

SoundBites

Robert Lorenz

Citizen Scientists for the Sound

The science of Long Island Sound water quality isn't just for professional scientists anymore. People responsible for safeguarding our natural resources are finding that public involvement in inquiry and discovery of new scientific knowledge can be a useful tool—particularly in data collection. Save the Sound, is working closely with partner organizations that conduct “citizen science” research to document water quality in bays and harbors around the Sound—just one more way we are working to make Long Island Sound safer and healthier for people and marine life. The resulting information will be included in future Long Island Sound Report Cards.

Last summer, the Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative published the first Long Island Sound Report Card, which has become a valued tool documenting the health of the Sound. Thanks to funding from the Collaborative, Save the Sound has been given the exciting task of coordinating, publishing, and publicizing the next two Report Cards. Why is that so important to people who

care about a healthy Sound? The Long Island Sound Report Card provides comprehensive data about the Sound in an easy to understand format, allowing meaningful comparisons to be made among regions, and showing progress from year to year.

Over the winter and spring, Save the Sound began hosting a series of workshops with groups that conduct citizen science on the Sound, Long Island Sound Study representatives, and science advisors with the goal of developing a uniform, achievable approach to monitoring water quality in Sound bays and harbors. Our goal is for the Report Card to support collaboration and for its findings to include health information on the bays and harbors where the public swims, boats, and fishes, as well as the most up-to-date information on the health of the open Sound.

Citizens have an important role to play in increasing our understanding of hyper-local water quality conditions. “Research has shown that the health of our bays and harbors is not always the same as the nearby open water of the Sound,” says Western Long Island Sound Program Director Tracy Brown. “These locations each have unique physical qualities including size and tidal



Water Quality Program Manager Peter Linderth trains volunteers and oversees sample analysis as part of Save the Sound's work to document water quality in Long Island Sound bays and harbors.

flushing. Citizens with an interest in water quality science have the opportunity to help out with sample collection and be empowered to safeguard their favorite waterways,” said Tracy. For more information on this effort and how you can get involved, contact us at pollution@savethesound.org.



Caption

In this issue..

- Staff Profile: David Wilkins 2
- Saving Oswegatchie..... 2
- Open House 3
- Plum Island Lawsuit 4
- Events 4
- Pipeline Victory..... Back Cover
- In *GreenSheet*: Legislative Update



CFE Board Member Sarah Bronin spoke at a gathering she co-hosted with Board Member Barbara David at the Town and County Club to educate the public about threats posed by an ill-advised fracked gas pipeline. CFE successfully challenged Kinder Morgan's proposal to run the pipeline through sensitive MDC water company lands in Greater Hartford. Kinder Morgan withdrew its proposal in June.

Published by Connecticut Fund for the Environment
900 Chapel St, Suite 2202, New Haven, CT 06510
203-787-0646 • info@ctenvironment.org

Designer: Laura Moorehead, Angell House Design.
©2016 Connecticut Fund for the Environment.
All rights reserved. Articles in this newsletter may be reprinted by permission.

The Pipeline that Wasn't

Clean water activists applauded in May when energy giant Kinder Morgan officially withdrew its application for a proposed \$3.3 billion Northeast Energy Direct fracked gas pipeline that would have threatened drinking water lands serving 400,000 Greater Hartford residents. Prior to that announcement, we testified at a public hearing and intervened as a party in the administrative proceeding before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to oppose it. Kinder Morgan shelved the project, citing lack of commitments from big customers that it needed to proceed with the plan.

"From the start, the Northeast Energy Direct pipeline was a bad deal for the

environment, the economy, and the region's energy system, but hundreds of hours of time and a lot of taxpayer dollars were spent on its review before the company pulled the plug. The next company proposing a natural gas pipeline through New England should keep all of this in mind," said Jack Looney, CFE staff attorney.

Could the demise of Kinder Morgan's pipeline mark a turning point for clean energy in Connecticut? At CFE, we'll keep working with our environmental allies to bring Connecticut into a clean energy future with safe, renewable, locally-produced energy that poses no threat to our pristine drinking water lands, safeguards Connecticut's air quality, and protects our climate.

