

# SoundBites

## Spring 2022

Freeing the Naugatuck River

Connecticut's Climate Action Plan

Designing for the Salt Marsh Sparrow

Curt's Corner: Celebrating Our Restoration Legacy



**Save the Sound<sup>®</sup>**  
Action for our region's environment.

Cover photo: Sunken Meadow State Park, Kings Park, NY, where Save the Sound completed its largest restoration project to date in 2019.



# Saving the Sound, One Lobster Pot at a Time

## *Soundkeeper wrestles with ghost fishing*

Over one million abandoned lobster pots are resting on the floor of Long Island Sound, still catching helpless sea life. “Ghost fishing” has claimed the lives of many different species in our waters, trapping them to perish in abandoned lobster pots. They then become bait for the next animal to come along, which then itself gets trapped, in an endless devastating cycle.

Soundkeeper Bill Lucey is helping develop a new project that will permanently remove some of these abandoned lobster pots from the environment. This project, led by The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, was recently funded through the Consolidated Appropriations Act. The first steps will be research-oriented, including putting cameras on the pots to look at the sealife being caught and mapping out likely areas to begin cleanup operations. The next step is meeting with the commercial fishing industry to discuss options for contracting their boats—the only vessels set up to make a real dent in retrieving pots—for future cleanup efforts. This partnership gives these vessels another option to continue working. This will be a long-haul effort (pun-intended!) that will take decades to accomplish, but the results will greatly benefit the sea life of Long Island Sound.



*Above: The grapple system employed by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) in Mount Sinai Harbor, NY. Left: CCE staff inspecting a retrieved pot on Long Island. Below: The sonar technology used to detect abandoned lobster pots on the seafloor.*



## A Look at New York's Bright Future

### *\$4 billion for the environment and green jobs*

New York Governor Kathy Hochul delivered a bold State of the State address with an ambitious environmental agenda to combat climate change and make major investments in clean energy infrastructure. Most exciting was the proposal to increase the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act (formerly the Environmental Bond Act) budget to \$4 billion. The Bond Act, which should appear on the 2022 general election ballot across New York State, is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reduce harmful carbon pollution and protect communities from flooding and deadly heatwaves while creating more than 65,000 green jobs to boost the state's economy.

“By putting forth bold plans to move New York into a safer, healthier, and more just future for all its residents, Governor Hochul has shown what can be done when a public official takes the existential crisis of climate change seriously,” said Director of Water Quality Peter Linderth. “We look forward to working with the Governor and State Legislature to help ensure voters have the chance to realize this historic opportunity and vote for the Bond Act in November.”

Learn more at [www.governor.ny.gov/programs/2022-state-state](http://www.governor.ny.gov/programs/2022-state-state).

## Groundwater's Day in the Sun

### *World Water Day*

The importance of groundwater is immense. Out of sight, under our feet, groundwater is a hidden treasure that enriches our lives. Almost all of the liquid freshwater in the world is groundwater. As climate change gets worse, we need to work together to sustainably manage this precious resource.

On March 21, Save the Sound and six other environmental organizations hosted an online forum focused on the current threats to groundwater and the steps we can take to ensure every Connecticut resident has access to clean water now and in the future.

For more information, visit [www.ourwaterct.org](http://www.ourwaterct.org).

# Donor Spotlight: Timon Malloy

## *A family legacy of giving for our environment*

Timon Malloy has been a supporter of Save the Sound for nearly two decades. Growing up in Westport, he was raised to have a deep admiration for the natural world by his mother, an artist who drew most of her inspiration from nature. The family's Sun Hill Family Foundation has been supporting environmental efforts for generations.

"I remember going to Compo Beach—seeing horseshoe crabs and swimming with seahorses," reflected Timon. "As a history buff, I've learned a great deal about the amazing natural history of the Sound. I think few people realize how bountiful the Sound's ecosystem once was."

His advocacy goes beyond funding. He works closely with Save the Sound's legal team, in partnership with Riverkeeper and the Natural Resources Defense Council, holding polluters accountable in New York through policy and litigation.

"Save the Sound's legal program is indispensable," said Timon. "If you really want to fight pollution and implement these

policies, you can't just be talk—you need to be able to take action."

Recently, he gave his expertise and time to help Save the Sound's New York team move into a new office with an all-new, state-of-the-art water quality testing lab, and brought some of his mother's paintings to display.

"As someone with experience in commercial real estate and with environmental nonprofits, I've tried to help organize a process to not just find a new office space but actually develop a facility to support the organization's five-year vision and strategic plan," said Timon.

While he is passionate about Save the Sound's water quality and legal work, he's also supportive of our work to mitigate the impact of global warming, which threatens to exceed two degrees Celsius.

