fish, the eels, and everything living in the water and the recovering riverside forest reap the benefits of the removal of a dam that once blocked the Norwalk River. Their experiences of Merwin Meadows Park are remarkably different, just as the landscape that plays host to them is forever different—and more whole—than the one we know today.

Such benefits of river restoration range from the quantifiable to the unquantifiable. Taken together, the possibilities they contain far outweigh the costs of removing an obsolete remnant of human development. Removing Dana Dam (also known as Strong Pond Dam) will reconnect 4.9 miles of upstream river habitat for migratory species, in addition to the 14 miles already restored downstream. The flowing, meandering river will stay colder, providing refuge for temperature-sensitive brook trout, while also protecting the riverbank from erosion and permitting the flow of sediments to the coast, where

In this future, the children, the fish, the eels, and everything living in the water and the recovering riverside forest reap the benefits of the removal of a dam that once blocked the Norwalk River.

they are crucial in reclaiming the oyster beds of the Norwalk/Westport Island Chain.

Now imagine the children again. Perhaps the first is so curious about life in the river that she sets off to study something entirely different than she otherwise would have. Perhaps the boy on the train comes back to visit the river someday. Or perhaps not. Either way, the transformation and restoration of the landscape allows such life stories—human and nonhuman—to unfold. Support us and our partners on this last stretch of dam removal at Merwin Meadows in Wilton, Connecticut, and expand the world of possibility on the Norwalk River.

Empowering Youth for Environmental Protection

A conversation between our Climate Advocate and Climate Policy Intern

Youth are a critical group in the fight to combat climate change. No one understands that better than Spencer Kinyon, an intern at Save the Sound who is completing his Master of Public Policy at the University of Connecticut. Spencer is working to engage young people across Connecticut and empower them to take on environmental battles in their backyards. Recently, our Climate Advocate Alex Rodriguez spoke with Spencer about their joint efforts to engage youth across the state.

Alex: Spencer, just to start us off, what first made you interested in environmental protection and policy?

Spencer: As a kid my family would go camping and fishing trips and that's where I really gained an appreciation for nature. Over the years that became a passion of mine, and then I got the chance to travel to the United Nations Conference of Parties in Spain, where I was able to learn about the Paris Agreement and international environmental policy. That really opened my eyes to the opportunities that existed for me to make a difference.

A: Wow! We're glad you brought those skills with you to Save the Sound. Can you talk a little about what you've been working on here?

S: In the fall I created the youth advocacy toolkit, which provides high school and college students with an introduction to Save the Sound and gives them the tools to be an environmental advocate. Essentially, we provide an overview of state government and then help teach youth how they can best use their voices to create concrete change.

A: We recently launched Youth Eco Advocacy Corps; this will serve as a way for students across Connecticut to meet with

other people interested in environmental policy and hear about the issues and activism that are happening across the state. What do you hope young people are getting out of this collaboration with Save the Sound?

S: One of my favorite things is that everyone comes to be involved in advocacy on a different path with a different story, and so I hope that Save the Sound is better able to help guide these youth activists on their journey into advocacy in a meaningful and important way.

A: That's great. So, why does it matter? Why are youth so important in the fight to combat climate change?

S: Environmental policy can take on so many different forms, from public health to agriculture to energy and technology. There are a lot of different areas that youth are involved with and can be involved with—and we need them involved with it all. I love seeing youth have their own ideas about how to be involved in their community, whether it's encouraging their school to be more sustainable, getting their cafeteria to eat local, or planting curbside gardens in their neighborhood. Youth are already having tremendous impacts in their local communities, and it's work that Save the Sound and people everywhere find important, so I think it's great that Save the Sound can collaborate with youth throughout Connecticut and across the region.



Spencer has been interning with Save the Sound for nearly a year, developing a youth engagement toolkit and getting a feel for environmental advocacy work.

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 or 203-787-0646 x109.

Curt's Corner: Your River Needs You

How you can help protect your local waterways

Close your eyes and imagine with me. Picture your favorite local river. Can you hear its soothing voice? Can you see its banks? Have you explored its course as it empties to the Sound? Our rivers are the lifelines of our communities, and they need our help.

If you live in Connecticut, you have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to bring your favorite river back to life—to clean its waters, even out its flow, slow down floodwaters, and restore its soul.

If you live in New York, stick with me. With your support, I look forward to offering you this same historic chance within the next five years.