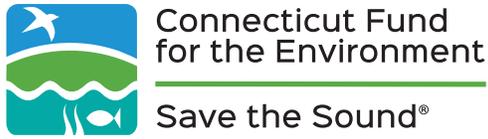
We Have a New Address

**CFE has a new address: 900 Chapel St, 2nd floor,
New Haven, CT 06510.**



Connecticut Fund for the Environment
900 Chapel St, 2nd floor
New Haven, CT 06510





GreenSheet

Robert Lorenz

Legislative Update

Although legislative efforts may not always make for big headlines, our members know how critical this work really is. This past spring, For example, CFE led the fight against the state’s proposed raid of Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) funds. RGGI sets a cap on carbon emissions from power plants, with plants purchasing emission allowances at a quarterly auction. Proceeds from the auction are reinvested in energy efficiency initiatives and renewable energy programs that help families and small businesses save money and reduce their climate pollution emissions. The proposed cuts would also have slashed funding for our first-in-the-nation Green Bank, which has served as a model for other states seeking to leverage private investment in clean energy.

In opposing the cuts, we worked with numerous environmentalists, organizations, and businesses, including Energy Efficiency Solutions CEO Leticia Colon. “Many people don’t realize how important RGGI is,” says Leticia. “Our company is 75 percent minority staffed. We hire and train people who have been on unemployment to conduct safety and energy audits for low-income homeowners. About half of our customers live below the poverty level. RGGI funds enable them to upgrade to energy-saving windows, insulate their homes, and replace old furnaces with safe, energy efficient ones. They save money, their homes are safer and more comfortable, and they reduce their carbon footprint. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

The re-directing of \$22 million in RGGI funds—which was the budget proposal by the state legislature’s Finance Committee—would have set back Connecticut’s clean energy and climate goals, cost jobs in our state, and hurt the health and wallets of Connecticut families and businesses, including the state’s most vulnerable populations. Fortunately,

the proposal to defund RGGI was defeated with CFE’s help. It was just one among a number of advocacy accomplishments we achieved this past legislative session that ended on May 5.

Passage of House Bill 5510 was among those victories. This bill will accelerate the transition to zero-emission vehicles, including electric vehicles, and was strongly advocated by the Connecticut Electric Vehicle Coalition, which CFE coordinates.

A bill that protects roadside trees in Connecticut passed both the House and Senate, thanks to hard work by CFE, the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, the New Haven Garden Club, and other allies. It adds a number of new requirements for the electric utilities’ vegetation management practices of pruning and cutting down roadside trees.

Senate Bill 394 will reward towns, state agencies, and farms that have installed renewable energy by expanding available energy credits. Virtual net metering lets excess clean energy credits generated in one spot be used towards energy needs elsewhere. For instance, a community could generate more than enough energy to power its City Hall via solar panels on the roof, and use the credits from the extra energy to help pay the electricity bill for its elementary school.



CFE Climate and Energy Attorney Shannon Laun (second from left) testified against cuts to Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) funds. The cuts would have set back the state’s clean energy and climate goals. Fortunately, the proposal to defund RGGI was defeated.

CFE and partners helped get protections added to a proposed land deal between New Britain and the Tilcon gravel mining company that otherwise would have set a damaging precedent with respect to drinking water lands preservation. In the end, the harmful effects of S.B. 300 were minimized and instead of approving the land deal as originally proposed, the bill mandates an independent study of impacts to water quality, the long-term water supply needs of New Britain, environmental impacts to forests and wetlands, and other factors.

In this issue..

- Staff Profile: David Wilkins 2
- Saving Oswegatchie..... 2
- Open House 3
- Plum Island Lawsuit 4
- Events 4
- Pipeline Victory..... Back Cover
- SoundBites: Citizen Scientists

Meet David Wilkins

This past spring, David Wilkins joined Connecticut Fund for the Environment as Development Director, charged with leading the organization's fundraising efforts. "I am excited to be part of CFE," said David, "because it has such an excellent reputation for scoring important victories in the administrative agencies, in the courts, and in the legislature that directly impact the local environment and protect public health."