Timon lives in New York City and also serves on the board of Riverkeeper.

“My vision is to restore the balance of human activity and nature so that life on earth will be environmentally and economically sustainable. I want to see the Sound thrive with a healthy balance between human activity and marine life. Save the Sound has the diverse expertise, legacy, and history to make that happen.”

- Timon Malloy



*Timon Malloy generously supports Save the Sound through a variety of ways. Most recently, he loaned our New York office several paintings from his mother's beautiful collection. One of those paintings, reflecting the vibrant colors of fall, is pictured above.*

## Protect your 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 and 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 Vice President of Philanthropy Alicia Sullivan at [asullivan@savethesound.org](mailto:asullivan@savethesound.org) or 203-787-0646 x109.



# Freeing the Naugatuck River

## *Historic fish runs thwarted by Kinneytown Dam*

*Kinneytown Dam; Photo credit: A. Budris NVCOG*

Historically, the Housatonic River Watershed provided the most abundant freshwater diadromous fish habitat in the Western Long Island Sound region—but when the river and its tributaries were dammed for industry and power, that habitat was lost. The Naugatuck River is the largest tributary of the Housatonic and, if restored, has the greatest potential to support an increase in populations of wild sea-run fish from Bridgeport to the East River. The Naugatuck River has come a long way over the last several decades, with multiple dam removals and in-stream habitat

improvements. Today it's become a place to enjoy trout fishing, paddling, numerous osprey nests, and even a bald eagle nest.

The problem? More than 32 miles of restored habitat on the main stem of the Naugatuck River are currently blocked by the Kinneytown Dam—owned and operated by the Hydroland Corporation—due to an ineffective fish ladder. Instead of making it upstream to spawn, fish, eel, and lamprey are often stranded below the dam where they are an easy meal for predators. The results are fish-run numbers far below restoration

targets. In 2021, only 18 lampreys, four eels, and 86 fish were recorded passing the dam. In fact, the number of fish documented passing Kinneytown Dam over the last 20 years represents a fraction of 1 percent of the populations that could thrive in an open river.

If fully restored, the Naugatuck River could support an annual run of around 160,000 shad and river herring, plus sea run trout, eel, and striped bass. We're demanding safe, timely, and effective fish passage at Kinneytown Dam.

## Bringing it All Together

### *Legal efforts and scientific expertise combine*

Save the Sound is utilizing the unique breadth of our toolkit and expertise to push for fish passage on the Naugatuck River.

Your legal team is fighting alongside your ecological restoration team and Soundkeeper Bill Lucey, combining expertise on effective fish passage, in-depth scientific knowledge on fish biology and behavior, and decades of legal advocacy experience.

Together, our team and partners have compiled the entire foundation of evidence that is being used by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to make decisions about enforcement of fish passage requirements at Kinneytown Dam.



*The faces fighting at Kinneytown. Left to right: Soundkeeper Bill Lucey, Staff Attorney Kat Fiedler, and Assistant Director of Ecological Restoration Anthony Allen.*

# Latest News: Kinneytown Dam is Out of Compliance

## *A step toward resolution, and what it means for the future*

This past December, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) declared Hydroland out of compliance for its failure to provide safe, timely, and effective fish passage, and directed them to comply with a strict schedule of measures to restore fish passage. This critical step in freeing the Naugatuck River could not have happened without your support.

The fish ladder at Kinneytown Dam has failed to adequately pass fish since it was constructed in 1999, and poor passage rates have only continued to decline. It's your advocacy—along with documentation from our team and partners—that pushed FERC to finally escalate its enforcement efforts and direct Hydroland to look at modern standards and a comprehensive fix. We initiated a powerful campaign,

