



RESTORE
AMERICA'S
ESTUARIES



LONG ISLAND SOUND
PARTNERSHIP

2026

**LONG ISLAND SOUND
COMMUNITY IMPACT FUND**



**ANNUAL
LEARNING
EXCHANGE**

June 25, 2026



GRADUATE CENTER

2026 LISCIF AWARDEES



Connecticut

- African American Society #024
- Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed
- Collective Oyster Recycling & Restoration
- Friends of Brookside Farm Museum
- Harbor Watch, a Program of Earthplace
- Mill River Wetland Committee
- Trust for Public Land

New York

- City as Living Laboratory
- The Energy Justice Law and Policy Center
- Environmental Leaders of Color
- Hutchinson River Restoration Project
- Khalipha
- Metoac Indigenous Collective
- University Settlement Society of New York
- The Ward Melville Heritage Organization

Scan the QR code to read
more about LISCIF
Awardees:



PURPOSE

The Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund (LISCIF) is a partnership among 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 for addressing environmental issues and to improve the quality and accessibility of the Long Island Sound. Technical assistance is provided and available to the region even if one does not submit a proposal for funding.

The focus at this year's Annual Learning Exchange is on the Clean Water Act, the history of the Long Island Sound Partnership, and context around the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). Projects funded by the LIS Partnership all are aligned with the goals and themes of the CCMP, focusing on:

- Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds
- Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife
- Sustainable and Resilient Communities
- Informed and Engaged Public



Our panel discussion and breakout session will dive deeper on how CCMP themes and goals are being implemented across several Tribal Nations, organizations and institutions.

To learn more on the CCMP and to participate in Working Groups, visit:
<https://lispartnership.org/>



Time	Content / Speakers	Location
9:30 – 10: 00 am	Registration & Networking Breakfast	Concourse Foyer
10:00 – 10:15 am	Introductions & Welcome: Shahela Begum, LISCIF Program Director, RAE; Metoac Indigenous Collective	Auditorium
10:15 - 10:45 am	History & Context: Clean Water Act, Long Island Sound Partnership, and the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP): Leah O'Neill, LIS Partnership Acting Director	Auditorium
10:45– 11:45 am	Panel Discussion, moderated by Alex Rodriguez, Save the Sound: - Clean Waters & Healthy Watersheds: Atlantic Marine Conservation Society, Allison Deperte, Metoac Indigenous Collective - Thriving Habitats & Abundant Wildlife: Collective Oyster Recycling & Restoration, Tim Macklin - Informed & Engaged Public: Mill River Wetland Committee, Samantha Anderson - Sustainable & Resilient Communities: Environmental Leaders of Color, Diana Williams	Auditorium

Time	Content / Speakers	Location
11:45 am – 12 pm	Q&A from the Audience	Auditorium
12:00 – 1:30 pm	Networking Lunch	Concourse Foyer
1:30 – 3:00 pm	Breakout Sessions: • Clean Waters & Healthy Watersheds: Hope Savercool, NY DEC, Hutchinson River Restoration Project, Trust for Public Land • Sustainable & Resilient Communities: Sarah Schaefer-Brown, Sarah Schechter, Sustainable & Resilient Communities Extension Professional for NY & CT Sea Grant, City Island Oyster Reef, Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed • Thriving Habitats & Abundant Wildlife: Juliana Merluccio, NY DEC, Audubon, Sacred Heart University • Informed & Engaged Public: Jimena Perez-Viscasillas, NY Sea Grant, Save the Sound, Energy Justice Law & Policy Center • Invoicing and Reporting: Undria Polley, RAE, LISCIF Grants Administrator	C201-205
3:00 – 3:30 pm	Closing Reflections	Concourse Foyer

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds

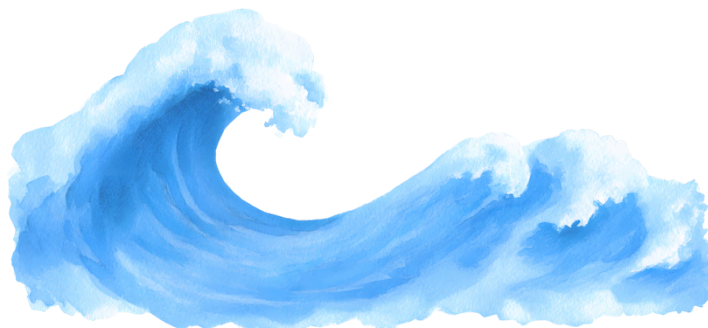
Room 201

1:30 - 3:00 pm

Goal: Restore and maintain water quality in Long Island Sound and its watershed.

