



Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund

OVERVIEW

The Long Island Sound is an estuary located between Connecticut and New York. It is one of the most densely populated estuaries in the United States, with 9 million people residing in the watershed. According to research conducted by the Long Island Sound Partnership, the Sound serves as an integral part of the regional economy, generating billions annually to the regional economy via boating, commercial and sport fishing, swimming, and beachgoing.

The following are the main themes and goals of the program:

1. Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds: Restore and maintain water quality in Long Island Sound and its watershed
2. Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife: Restore and protect the health and resilience of habitats and wildlife in the Long Island Sound and its ecosystems
3. Sustainable and Resilient Communities: Empower Long Island Sound communities to plan for and respond to environmental challenges in ways that prioritize well-being for all
4. Informed and Engaged Public: Inspire and empower the public to appreciate, value, and protect Long Island Sound and the waters that flow into the Sound

It is a critical priority to restore and protect the Sound, so it can continue to provide a diverse ecosystem, commercial opportunities, resiliency, and recreational access to all people. The Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund (LISCIF) is a partnership between Restore America's Estuaries, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Long Island Sound Partnership. The purpose of LISCIF is to provide technical and financial assistance to communities addressing environmental issues and improving the quality and accessibility of the Long Island Sound. Technical assistance is provided through LISCIF regardless of submitting a proposal.

Funding for LISCIF is available for:

- Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction
- Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types targeted by LISP

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ABOUT RAE

Founded in 1995, Restore America's Estuaries is dedicated to the protection and restoration of bays and estuaries as essential resources for our nation. As the leader of a national alliance, we provide a unified voice for coastal conservation in Washington D.C. and advance the science and practice of habitat restoration through on-the-ground projects, groundbreaking science, high-level meetings, and our biennial National Coastal and Estuarine Summit.

Learn more at
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- Projects that foster a diverse balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife
- Public engagement, knowledge and stewardship
- Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability
- Planning and design that sets the stage for the implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects, and resilience projects
- Community-based science projects
- Data management and integration projects
- Other similar activities that the applicant proposes, and the EPA approves are consistent with section 119 of the Clean Water Act

The second round of LISCIF will award up to \$1,500,000 in competitive funding to projects in the Long Island Sound region, in New York and Connecticut. The following organizations have been selected for the second round of funding with grant sizes ranging up to \$100,000.



CONNECTICUT

Establishing a Center for Indigenous, Regenerative, and Community Learning (CIRCL) in SE Connecticut in Support of Resilient Long Island Sound Watersheds (CT) Grantee: Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed

Grant Amount: \$99,987.68

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge and stewardship.

Resilient communities and ecosystems are rooted in right relationships and knowledge systems built on ancestral wisdom to inform their planning and design practices. To support a diverse array of local and regional resilience interventions, we propose the development of a coherent, accessible, and inclusive curriculum and learning ecosystem, aligning current best practices in regenerative built environment design, green infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and other forms of land-based design (e.g. ecological restoration) with Tribal cultural values and knowledge systems. This curriculum will directly inform community and youth-led place-based interventions for social and ecological (community) resilience and stimulate further co-design efforts. This work builds on the last two years of work by The Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed (AMRW) to build relationships and community education, engagement, and outreach capacity in support of developing our Watershed Resilience Action Plan (WRAP). This work, including the Youth Centered Design Circles funded by the Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund, our monthly Planners' Convenings, and Community Conversation Circles, has identified to date over

30 specific place-based intervention concepts, and this curriculum will support their integration into our WRAP in order to seek implementation funding.

Connecticut Shell Recovery and Oyster Habitat Restoration Collaborative (CT)

Grantee: Collective Oyster Recycling & Restoration Foundation, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$99,607.50

CCMP Theme: Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that foster a diverse balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife; Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction.

This project will recover and recycle shells from restaurants, festivals, and seafood businesses and continue to maintain a sustainable supply of shell for shellfish restoration work in Long Island Sound and preservation of historical shellfish beds and reefs in Bridgeport, Stratford, and Branford, Connecticut. A collaboration of nongovernmental organizations with the support of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAG) Bureau of Aquaculture and Laboratory will recover and plant approximately 350,000 pounds (7000 bushels) of shells annually. The project will significantly impact the sustainability and resilience of historical shellfish beds in Long Island Sound and address the strategies of the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). While the focus of this project is shell recycling and oyster habitat restoration, we are also working on expanding and building off of that work to create more community education and engagement in two specific ways. The first is a community-based small oyster habitat restoration project in Bridgeport along the shores of either the Yellow Mill Channel or the Pequonnock River. We are also working on creating mentorship and training programs for individuals from Bridgeport and New Haven interested in oyster farming and oyster habitat restoration.

