

# State of Connecticut



## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 3200  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591  
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Eel Grass Restoration Working Group Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, August 30, 2023  
10:00 AM on Zoom and YouTube Live

YouTube Live Recording Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sKBXbINCgQ>

### ATTENDANCE:

1. Introductions (15 min total)
  - Representative Gresko opened the meeting by expressing gratitude to the members for their dedication to the Environmental Committee. The following introductions were made:
    - Jamie Vaudrey (Chair), UConn and CT National Estuarine Research Reser.
    - Bill Lucey, Save the Sound
    - Larry Dunn, Groton Conservation Commission
    - Zac Gordon, NOAA
    - Craig Tobias, Groton Shellfish Commission
    - David Carey, CT Bureau of Aquaculture
    - Sen. Heather Somers, 18<sup>th</sup> Senate District
    - Tessa Getchis, UConn Sea Grant
    - Marc Harrell, Aeros Cultured Oysters
    - Don Murphy, Stonington Shellfish Commission
    - Committee Staff: Lukas Houle, Administrator; Brad Townson, LCO Attorney for Environment; and Hillary Desideraggio, Legislative Aide to Senator Rick Lopes
2. Eelgrass Overview (20 min total)
  - Ecosystem benefits were briefly reviewed by Jamie Vaudrey.
    - Highlighted shields.
  - Overview of Eelgrass distribution in Long Island Sound was presented by Jamie Vaudrey.
    - Noted recent significant loss and referred to the LIS Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (2015).
      - Emphasized the importance of improving water quality.

- Shared "Saving the Sound with History" video link showcasing historical Eel Grass mapping by UConn and its importance.
      - Highlighted Eel Grass benefits including filtration, carbon sequestration, and shoreline stabilization.
  - Discussion of LISS CCMP goal for Eelgrass restoration, including how the goal was identified and the target.
  - Bill Lucey provided an overview of Eelgrass restoration efforts in the Sound.
    - Mentioned exploring new methods involving gluing seeds to shellfish.
    - Suggested a potential symbiotic relationship with clam farming and Eelgrass restoration.
    - Shared a video on this restoration method and noted the three-year growth metric for successful replanting.
    - Mentioned the involvement of CT College, UConn Avery Point, Stonybrook in NY, and other modeling efforts.
- 3. Overview of other working group and collaborative efforts, listed chronologically (20 min total)
  - Bill Lucey discussed New York Efforts:
    - Fisher Island Seagrass Management Coalition.
    - NYS Eelgrass Coordinator.
  - Jamie Vaudrey discussed the EPA LISS Eelgrass Management and Restoration Strategy.
  - Jamie Vaudrey also discussed the CT National Estuarine Research Reserve's Eelgrass Collaborative.
  - Tessa Getchis discussed the Shellfish Permitting Working Group:
    - Mentioned the upcoming release of a NOAA NMFS literature review on Eelgrass-aquaculture interactions in Long Island Sound.
    - Highlighted the importance of this review for identifying research priorities.
- 4. Setting priorities for this Working Group (1 hour, facilitated by Vaudrey & Lucey)
  - Discussed required output/products.
    - Sen. Somers mentioned finding actionable goals for legislation and possibly allocating funds/resources for restoration.
    - Brad Towson (Committee LCO attorney) outlined the legislative charge.
      - Mentioned the need for an extension and the timeline for submitting recommendations in February 2024.
  - Discussed the mission statement and outline of the report.
    - Craig Tobias suggested using a Google doc for collaborative idea sharing.
    - Marc Harrell expressed interest in having a working document to synthesize information.
    - Larry Dunn was interested in cost implications and how implementation affects costs (cost-benefit analysis).
    - Tessa suggested reaching out to concerned groups to identify gaps in knowledge.

- Craig Tobias raised questions about defining success and learning from other states' experiences.
- Bill Lucey noted the importance of looking at how other states have tackled similar challenges.
- Discussion on infrastructure support and cost analysis.
- Discussed interactions with humans and the environment, including use conflicts.
  - Don Murphy emphasized finding "low-hanging fruit" for actionable goals.
  - Brad outlined how the Environmental Committee (ENV) would raise legislation based on the working group's recommendations.
- Tessa suggested public outreach and engagement.
  - Internally identifying affected communities and broadcasting the importance of restoration.
  - Discussion on possible meeting with Julie Rose from Milford Lab and the review of existing information.
  - Consideration of opening the working group to informational hearings and involving different stakeholders.
- Tessa Getchis proposed looking into outreach for fishers and DEEP members.
- Discussed timeline, meeting schedule, lines of communication, and member assignments.

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Lukas Houle

Working Group Administrator