Objectives: Reduce Nutrients; Improve Watershed Health; Reduce Pathogens; Reduce Toxic Contaminants; Decrease Marine Debris

- 1:30 - 1:45 pm: Remarks from Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds Co-Chair, Facilitator, Hope Savercool, NYS DEC
- 1:45 - 2:15 pm: Hutchinson River Restoration Project, Barbara Zahm, Ann 'Adjie' Henderson, Melissa Sotelo-Wright, Cat McGrath
- 2:15 - 2:45 pm: Trust for Public Land, Andrew Rohrberger, Mary Alice Lee
- 2:45 - 3:00 pm: Q&A



Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds

The Hutchinson River Restoration Project (HRRP): Identify Industrial Pollution along the Hutchinson River and its Community Impact (2024); Building Capacity to Restore the Hutchinson River's Ecosystems Back to Health (2026)

The Hutchinson River is a highly polluted tributary to the Eastchester Bay at the mouth of the Long Island Sound. Several agencies monitor bacterial load in the river; however, there is little information about point source pollution or quantity of industrial chemicals and minerals from runoff into the river. There are industrial and commercial companies along the river such as scrap metal recycling, asphalt production, bus depots, auto body shops, shopping centers, etc. To further the goals of creating a clean, healthy, waterway and shoreline, the HRRP team has been conducting a preliminary study to look for the probable harmful contaminants along the shoreline and water near the industrial settings to set the stage for further study and mitigation planning. HRRP's second grant in 2026, builds on the work from 2024 and focuses on capacity for their growing organization.

Trust for Public Land (TPL): Designing and Building a Green Infrastructure Community Schoolyard in the Bronx

TPL's 2025 grant focuses on their NYC Community Schoolyards Program, working with PS 146 in the South Bronx to transform the school's asphalt outdoor space into a green Community Schoolyard. The current impervious property will manage 1.1 million gallons of stormwater annually. This initiative is part of City plans to mitigate flooding from extreme storms. TPL has developed 230+ schoolyards with NYC DEP and the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. The schoolyard will be designed by students of PS 146X in educational sessions, with input from the neighboring community.

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Room 202

1:30 - 3:00 pm

Goal: Empower Long Island Sound communities to plan for and respond to environmental challenges in ways that prioritize well-being for all.

Objectives: Inform Decision Makers; Drive Community Resilience Planning; Implement Resilience Initiatives

- 1:30 - 1:45 pm: Remarks from Sustainable and Resilient Communities Extension Professionals for New York and Connecticut, Sarah Schaefer-Brown, NY Sea Grant; Sarah Schechter, CT Sea Grant
- 1:45 - 2:15 pm: City Island Oyster Reef, Frank Williams, Director of Maritime Field Operations; Alex Acevedo, Lead Educator
- 2:15 - 2:45 pm: Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed, Maggie Favretti, Co-founder
- 2:45 - 3:00 pm: Q&A



Sustainable and Resilient Communities

City Island Oyster Reef (CIOR): Expanding Engagement and Educational Programs for Its Community and Beyond (2025)

CIOR'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 is using LISCIF25 funds to expand and grow its several eco-volunteer and educational programs, activities and its outreach capacity.

Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed (AMRW): Building Resilience Capacity by Reconnecting Generations with Water, Land, and Shelter (2026); Establishing a Center for Indigenous, Regenerative, and Community Learning (CIRCL) in SE Connecticut in Support of Resilient Long Island Sound Watersheds (2025); Improving Youth and Community Resilience Capacity Through Regenerative Design (2024)