Preserving and Protecting the Connecticut River Watershed through Advocacy, Environmental Awareness, and Education (CT)

Grantee: Connecticut River Museum

Grant Amount: \$99,614.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

Environmental education, a core Museum tenet, is codified in our Strategic Plan. As Jacques-Yves Cousteau famously said, “We only protect what we love, we only love what we understand, and we only understand what we are taught”. Building on this perspective, the Connecticut River Museum emboldens a new generation of River Stewards who will love the Connecticut, the backbone of New England and the source of 70% of the freshwater in the Long Island Sound. To that end, we offer an array of environmentally focused programs that support environmental literacy; raise awareness of the River’s ecosystems and the interconnection of our cultural stories and the River’s ecology (past, present and future); foster critical thinking and creativity to identify environmental challenges facing the River; and empower people to take action and contribute to positive change. The museum offers educational programs for learners of all ages, reaching more than 30,000 people, as we raise awareness about the River.

Thames River Watershed Resilience Project (CT)

Grantee: Interdistrict Committee for Project Oceanology

Grant Amount: \$99,801.49

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

The Thames River Watershed Resilience Project is designed to partner with coastal communities within the Thames River watershed to provide K-12 students from underserved communities hands-on educational opportunities both in the classroom and in the field. Curriculum development between classroom teachers and informal educators to develop a new high school course with a focus on Long Island Sound topics and robust

professional development will be a cornerstone of this work. The project engages youth to increase knowledge and understanding of the ecological health of the Thames River and Long Sound Island Sound and will increase appreciation and environmental stewardship among teachers and students in communities in the Thames River watershed and Long Island Sound. This project will culminate with place-based, student-led stewardship action projects designed to promote community resilience to the environmental effects of climate change.

Bridgeport Water Warriors – Phase Two (CT)

Grantee: Mill River Wetland Committee

Grant Amount: \$33,035.74

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

Students in Bridgeport's historically overburdened and underserved East Side neighborhood participated in Mill River Wetland Committee's Groundwater Unit in the Fall of 2024. The program will now expand this to 3 other grade levels over the next two years. This opportunity will connect diverse populations using a shared watershed preservation model. Examining the unique environmental challenges facing the Sound will promote integrated problem solving and collaborative research study. Introducing same-age peers in unknown geographic proximity will motivate students to discover the regional waterways that connect them using maps and zoom software. This project builds an aquatic-based relationship of interdependent research study at an age when students are ready to use the skills taught in younger grades. Students will learn how their actions on and near their local waterways and wetlands can affect the health of the watershed and the Sound in both positive and negative ways. The project sustainability model will incorporate extension of MRWC's existing Water Warriors citizen science community engagement program. MRWC intends to pursue expansion of this project by continuing to involve students in subsequent grades, research future grant opportunities, seek private donations and apply the CT Sea Grant funded, grant writing assistance to educate our MRWC organization.

Building Job Skills and Stewardship in Fair Haven (CT)

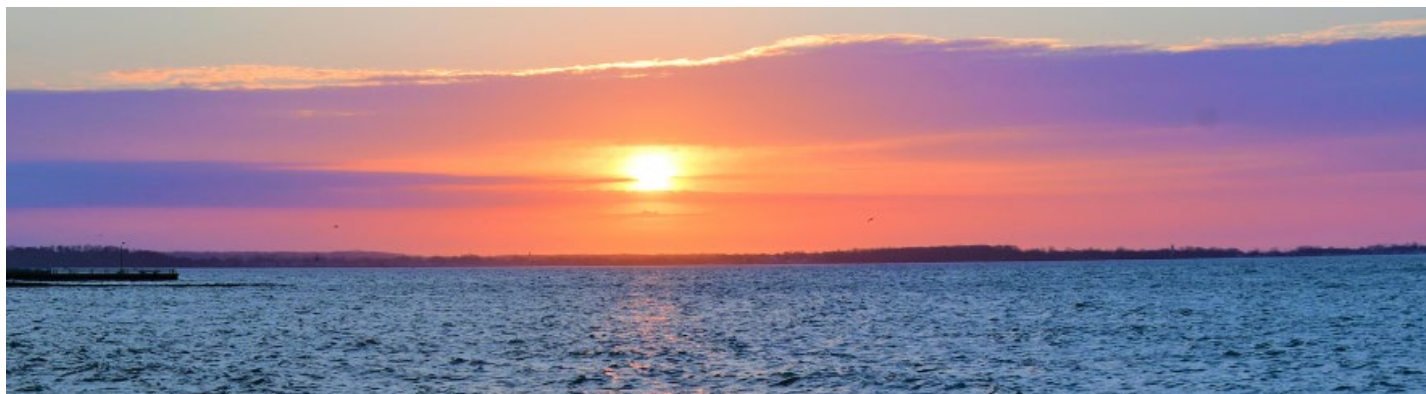
Grantee: Save the Sound, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$99,996.97

