



Funding to Protect Long Island Sound Announced

Over \$1 million to be provided to local organizations to help restore and protect Long Island Sound and its watersheds

Washington, DC. (September 29, 2004) – The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, in cooperation with the Long Island Sound Study, announced a new grant program that will provide over \$1 million to local communities in their efforts to restore and steward critical wildlife habitat, and improve water quality within the Sound and its watersheds.

Under the new Long Island Sound Futures Fund, grants of up to \$75,000 will be awarded to foster partnerships with local communities in Connecticut and New York for projects to restore and protect the Sound.

“The Long Island Sound is truly a national treasure for wildlife and for people,” said National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Executive Director John Berry. “The estuary hosts a rich mosaic of habitat including coastal and island forests, tidal and freshwater wetlands, rivers, coastal grasslands, coastal barriers, beaches, and dunes. The estuary and its watershed is also home to more than 8 million people who depend on its clean waters for recreation and their livelihood rather than commercial purposes.”

Activities supported by the new grants program will include projects that actively implement Long Island Sound Study Habitat and Stewardship Initiatives, including restoration and management of coastal habitats, wetland and stream restoration, riparian plantings as well as the development of community watershed management plans and water quality improvement strategies. Initial funding for the first year of grant awards is provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service), and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

"Our nation's estuaries are unique places where fresh and salt water mix -- creating vibrant habitats for marine life and scenic spots for boating and birdwatching," said Mark Tedesco, director of the EPA Long Island Sound Office. "For nearly two decades, local communities have played a key role in contributing to the recovery and protection of the Long Island Sound. EPA applauds the launch of the Long Island Sound Futures Fund to provide much-needed support for local actions."

“The Service recognized immediately the need to expand funding to protect and restore the Sound,” said Marvin Moriarty, Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “We have a long history of creating conservation partnerships and have worked closely with the Long Island Sound Study and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to make this goal a reality. I’m confident that the Sound’s partners will quickly transform these funds into more on-the-ground results.”

"I am proud to say that NOAA has been a leader in restoring coastal habitats throughout the Northeast region and the nation," said Timothy Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. "This initiative demonstrates our commitment to working with partners to accomplish citizen driven restoration."

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will administer the new program, in partnership with the Long Island Sound Study. Applications must be postmarked to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation by December 3, 2004. Award notification will be made around April 1, 2005.

A team of federal and state partners will provide technical assistance to prospective applicants and assist in evaluating submissions to the program. State agency partners include the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CT DEP) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC).

"The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection has placed the restoration of Long Island Sound as one of its foremost environmental priorities. Great strides have been made over the past three decades to restore Connecticut's most valuable natural resource," said CT DEP Commissioner Arthur J. Rocque, Jr. "However, important challenges still lie ahead to improve the overall health of this magnificent waterbody. These grants will help foster stronger partnerships with local communities as we work collectively to return the Sound to its place of prominence as one of the nation's finest waterbodies."

NYS DEC Commissioner Erin M. Crotty said, "New York State's commitment to protecting Long Island Sound has never been stronger. Through ambitious programs and an unwavering dedication, progress continues to be made to improve the health of the Sound and to protect the critical habitats that make this area unique. This program illustrates the importance of preserving this wonderful resource, and I'm proud the department will be an active partner in this landmark initiative."

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a nonprofit organization established by Congress in 1984 and dedicated to the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants, and the habitat on which they depend. The Foundation creates partnerships between the public and private sectors to strategically invest in conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. The Foundation distributed 687 grants in 2003 and has leveraged \$261 million in federal funds since its establishment, for a total of more than \$786 million in on-the-ground conservation.

The Long Island Sound Study is a cooperative effort involving researchers, regulators, user groups and other concerned organizations and individuals. These stakeholders are working together to protect and improve the health of the Sound by implementing the Sound's *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* (CCMP) completed in 1994.

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The Request for Proposals for the Long Island Sound Futures Fund is at www.nfwf.org/longisland/.