This project builds on two years of LISCIF work. Previous LISCIF funding strengthened youth, cross-generational, intertribal, and cross-cultural collaboration supporting the development of the Watershed Regeneration Action Plan (WRAP) through a simple and effective "design circle" process. The third round of funding expands work by: 1. Piloting the curriculum developed through the Center for Indigenous and Regenerative Community Learning (CIRCL) in area schools and community gatherings, highlighting the relationships between water, land, and human decision making. 2. Working with BuildGreenCT and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum to host the 2027 Northeast Summit for a Sustainable Built Environment (NESSBE) with a proposed theme of "Culture of Place: How Regenerative Systems for Shelter Take Care of Life on Land and in the Water." 3. Creating participatory art and idea boards from the conference that remain on view so that a wider audience, including school children, can contribute their own ideas. 4. Providing a CIRCL Toolkit Guide to Regeneration for Educators, Community Builders, and Youth Leaders, will document our shared learning. It will inform the Watershed Regeneration Action Plan, and can be shared across the Long Island Sound watershed as a model for developing long-term resilience capacity.

Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife

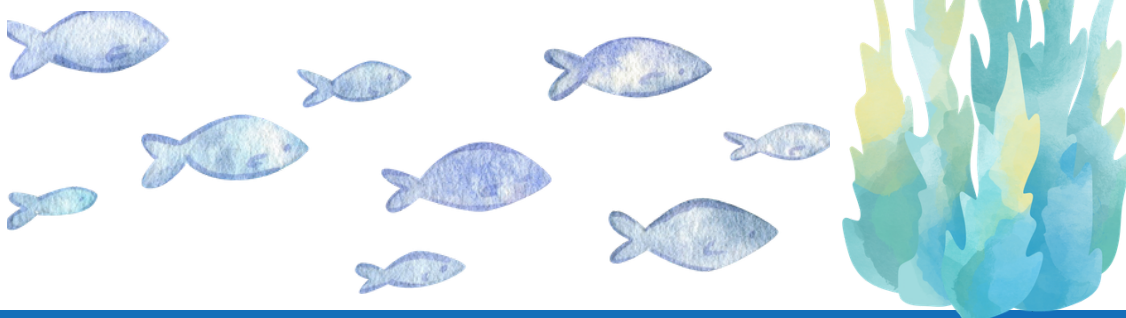
Room 203

1:30 - 3:00 pm

Goal: Restore and protect the health and resilience of habitats and wildlife in Long Island Sound and its ecosystems.

Objectives: Protect Coastal Habitat; Protect Offshore Habitat; Connect Habitats; Conserve Open Space

- 1:30 - 1:45 pm: Remarks from Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife Co-Chair, Juliana Merluccio, NY DEC
- 1:45 - 2:15 pm: Sunken Meadow SP Salt Marsh Restoration Project, Audubon, Vicky O'Neill, Director of Coastal Resilience
- 2:15 - 2:45 pm: Stratford Point Oyster Castle Living Shoreline Project, LaTina Steele, Jo-Marie Kasinak, Ashley Stoehr, Sacred Heart University
- 2:45 - 3:00 pm: Q&A



Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife

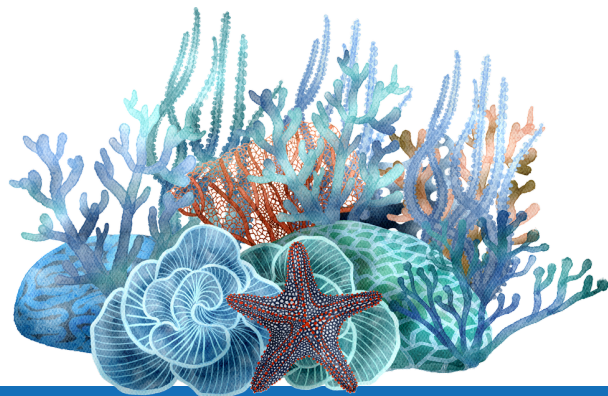
Audubon: Sunken Meadow SP Salt Marsh Restoration Project

The National Audubon Society is working towards designing and completing a 70-80 acre salt marsh restoration project within Sunken Meadow State Park on the north shore of Long Island. This project addresses lingering impacts of 60+ years of severely restricted tidal flow in the creek that was alleviated by a dam failure during Hurricane Sandy in 2012. While improved tidal flow has helped the ecosystem recover, the marsh is still in need of restoration. Audubon's implementation project will address these lingering issues and improve resilience to sea level rise. Marsh habitat will be restored using a suite of techniques including elevation enhancement (Phase 1), hydrological repair (Phase 2), and invasive species control (Phase 3). Phase 1 of this project is funded through a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant.