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability.

Save the Sound will partner with EMERGE, Junta for Progressive Action, and the University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) to provide formerly incarcerated individuals and high school students in New Haven, CT with a resume-building green-job opportunity that will also benefit the community. Using a bioretention pocket park recently built on an abandoned lot in the neighborhood of Fair Haven as a learning laboratory, EMERGE crew members will undergo green stormwater infrastructure training led by CLEAR on how to install and maintain a bioretention system; identify native plants and weeds; and manage invasive species. Then CLEAR and EMERGE crew members will teach the skills to the students, who Save the Sound and Junta are simultaneously teaching how to be Environmental Ambassadors. EMERGE crew members will build their skills by stewarding the site over 18 months and earn certification in green infrastructure. The program will culminate with a boat trip led by the Sound School on the adjacent Mill River for EMERGE crew members and the Environmental Ambassadors to see how their work affects water quality, and three community events to showcase the work of participants and deepen the community's connection with the park.



NEW YORK

Waters to People: Relationship Building with Indigenous Communities and Scientists to Enhance Stewardship of the LIS (NY)

Grantee: Atlantic Marine Conservation Society

Grant Amount: \$88,864.05

CCMP Theme: Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds; Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

This project will bring together science and cultural heritage to spur community action and create meaningful change. Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMSEAS) will partner with local indigenous community leaders and Citizens Campaign Fund for the Environment (CCFE), to host 4 in-person community events and 2 virtual community events in Nassau and Suffolk County within the Sound's watershed. These events will provide members of the public an opportunity to learn about the Sound's marine mammals and sea turtles, the cultural significance of these animals, the threats facing these animals and what actions we can take to protect animals and their environment. Participants will conduct beach-cleanups on local Sound beaches, learn how to respond to cold stunned turtles, and how to make small changes that will have a big positive change for the Sound. Partners will craft a public education campaign that highlights the Sound's cultural roots and spurs individual action. This unique partnership will engage tribal members in Sound conservation conversations and activities, while allowing members of the community to also learn about tribal cultural practices. The goals of this project are to engage underserved communities in Long Island Sound environmental conservation activities and increase actions to protect endangered marine life.

Restoring and Protecting the Long Island Sound's Native Bronx Habitat (NY)

Grantee: Bronx River Alliance

Grant Amount: \$88,708.68

CCMP Theme: Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife

LISCIF Program Priority: Projects that foster a balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife.

The Bronx River Alliance's project continues engagement and education of the diverse and vibrant Bronx River Community in advocating for a thriving Long Island Sound (LIS). Our approach involves organizing captivating public stewardship events, offering accessible and dynamic educational programs, and creating informative and accessible signage to support community interpretation of the site. Building on the successes made possible through our LISCIF24 grant award, we are excited to expand the project to include a full time permanent and seasonal gardener along with new interpretative signage throughout the site. We will continue to engage and educate community members on the importance of protecting the Long Island Sound, offering opportunities to be a part of its restoration through workdays and public education events. All of this will take place from Concrete Plant Park, a dynamic waterfront site that was once a concrete factory. Home to NYC's only public edible food

forest, the Bronx River Foodway. A park that provides not only solace and food to local residents but also a refuge for coastal/migratory bird species such as ruby throated hummingbirds as well as insects like butterflies and bees that have reignited Bronxites' connection to land.