David has a bachelor of arts degree from the College of Wooster in Ohio. He comes to CFE from the Western Rivers Conservancy in Portland, Oregon where he served as Development Director for the past 12 years. Prior to that, he was Development Director and Deputy Director of Oregon Wild, and worked as a Development Officer at River Network, also in Portland.

"CFE's forty-year history of protecting Connecticut and Long Island Sound's land, air, and water has proven very successful. It will be a great experience to work with the staff and board of directors to sustain and strengthen those programs now and for the future benefit of children and families to come," he observed.



David Wilkins, Director of Development

A Coalition to Save Oswegatchie Hills

Pristine woodlands, dramatic rocky crags, an inspiring landscape for the state's residents to hike and explore: that's Oswegatchie Hills. This coastal forest also protects a tidal estuary that flows directly into Long Island Sound. Two-thirds of the forest has been protected as the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, established in 2007 in East Lyme. Unfortunately, the final one-third is threatened by a proposed high-density development to be located on a steep slope near the top of the Hills and directly uphill from wetlands and the Niantic River. We are working to protect Oswegatchie Hills in the court and by educating the public about what stands to be lost.

Toward that end, in January, we launched the Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition in partnership with Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve (Friends), and Save the River—Save the Hills (STR-STH), two local grassroots environmental organizations. More than 60 attended our June 9 reception to celebrate the coalition at the East Lyme Community Center. The event brought together leaders and board members of state, regional and local conservation, environmental and civic organizations, including Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Rob Klee who, in his remarks, observed that strategic preservation of coastal forests is becoming more important as Connecticut prepares to deal with the impacts of climate change. The reception unveiled a traveling public display about Oswegatchie Hills, the Niantic River, and why protecting these natural treasures is such a critical endeavor. Watch for it at a public library, farmer's market, or other event near you.

At a hearing at which we testified last year, the East Lyme Zoning Commission approved the developer's application for rezoning



Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Rob Klee (center), Save the River—Save the Hills founder and president Fred Grimsey (left), and Save the River—Save the Hills board member Mark Sperry attended our June 9 Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition event. Our travelling display offers an environmental critique of the proposed development.



the property to an Affordable Housing District as well as a preliminary site plan to construct 840 units of housing with 1,767 parking spaces—approximately 36 acres of total impervious surface. The decision, however, included substantial conditions that constrain the developer. Only the part of the site that is within the sewer service district may be developed and the developer would be required to meet a high environmental standard. The developer appealed that ruling, and CFE intervened earlier this year to have a judge dismiss the developer's appeal. The case is ongoing. In the meantime, we are building support for this exceptional natural area to be permanently protected.

Open House

Our spacious new headquarters was packed for the Open House held on Saturday, June 25. More than 100 members and friends of CFE and its bi-state program Save the Sound gathered to tour the organization's new office at 900 Chapel Street, meet the board and staff, and get the inside scoop on our current environmental initiatives and latest victories. "One dozen years ago, I stood before the CFE Board and spoke about the opportunity to merge with Save the Sound," said CFE President Don Strait. We believed that merger would result in a single stronger, more dynamic and flexible organization. Organizational growth brings change and raises a host of questions with no easy answers: What will growth entail for our staff, systems, and existing structure? How much new funding will it take? Fortunately, thanks to the generous investment of longtime donors, some of whom have shared our environmental goals and passion for decades, CFE and its bi-state Save the Sound program have flourished. Together, we have grown our programs and welcomed new experts to our staff, necessitating the move to our new, more spacious office. We're achieving great things for the land, air, and water of Connecticut and the Sound, and we were excited to share these wins at our Open House."

Our program staff spoke about current work on a wide variety of issues—from saving Plum Island, to fighting climate change, to healing the western Sound, Stamford 2030 accomplishments, and more. Following the Open House, attendees had the opportunity to cross the street and enjoy the New Haven Symphony Orchestra performance in conjunction with Cirque Mechanics at New Haven's Festival of Arts & Ideas on the New Haven Green.