Sacred Heart University: Stratford Point Oyster Castle Living Shoreline Project

In June 2016, the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) awarded Sacred Heart University (SHU) matching funds to expand an existing "living shoreline" at Stratford Point, Fairfield County, Connecticut. The purpose of this final report is to provide the following information:

- Overview of the project along with its objectives and methods
- Effectiveness as a living shoreline strategy and expected outcomes
- Explanation of how the project advanced CIRCA's mission and grant priority areas
- Elements that are transferable to other coastal communities
- Final project schedule
- Maps and photos of the completed project



Informed and Engaged Public

Room 204

1:30 - 3:00 pm

Goal: Inspire and empower the public to appreciate, value, and protect Long Island Sound.

Objectives: Improve Public Access; Increase Environmental Knowledge; Foster Stewardship

- 1:30 - 1:45 pm: Remarks from Jimena Perez-Viscasillas, LIS Partnership Outreach Coordinator, NY Sea Grant
- 1:45 - 2:15 pm: Save the Sound and EMERGE CT, Alex Rodriguez, Environmental Justice Specialist, Jermaine Smith, Crew Lead, EMERGE CT
- 2:15 - 2:45 pm: Energy Justice Law & Policy Center, Raya Salter, Carmen Glenn, Jonathan LaRosa
- 2:45 - 3:00 pm: Q&A



Informed and Engaged Public

Save the Sound (STS): Building Job Skills and Stewardship in Fair Haven, Connecticut (2025)

Save the Sound partnered 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. CLEAR and EMERGE crew members will teach the skills to the students, who STS 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.

Energy Justice Law & Policy Center (EJLPC): New Rochelle Coastal Center Community Planning and Engagement Initiative (2026); New Rochelle Eco-Ambassadors (2024-2025)

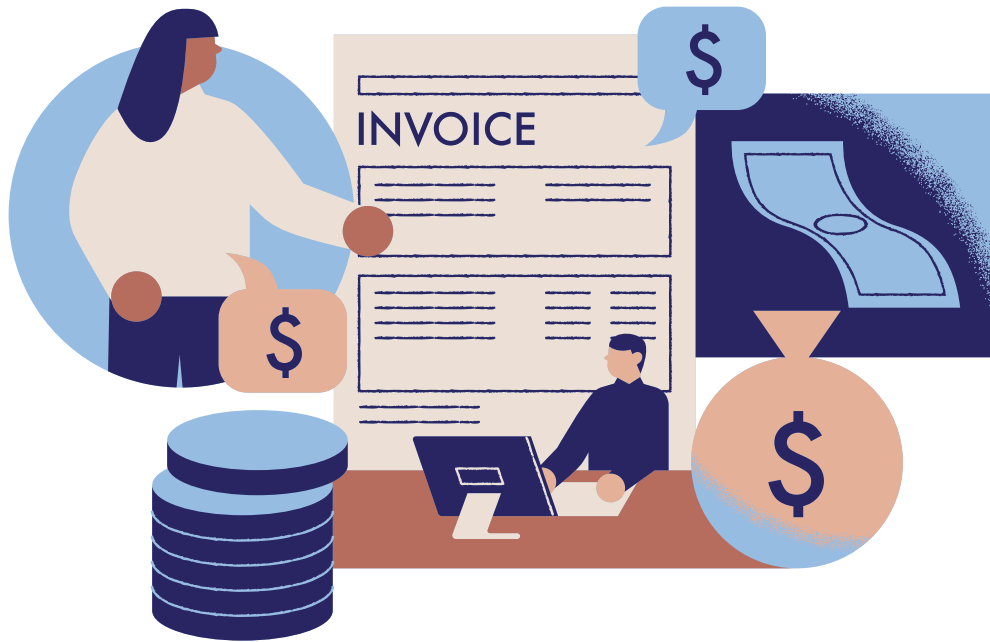
EJLPC will support a community planning and learning process to activate a permanent Coastal Learning Center at Five Islands Park in New Rochelle. Previous funding from LISCIF grew the Eco-Ambassadors program into a successful marine science education and leadership initiative for underserved youth at the coastal pavilion. In partnership with the City of New Rochelle and certified district teachers, the program offers summer marine science programs for high school students and hire recent graduates as interns. Interns often go on to pursue science in college, and students continue into science and sustainability activities during the year. A key goal of earlier LISCIF-supported work was to lay the groundwork for a permanent Coastal Learning Center and expand marine learning opportunities in New Rochelle, both in the community and in school curriculum. Success in this work helped EJLPC and the City of New Rochelle secure a \$700,000 New York State grant to renovate the Five Islands Park pavilion from a seasonal facility into a permanent Center. 2026 funding focuses on expanding capacity and engagement.