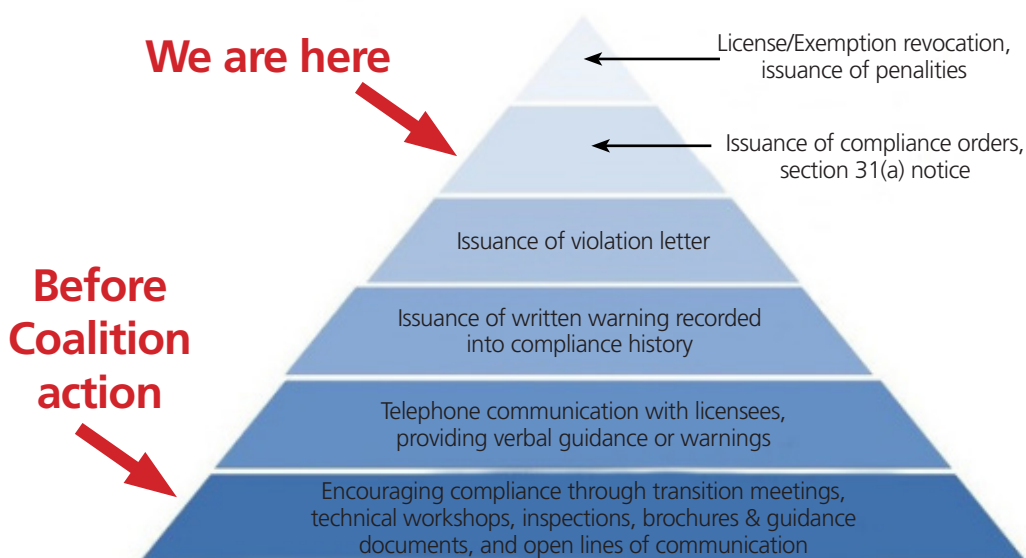
supported by Connecticut Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy and Representatives Rosa DeLauro, Jim Himes, and Jahana Hayes, who filed a letter in support of effective fish passage.

Without our efforts, this mounting regulatory pressure on Hydroland may have never materialized. After two decades of noncompliance, this is a serious step forward in this monumental fight for the fish, wildlife, and communities of the Naugatuck River Valley.

Despite this momentum, the work is far from over. Hydroland continues to show little interest in or capacity for remedying the issues. They have missed every fish-passage related deadline in FERC's December Order. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) have filed comments citing this noncompliance and expressing concerns for the fast-approaching spring fish run.

We're holding Hydroland accountable to the schedule issued by FERC. Until safe, timely, and effective fish passage is restored, the Kinneytown Dam will continue to have a severe impact on the vitality of the Naugatuck River—and we'll continue to fight.

*Source: FERC Compliance Handbook (callouts in red are our own)*



**Figure 1** Enforcement pyramid showing various activities aimed to achieve licensee/exemptee compliance (activities at the base of the pyramid are used most frequently and activities at the top of the pyramid are used less frequently).

## Our River-Reopening Partners

Ensuring safe, timely, and effective fish passage at Kinneytown Dam and freeing the Naugatuck River will not be accomplished alone. Our work wouldn't be possible without collaboration with local and regional partners.



NAUGATUCK VALLEY  
COUNCIL of GOVERNMENTS



Additional partners include Housatonic Valley Association, Rivers Alliance of CT, Maritime Aquarium, Mystic Aquarium, and Trout Unlimited - CT Chapter



# Clean Trucks and Coastal Resiliency

## *Key priorities in Connecticut and New York*

We are now past the committee hearing stage of the Connecticut and New York legislative sessions. In Connecticut, we are pleased to see the effort to clean our air by adopting California's medium and heavy-duty vehicle emission standards gaining momentum, along with several bills to reduce waste and plastic pollution. In New York, we are continuing to advocate for a historic bonding bill and multiple

coastal resiliency measures that will help protect communities from flooding and storm surge, and restore healthy shoreline ecosystems.

Please stay tuned for future email and social media action alerts that offer an easy way for you to engage with your elected officials on issues that matter to you. Your voice is essential to carrying these priorities past the finish line!

# Connecticut's Climate Action Plan

## *Climate mitigation, health, and equity strategies*

We are proud to announce the Connecticut Climate Action Plan, a collaboration between Save the Sound, The Yale Center on Climate Change and Health, and other allies.

This resource focuses on climate change mitigation strategies for Connecticut, with specific recommendations for the Building, Electricity, and Transportation sectors.

Among the plan's top policy recommendations: strengthen accountability and enforcement

mechanisms in the Global Warming Solutions Act, and pass the Transportation & Climate Initiative to cut emissions from the state's largest source of climate pollution. The plan also highlights key intersections where climate interventions can improve equity and public health.

We hope that its urgency will inspire state leaders and residents alike in action for a healthier, more resilient state. Find it at [www.savethesound.org/CTClimateActionPlan](http://www.savethesound.org/CTClimateActionPlan).

# Feeling Inspired?

Don't just read about our efforts—be a part of them!

All of our work—from legislative advocacy to removing dams—is more successful with YOU. Scan the QR code below to sign up for our email activist network, and we'll alert you when opportunities arise for you to make your voice heard in support of positive change in the Long Island Sound region.

Choose the topics you care about most, from climate to clean water. If there's an environmental event or volunteer opportunity near you, you'll hear from us first. And when big issues break, you'll get an action alert with all the information you need to reach out to your legislators.