City Island Oyster Reef Expands Engagement and Educational Programs for Its Community and Beyond (NY)

Grantee: City Island Oyster Reef

Grant Amount: \$93,644.21

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

City Island Oyster Reef, Inc. (CIOR), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in 2019 when concerned members of the community joined together to explore the possibility of restoring oysters to the waterways around City Island. They had learned about the significant role that oysters play in improving the local marine ecology. The organization's mission is to restore oyster reefs and wetland habitats to improve water quality, protect the shorelines against storm surges and flooding, and create a healthy marine ecology that restores the biodiversity historically associated in the Long Island Sound. CIOR has always been focused on developing community involvement and educational programs to better inform and encourage the general population in developing deeper understandings and greater stewardship skills. Initially it developed and managed several eco-volunteer programs through the hard work and dedication of a very active volunteer Board of Directors, but after a couple of years the Board of Directors realized that to sustain and grow these programs, it needed to scale up its organizational capacity. CIOR is applying LISCIF25 funds to expand and grow its several eco-volunteer and educational programs, activities and its outreach capacity.

From Soil to Sound: Empowering Students to Protect Ecosystems Through Environmental Science (NY)

Grantee: City University of New York (CUNY) LaGuardia Community College

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

LaGuardia Community College's Environmental Studies Program would like to integrate Long Island Sound education into Soil Science courses, equipping Urban Agriculture students with the knowledge and skills to become environmental stewards. Through hands-on fieldwork, students will examine the relationship between soil and water quality, addressing urban pollution, green infrastructure, and environmental challenges affecting the Long Island Sound. To enhance experiential learning, soil science students will receive a travel stipend for field labs, where they will conduct soil and water testing and receive hands-on learning. Additionally, students will be selected as Soil & Water Ambassadors for a paid internship, applying their coursework to real-world environmental solutions. This internship increases awareness and community action around rain gardens in neighborhoods near Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek, including Jackson Heights, Corona, East Elmhurst, and Flushing, which face a critical challenge that rain gardens in Long Island Sound-adjacent neighborhoods lack proper maintenance. As ambassadors, students will lead community workshops and info tabling events at LaGuardia Urban Farm to increase community awareness and action to steward rain gardens in the Flushing Bay & Creek area. Ambassadors will also cultivate native plants in our outdoor greenhouse, and distribute plantings for community rain garden installations. This program empowers students to take meaningful action in urban ecosystem restoration and water conservation, fostering the next generation of environmental leaders.

Don't Strain Your Drain Campaign (NY)

Grantee: Environmental Leaders of Color

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

Environmental Leaders of Color (ELOC) is committed to empowering youth and protecting vulnerable communities in Westchester County through environmental education and action. With funding from LISCIF, we are expanding our Student Environmental Ambassador (SEA) program. This year-round initiative equips students with the knowledge and leadership skills to drive environmental change in their communities. Our 2025 theme, “Don’t Strain Your Drain!”, will address the devastating impact of improper waste disposal on the Long Island Sound Watershed. We will select student ambassadors from our summer program graduates to lead outreach campaigns. ELOC has expanded the second year of funding activities to include students educating residents on the dangers of all hazardous household waste material that can be poured down the drain, including paint, flammable liquids, pharmaceuticals, automotive fluid, and, of course, cooking oil; advocate for proper disposal methods in local communications and publicize the existence Westchester County Household Material Recovery Facility at which most hazardous waste is accepted; provide oil collection bins in local communities, and convene pop-up oil collection events. At the program’s conclusion, SEAs will evaluate the program's success and propose additional disposal methods to enhance long-term sustainability. ELOC will measure impact through community engagement metrics, including marketing reach, event participation, social media responses, and the volume of waste collected. Our ultimate goal is to establish a permanent, community-led solution that fosters environmental responsibility for future generations.

Growing and Sustaining a Network of Rain Garden Stewards in Flushing Waterways (NY)

Grantee: Guardians of Flushing Bay

Grant Amount: \$99,465.56

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities

LISCIF Program Priority: Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

In response to the need for an improved and community-based approach to green infrastructure maintenance, Guardians of Flushing Bay (GoFB) proposes to expand the scale and scope of our Sidewalk Stewardship program. For scope, we will increase our focus from rain gardens to street trees, developing a more holistic “Sidewalk Stewardship” program. For scale, we will expand Sidewalk Stewardship into Flushing by hiring a new part-time Bilingual Mandarin/English Stewardship Organizer. In doing so, GoFB will steward 30 rain gardens and 50 street trees across Corona and Flushing, working in partnership with at least 5 schools. GoFB will engage 300 people in stewardship and reach 3000 people through social media and our newsletter. To ensure successful engagement in Corona and Flushing, we will translate all materials into English, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese.