So, let's talk a little more about this opportunity.

You and I, along with our favorite rivers, are surrounded by acres and acres of parking lots, streets, and roofs. Rain rushes across the black-top and picks up dog poop, litter, and oil. This polluted stormwater then pours down into street drains and rushes out pipes on its way into your rivers. This pollution also causes flash floods that threaten our vulnerable downstream neighborhoods.

The good news is: you have the power to help protect your local rivers and the communities that rely on them.



You can protect your local waterways like the Farm River in East Haven, Connecticut.

With your support, Save the Sound has been fighting for your clean water for over 40 years, advocating for policies that clean up polluted stormwater and reduce climate-induced flooding. Recently, your Senior Legal Counsel Roger Reynolds spent a year negotiating a regulation requiring common sense clean river plans be submitted by 121 towns throughout Connecticut. They require your town to start capturing polluted stormwater in lovely rain gardens, cleaning rivers and beautifying neighborhoods at the same time. These plans (called MS4 plans) were due in April. And still, many towns have not submitted their plans, and the ones that have been submitted are grossly inadequate.

So, what can you do to help?

I'm asking you to place two emails or calls:

one to your town's clean water/MS4 plan coordinator, and another to your First Selectman or Mayor's office. Ask them if they are covered under the MS4 permit (the vast majority of the CT population is covered) and if they have submitted their clean river/MS4 Retrofit Plan.

Tell them they must. Tell them why you love that river and that this plan is essential to keeping it healthy, so that you and generations after you can enjoy it forever. We need your help to restore our local rivers. The time is now.

To our New York members: stay tuned! With your support we will pass this clean river/clean Sound mandate soon, and I'll be back asking you to make these same phone calls.

Now, get out and enjoy that river!

From Rivers to the Sound—Defending Your Clean Water

What exactly is a MS4 plan?

All roads lead to Rome, and all waterways lead to Long Island Sound—at least the ones in Connecticut.

Whether you live on the coast, or in a land-locked town, raw and partially treated stormwater is a threat to your local streams and rivers, and those waterways feed into our Long Island Sound.

Stormwater is identified by the Environmental Protection Agency as the nation's largest remaining predominantly uncontrolled source of water pollution. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) identifies stormwater as an impairment to the public's right to enjoy clean water.

Recognizing that threat, in 2017 Save the Sound's legal team successfully reached an agreement with municipalities for required actions that will protect your local rivers and Long Island Sound. These requirements were included in what is called the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater for Small Municipal Separate Stormwater Systems.

Under the guidelines of the permit, towns are required, among other things, to complete a comprehensive mapping of all stormwater outfalls and to create a plan, called a Retrofit Plan, that prioritizes projects to achieve a 2% reduction in impervious surface by the end of the permit.

Essentially, this requires towns with certain population densities to submit a publicly available report on the impact of their stormwater system on your waterways, and a Retrofit plan to address it.

These plans were due on April 1, and at least 123 towns either failed to submit plans or submitted inadequate plans.

That's why Save the Sound's attorneys and Soundkeeper are tracking and monitoring your towns and reaching out when they are out of compliance.

With your support, we'll continue pushing for clear and transparent communication that benefits the health of your local waterway and your community.

A Better Boat to Safeguard Long Island Sound

Saying goodbye to UWS 1 and hello to Terry Backer III

The Soundkeeper fleet is set to launch for another season. The *Terry Backer I*, a 21-foot Mako that was our first Soundkeeper skiff, will be launched later this month and brought down to City Island, New York to support the Unified Water Study (UWS) work in the Bronx and Westchester areas. The *Terry Backer II* has been in the water all year at Bridgeport, Connecticut, even through the winter with the help of some snow shoveling to keep her afloat! Piloted by Soundkeeper Bill Lucey, she will patrol from Norwalk to Smithtown Bay and out to Plum Island and Watch Hill.

The *UWS 1*, a low freeboard 17-foot Boston Whaler, is being retired this year and replaced with the newly acquired *Terry Backer III*, a much safer 18-foot Carolina Skiff Sea Chaser. The new boat, based in Mamaroneck, NY, is getting cleaned and prepped to launch in May and will be run by a new seasonal assistant Soundkeeper patrolling from Stamford to the East River and over to Oyster Bay.



Soundkeeper Bill Lucey has been patrolling your water year-round because environmental protection doesn't take days off.

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