# Offshore Wind Energy Coming to New York

## *Looking toward a critical milestone for the Empire State*

New York began construction of its first offshore wind farm in February, starting with a new electrical substation on the east end of Long Island. A subsea cable will connect the 12 turbines standing in federal waters to Long Island's grid, supplying enough power for roughly

70,000 homes every year. Developers estimate that construction will be completed in late 2023.

New York aims to build nine gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2035, enough to meet about 30 percent of the

state's total electricity needs. For densely populated areas like Long Island and New York City, the ocean represents one of the few available areas to site large-scale renewable energy facilities to meet demand from millions of households.



# Curt's Corner: Celebrating our Restoration Legacy

## *Wishing well to former Director of Ecological Restoration Gwen Macdonald*

In January our team said farewell to our Director of Ecological Restoration Gwen Macdonald, who came to us as a young ecological engineer and over a dozen years built our ecological restoration program into a regional leader. While Gwen continues having a positive impact in her new role at European Open Rivers Programme, we'll be honoring her legacy at Save the Sound.

Upon arrival, she immediately took on two big projects. By installing self-regulating tide gates on the West River in New Haven, the team began a linked set of river restoration projects that at least one national expert identifies as the most ecologically significant urban river restoration project from the Chesapeake to Maine. Now, a decade later, thousands of urban visitors enjoy a beloved duck pond with enhanced wetlands and safer, more aesthetic trails. The second project was day-lighting Bride Brook in Connecticut's Rocky Neck State Park, where it had been trapped below ground in culverts for the past eight decades. Herring populations have multiplied four-fold since the project was completed.

Since 2005, Save the Sound has completed 55 ecological restoration projects in Connecticut and New York with a broad spectrum of partners.

Gwen transformed our work. What started as a team of two has grown into a nimble department of eight diversely-talented specialists. What began as a pass-through construction effort has evolved into a multi-pronged, sought-after identification, design, and implementation program and team.

Building on this legacy, our new strategic plan promises to supercharge the team's work through:

- Expanding our Ecological Restoration program across Westchester, the Bronx, Queens, and Long Island;
- Expanding our regional leadership through a river restoration network;
- Boosting nature-based flood reduction and community resilience;
- Accelerating municipal adoption of green stormwater infrastructure in cities and suburbs through training, demonstration projects, and community capacity building;
- Empowering and catalyzing equitable partnerships through the dual lenses of ecological restoration and environmental justice.

Under Gwen's leadership we've opened 107 river miles through fishways and dam removal, restored 322 acres of degraded tidal marsh, installed 37 acres of native vegetation and about 138 rain gardens along with additional green infrastructure, and so much more.

From dam removals at Merwin Meadows (Wilton, CT) and the Nissequogue River (Long Island, NY), to freeing the Naugatuck River at Kinneytown Dam (Seymour, CT), to living shorelines projects at Chittenden (Guilford, CT) and Big Rock (Queens, NY)—we'll continue to be at the forefront of environmental protection and restoration. Thanks to the connections and accomplishments Gwen brought to Save the Sound, the next years are going to be exciting ones for our organization and ecological restoration program. I'm grateful to you for all your support.

## Designing for the Salt Marsh Sparrow

### *The work continues at Sunken Meadow*

Back in 2019, our Ecological Restoration team completed its largest project to date, restoring tidal connection to the 135-acre marsh complex, installing large-scale green stormwater infrastructure, and improving the marsh habitat at Sunken Meadow State Park in Kings Park, NY on the North Shore of Long Island.

Over the past year, our team has been building on that work, assisting New York Audubon with designs for further marsh restoration at the site. This time the focus is on creating habitat suitable for the threatened Salt Marsh Sparrow, which relies on high marsh habitat that remains dry for its entire nesting cycle. Preliminary designs have been completed; they call for a range of techniques to improve the marsh's habitat quality, diversity, and resilience to sea level rise.



*The threatened Salt Marsh Sparrow.*



# Building a Functional Park as a Living Classroom

## *A green infrastructure park for the Fair Haven community*

Save the Sound's Ecological Restoration team has officially begun construction of a green infrastructure park along the Mill River Trail in the Fair Haven neighborhood of New Haven, CT. The long-awaited project officially broke ground in January and is expected to be completed this spring. It will convert an abandoned stretch of roadway into a community green space that includes permeable pavement and rain gardens designed to absorb stormwater and reduce flooding. The park will also act as a living classroom for students at nearby schools, where our team has been working with teachers to design curricula around the impacts of stormwater and how rain gardens and other green infrastructure can keep pollutants out of our waterways.



*Construction has officially begun along the Mill River Trail. Once completed, the space will serve as a community green space and outdoor classroom.*

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