LISCIF Invoicing and Reporting

Room 205

1:30 - 3:00 pm

Facilitated by: Undria Polley, LISCIF Grants Administrator,
Restore America's Estuaries



Goals:

- To better understand federal invoicing procedures.
- To better understand the technical steps in submitting an invoice through the Euna platform.
- To better understand reporting requirements for your LISCIF grant.

Breakdown:

- 1:30 - 1:40 pm: Introduction by Jesus Sanchez, RAE
- 1:40 - 2:45 pm: Reviewing invoicing and reporting requirements; Walking through the steps in the Euna system.
- 2:45 - 3:00 pm: Q&A

UPCOMING TRAININGS



Managing Projects

The Management Center (TMC) will host a “Managing Projects” training for the region. This training will focus on approaches, practices, and tools to manage complex projects equitably and toward excellent results. The concepts are grounded in the challenges of managing projects on a team in a non-profit context. The course will cover a range of topics, including:

- The qualities and role of an effective Project Manager
- How to integrate equity and inclusion practices into working with stakeholders and your team
- How to estimate risk and plan for mitigations
- Practical tips for building relationships and improving communication on a project
- How to get started with a basic outline for an effective project plan

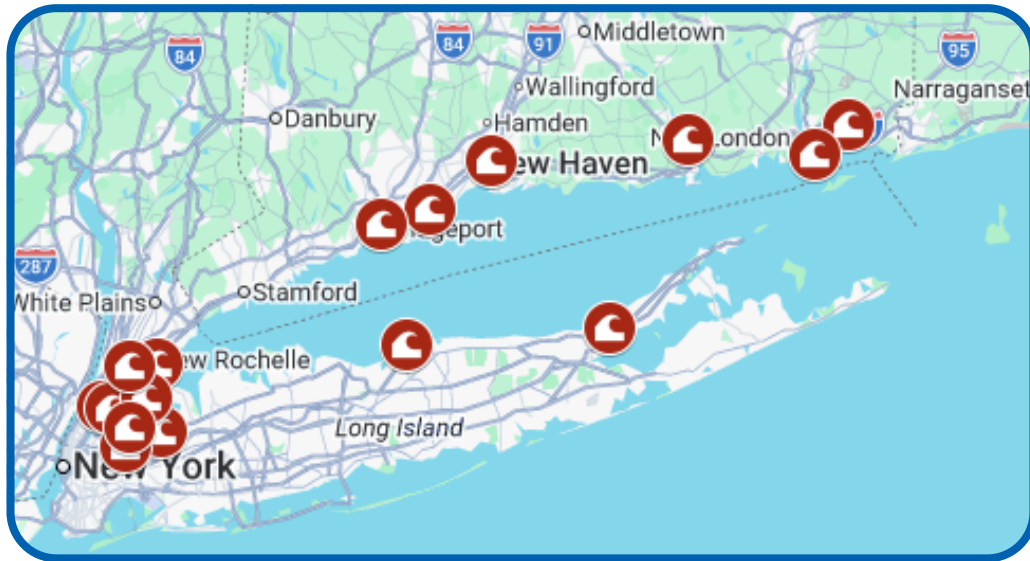
Date: August 5 - 6, 2026

Time: 1:00 - 4:00 pm each day

Register: <https://estuaries.org/liscif/trainings/>



2025 LISCIF AWARDEES



Connecticut

- Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed
- Collective Oyster Recycling & Restoration
- Connecticut River Museum
- Interdistrict Committee for Project Oceanology
- Mill River Wetland Committee
- Save the Sound - Fair Haven (CT)