Cultural Monitoring at the Big Rock Wetland Restoration: Building a Model for Equitable Ecological Restoration in the Long Island Sound Watershed (NY)

Grantee: Save the Sound, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$100,060.03

CCMP Theme: Sustainable and Resilient Communities; Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife

LISCIF Program Priority: Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types Identified by LIS Partnership; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Projects that enhance community resilience

Save the Sound will partner with the Matinecock Tribal Nation (MTN) and Honor Our Indigenous Ancestors, Inc. (HOIA) to conduct cultural monitoring at the Big Rock Wetland Restoration project at Little Neck Bay, Queens, NY. This project is located on the Douglas Manor Peninsula, the ancestral lands of the MTN. SHPO reviewed Big Rock Wetland Restoration plans and deemed the project to have No Adverse Effect on historic or archeological resources; however, the MTN cites native historical knowledge sources absent from NY State THPO or CRIS data that describe Douglas Manor as the site of a massacre of the Matinecock people, and Big Rock as a sacred marker, navigational aid, and place of cultural practice. As such, the MTN believes that cultural artifacts and ancestral remains may be present at the restoration site. Partnership with the MTN and HOIA ensures that Save the Sound will conduct construction at Big Rock with consideration of site significance: HOIA-selected cultural monitors will observe the excavation; and if artifacts or ancestral remains are revealed, partners will engage in cooperative adaptive management in accordance with the law and cultural practices. This collaboration will yield a replicable model for equitable collaboration on ecological restoration projects.

Setalcott Nation Historical Stewardship Restoration Project (NY)**Grantee:** Setalcott Nation**Grant Amount:** \$90,700.00**CCMP Theme:** Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds**LISCIF Program Priority:** Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types Identified by LIS Partnership; Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship; Planning and design that sets the stage for the implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects, and resilience projects.

The Setalcott Nation Historical Stewardship Restoration Project is a project that will build our Nation's infrastructure and commitment to our people, stewardship of our ancestral land and waterways. This project incorporates stewardship at Conscience Bay, Setauket which is connected to the Long Island Sound. Our stewardship initiative will include planting native plants to restore the soil, waterways and natural habitat of the area and researching the feasibility of oyster hatchery at Conscience Bay. This project also includes kelp farming in the waters of the Village of Poquott. We will use kelp farming to clean our waterways in the Long Island Sound.

New Rochelle Eco-Ambassadors (NY)**Grantee:** The Energy Justice Law and Policy Center**Grant Amount:** \$100,000.00**CCMP Theme:** Sustainable and Resilient Communities**LISCIF Program Priority:** Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.

The New Rochelle Coastal Eco-Ambassadors program is entering its 4th year and will be in its second year with LISCIF funding. This year-round initiative focuses on environmental science, restoration, and advocacy. In Year 2 with LISCIF, the program will scale to increase opportunities for youth engagement, including additional workshops, hands-on fieldwork, and educational activities for both youth and teachers. These expanded activities will continue to foster stewardship and ecological restoration of the Long Island Sound. In partnership with the City of New Rochelle, we are applying for funding to establish a Coastal Education Center, which will serve as a permanent hub for year-round environmental and coastal resilience programming. The center will support the Eco-Ambassadors and other community initiatives. The program will continue its summer employment opportunities and expand through partnerships with schools, environmental organizations, and the Green Schools Committee.

Designing and Building a Green Infrastructure Community Schoolyard in the Bronx (NY)**Grantee:** Trust for Public Land**Grant Amount:** \$100,000.00**CCMP Theme:** Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds**LISCIF Program Priority:** Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction.

Through our NYC Community Schoolyards Program, Trust for Public Land will work with PS 146 in the South Bronx to transform the school's asphalt outdoor space into a green Community Schoolyard. The currently impervious property will manage 1.1 million gallons of stormwater annually. Our program is part of official City plans to mitigate flooding from extreme storms. We have developed 230+ schoolyards with NYC Department of Environmental Protection and Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. The schoolyard will be designed by students of PS 146X in our educational sessions, with input from the neighboring community. Participants will become landscape architects of the new space and learn about the ecosystem, local waterways, and Sound, with a focus on how their new schoolyard's green infrastructure can increase sustainability. In addition to green infrastructure, the schoolyard will include athletic fields, playground equipment, art, rest areas, outdoor classrooms, and more. It will be open to the neighborhood outside school hours, a space for recreation, exercise, outdoor learning, socialization, and interaction with nature for everyone living in the distressed community. TPL will directly train teachers to teach students about the environment and Long Island Sound through hands-on outdoor lessons in the completed schoolyard.