Our June 23 Open House gave CFE members and friends a chance to tour the new headquarters at 900 Chapel Street in New Haven and hear presentations about our latest environmental accomplishments.



Board Member Barbara David (right) and Save the Sound Member Sharon Anne Byron were among more than 100 attendees at our Open House this summer.

JOIN THE GREEN TEAM

When you become a member of our monthly giving society, The Green Team, you save paperwork and help us make the most of your membership donation to CFE or Save the Sound. Find out more at www.ctenvironment.org by clicking on the red "Donate" button.

LEAVE A LEGACY

A planned gift from your estate to CFE and its bi-state program Save the Sound can help protect public health and the endangered places you care about far into the future. Please consider a lasting gift to the environmental heritage of Connecticut and Long Island Sound. For more information, contact Heidi Green at 203-787-0646, ext. 109.

Suing to Protect Plum Island

In July, CFE/Save the Sound and its allies filed suit against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the General Services Administration (GSA) in Federal District Court for the Eastern District of New York. Our claim is that Homeland Security and GSA's plan to auction Plum Island to the highest bidder without regard to conservation and the remarkable array of wildlife on the island violates the letter and spirit of multiple federal laws—including the National Environmental Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act. We asked that the court halt any sale of Plum Island and order the agencies to fully consider conserving the resources on the undeveloped portion of the island that does not support the research facility operations—whether through a conservation sale or outright protection.

The broader effort to protect Plum Island by legislation and other means has the backing of a host of lawmakers, including the entire Congressional delegations from Connecticut and New York. Senator Blumenthal said, "Plum Island should be preserved and protected, not violated and diminished. While DHS and GSA are

continuing to pursue the senseless sale of Plum Island, precious wildlife—critical to the public interest—is being put at risk. I applaud and support the Connecticut Fund for the Environment and Save the Sound for taking swift, necessary legal action."

Senator Chris Murphy called Plum Island, "an ecological gem right in Connecticut's backyard," and said, "Once it's sold to developers, it's gone forever. That's why we need to use every tool at our disposal to protect Plum Island and its natural treasures from development."

New York State Senator Ken LaValle (R-1) said, "Plum Island contains nationally significant natural, historic, and scenic features and resources. It is the home to numerous birds, fish, and marine wildlife, in addition to rare and endangered plants. It is critically important that we all work together to halt the sale and safeguard Plum Island for future generations."



This summer, CFE/Save the Sound filed suit against the federal government in an effort to protect Plum Island. "The government holds the wildlife and natural resources in public trust for the people, not the private gain of individual developers," observed Roger Reynolds, legal director for CFE/Save the Sound.

We announced the filing of the lawsuit at two very successful press events—one in Old Saybrook, Connecticut and the other at Orient Point, New York. To join the effort to protect Plum Island, visit <http://tinyurl.com/PlumPetition> and add your name to the fight!



Above: Paintings and photography presented the compelling case for preserving Plum Island at the July 7 Opening Reception and Presentation for "The Natural Beauty of Plum Island." Pictured are two Plum Island photographs by Robert Lorenz (left) and two paintings by John Sargent (right). The exhibit, which runs through August 30 at The Village Center in Port Jefferson, New York, highlights the remarkable landscapes that make up this biologically diverse island in Long Island Sound.

Event Roundup

Earlier this year, members and friends of CFE/Save the Sound enjoyed some unique events to support our environment. You gamely kayaked the Connecticut River to celebrate National Fish Migration Day; laughed along with host Kim Berns at "Ladies Sounding Off Comedy Nite" in Mamaroneck; caught the big one with Bass-a-palooza fishing tournament in Rowayton; hiked along the West River site of Save the Sound's Pond Lily dam removal project as part of National Trails Day; and joined us in lively discussion about Plum Island's future at the art opening of "The Natural Beauty of Plum Island" in Port Jefferson, New York. When you put together a good time, a good cause and the great outdoors, everyone benefits. Watch for more special Save the Sound events coming to your area soon.



Left: Dozens of adults and children, some sporting fanciful fish costumes, gathered for a family-friendly paddling event at the mouth of the Connecticut River in support of World Fish Migration Day.