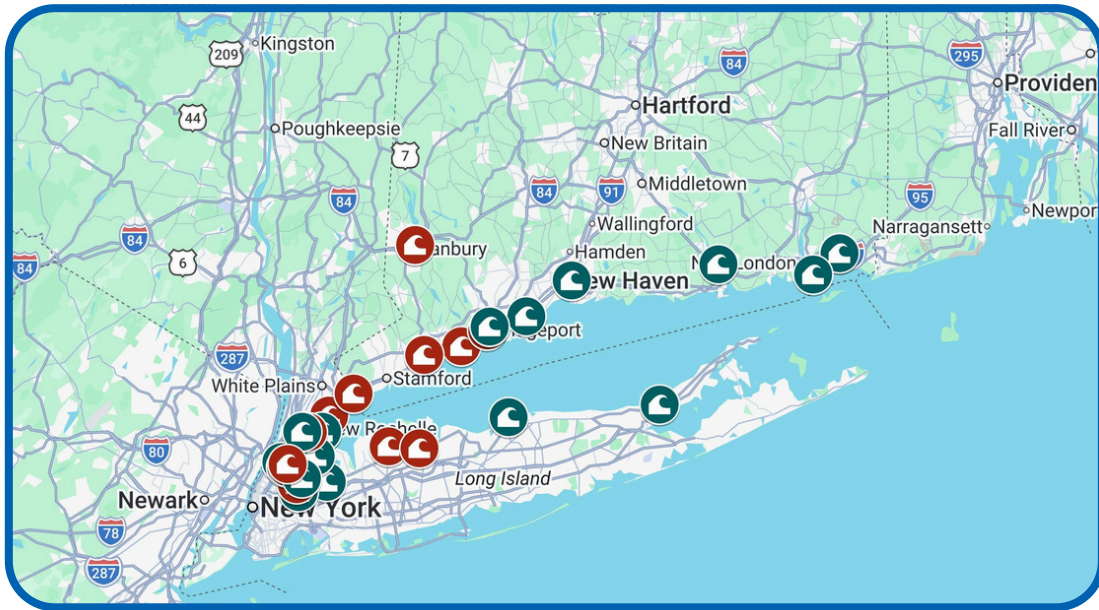
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Awardees:

New York

- Atlantic Marine Conservation Society
- Bronx River Alliance
- City Island Oyster Reef
- City University of New York (CUNY) LaGuardia Community College
- Environmental Leaders of Color
- Guardians of Flushing Bay
- Save the Sound / Matinecock Tribal Nation / Honor Our Indigenous Ancestors (NY)
- Setalcott Nation
- The Energy Justice Law and Policy Center
- Trust for Public Land



2024 LISCIF AWARDEES



Connecticut

- Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed
- Groundwork Bridgeport
- Mill River Wetland Committee
- Collective Oyster Recycling & Restoration
- Save the Sound
- Housatonic Valley Association
- Southwest Conservation District

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more about LISCIF
Awardees:

New York

- Citizens Campaign for the Environment
- Community Resource Center of Larchmont
- Environmental Leaders of Color
- Bronx River Alliance
- Guardians of Flushing Bay
- Hutchinson River Restoration Project
- Rocking the Boat
- Seatuck Environmental Association
- The Energy Justice Law and Policy Center
- THE POINT CDC
- Westchester Land Trust





Thank you for attending the Annual Learning Exchange! Please take a few minutes to answer questions about your experience by scanning the QR code below.

Your input will help shape next year's gathering and the upcoming State-Wide Learning Exchanges in early 2027.

Note: This questionnaire is anonymous and results are used internally. Thank you for your time!



[HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/ALE2026](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALE2026)

RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES 2026 SUMMIT



Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) is proud to present the 2026 Coastal & Estuarine Summit – taking place at the centrally located **San Francisco Marriott Marquis** from September 22 – 25, 2026 – with support from our member organization, **Save the Bay**.

The 2026 RAE Summit promises to be an unparalleled gathering of the coastal restoration community, dedicated to exploring pressing issues, innovative solutions, and invaluable lessons learned in the pursuit of robust strategies to restore and revitalize our coastal resources and communities effectively.

Registration is now open at estuaries.org. You can also scan the QR code below to register.



THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

To learn more about the Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund, visit: <https://estuaries.org/liscif/>



For upcoming LISCIF Funding Opportunities in the Fall, subscribe to our newsletter: <https://estuaries.org/liscif-sign-up/>



Thank you to the CUNY Graduate Center and the Earth and Environmental Sciences PhD Department for hosting us!