

The Long Island Sound Investment Plan 2.0

A plan for the future of our coastal resources



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A NOTE FROM SENATOR MURPHY:

Eight years ago, I released the first Long Island Sound Investment Plan to demystify the federal funding that supports the health of Long Island Sound and lay out a clear roadmap to grow federal investment in the Sound and the communities that depend on it. From fishermen and oyster farmers, to marine researchers and submarine manufacturers, to anyone looking for a great beach, Long Island Sound is a huge asset to our state, and it's on us to keep it healthy and resilient. That is why I am so proud of the work done to achieve the goals of the first Long Island Sound Investment Plan.

We have dramatically increased funding for the Long Island Sound Geographic Program - the hallmark federal program that supports the Sound. When the plan was first published, this program received \$3.9 million dollars, so I set a goal of raising that amount to \$10 million dollars per year. We shattered that goal. Last year, the program received \$40 million dollars in direct annual appropriations on top of \$20 million from the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*.

The Sound has benefited tremendously from federal investment in the last decade and will continue to do so thanks to the funding provided annually by the programs identified in the first plan. I will continue the fight to maintain this funding because our original goals are just as important now as they were then.

But, Long Island Sound is facing a new set of challenges that need to be addressed. Rising sea levels and temperatures combined with the more severe and frequent storms hitting the Northeast have put the Sound and those who rely on it at increased risk. The *Inflation Reduction Act* (IRA), a generational \$369 billion investment in combatting climate change, has given us a chance to fight back, but it is only a first step.

That is why I am releasing this new report, the **Long Island Sound Investment Plan 2.0**. We've made major strides toward a cleaner, more resilient Sound in the last decade, but there's more work to be done. To build on that progress, we need a new vision and new goals that are aligned with the Sound's current challenges.

Fighting for Long Island Sound has always been a top priority of mine in Congress, and I will continue to work tirelessly to protect it for future generations.



RENEWABLE DEPLOYMENT

The science is clear: the world's reliance on pollution-heavy energy generation is causing drastic, dangerous changes to our climate that have local and global consequences. In Long Island Sound, rising water temperatures challenge biodiversity and marine habitats, and hurt our aquaculture industry. Rising sea levels threaten our coastal communities, and the larger, more-frequent storms threaten to wreak havoc on communities across Connecticut, regardless of whether you live on the coast.

The impacts of climate change are already here, and they will only grow worse unless we take action to reduce, and eventually reverse, them over time. That means we must do all we can to responsibly transition to clean energy. Connecticut, like much of the Northeast, does not have wide swaths of open land to capitalize on solar power or onshore wind. Our best resource to make this clean energy transition is the consistent wind power that we have offshore.

Supporting the offshore wind industry in the Atlantic will drive Connecticut's renewable transition while creating good-paying jobs. The *Inflation Reduction Act* has provided a catalyst for these investments, and we are already seeing the economic benefits. However, the renewable transition will also bring increased industrial and commercial marine traffic to Long Island Sound, threatening some of the progress we've made in improving the water quality. We must assess in real time the impacts of this growing industry so we can deploy mitigation efforts before losing any ground in our fight for cleaner water. While it is urgent that we do all we can to maximize the IRA's impact on the offshore wind industry, we also need additional federal resources to monitor the industry's impacts and mitigate any potential harm to the Sound.

I am working to encourage the swift implementation of the offshore wind provisions of the *Inflation Reduction Act* while driving federal funds to water quality monitoring and pollution mitigation efforts. I am calling for:

- **Passage of the *Reinvesting In Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems (RISEE) Act***
- **\$20 million for the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) for water monitoring**
- **\$20 million for the Long Island Sound Stewardship Grant Program**
- **A continued focus from the federal government on the efficient deployment of the IRA's Offshore Wind incentives**
- **\$250 million for the Department of Energy Office of Offshore Wind Research**

RESILIENCY EFFORTS



While Connecticut strives to reduce our emissions and mitigate the future effects of climate change, we must also address the current threat to Connecticut's coastline and residents. The occurrence of heavy rain events has increased for two consecutive decades, and nor'easters and subtropical storms are becoming more frequent. These storms threaten the entire state with high winds and heavy precipitation, but our coastal communities are the most vulnerable, especially to the dangers of flooding.

As Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee that is in charge of providing funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), I have seen firsthand how important it is to build resiliency before the disaster strikes. FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program provides funding to help communities brace for the worst. The agency estimates that each proactive dollar spent through BRIC saves more than ten dollars in clean-up costs after a disaster.

To keep pace with the growing threats, Connecticut needs a holistic approach to building resilient infrastructure. Living shorelines and other sustainable, self-perpetuating natural barriers are an example of the incredible innovations that have been made in deploying green infrastructure to increase our coastal resiliency. The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* provided \$1.4 billion and the *Inflation Reduction Act* included another \$2.6 billion dollars in funding to build resilience to weather and climate events through nature-based solutions. Bringing these dollars back to Connecticut and continuing to provide federal support for these programs must remain a top priority.

However, there are parts of Connecticut's coastline that are incompatible with these solutions, many of which are some of the most vulnerable to flooding. In addition to supporting ecosystem restoration and green infrastructure work, we will drive federal funds to Connecticut for climate-smart gray infrastructure such as water treatment plants, dams, sea walls and drainage systems.

I am continuing to fight for resources for shoreline communities so they can bolster both their gray and their green coastal resiliency efforts. I call for:

- **Increasing the total funding provided in the BRIC program, as well as the BRIC funding that goes to Connecticut**
- **\$60 million for the National Coastal Resiliency Fund**
- **\$25 million for the National Estuarine Research Reserve to support innovative research on green infrastructure projects**
- **Provide additional federal funding for NOAA's Climate-Ready Coasts Initiative**





SUPPORTING THE BLUE ECONOMY:

Long Island Sound is more than just a beautiful, ecologically vital asset for Connecticut. It is a large economic driver as well. The boating, fishing, tourism and swimming industries alone contribute an estimated \$5.5 billion dollars each year to the local economy, according to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Aquaculture is growing across the state with more than 61,000 acres of shellfish farms under cultivation and \$30 million in annual sales.

Connecticut is home to NOAA's Milford Lab, which conducts cutting edge research that helps Connecticut shellfishermen. We've successfully directed federal funding to support Milford's work and even funded a partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture to launch a new, state-of-the-art Northeast Oyster Breeding Center. Going forward, we must continue to support the growing aquaculture industry and federal institutions like NOAA's Milford Lab that support these jobs. We must also fight to help the commercial fishing industry by giving the National Marine Fisheries Service the tools they need to cope with the effects of climate change.

Finally, Connecticut faces a shortage of available commercial marina space, which is a significant barrier to entry for blue economy jobs moving forward. Continuing to support aquaculture and sustainability research is important, but federal resources can also support other critical components of the marine industry. We will fight to provide support for all of the onshore businesses that are so important to the blue economy, such as maritime mechanics, bait shop owners, and more.

I will continue to support our fishing and aquaculture industries as well the groups that keep these industries afloat. I call for:

- **\$150 million for the Maritime Administration’s Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP)**
- **\$164 million in funding for the Sea Grant Program, including \$18 million for Sea Grant Aquaculture program**
- **\$25 million for NOAA Aquaculture program to support Milford Lab**
- **Passage of the *Working Waterfronts Preservation Act* to help preserve access for our nation’s fishermen and maritime workers to the waterfronts in coastal communities**
- **Passage of the *Supporting Healthy Interstate Fisheries in Transition (SHIFT) Act*, giving NMFS the tools they need to help our commercial fisherman cope with changing fish stocks**
- **\$12 million in funding for the Beaches Protection grant program**





ACCESS & EDUCATION:

The Sound powers our economy and defines the culture of our state, but too many Connecticut residents lack access to the Sound or the means to learn about it. More than 21 million people live within a one hour drive of Long Island Sound, which has over 600 miles of coastal shores, bays, inlets, and beaches. But in 2023, there were only 563 public access sites to the Sound across Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island. Some of those sites have additional local restrictions and are not truly public. We must work to make sure a day at the beach is not a privilege only enjoyed by those who can afford it.

While there are many challenges to increasing public access in our state, federal dollars can make a difference, helping cover the cost of building open access parks and green space along the waterfront for example. I am fighting to help communities like Bridgeport leverage federal investment to do just that. In 2024, the City of Bridgeport announced a new recreational park along the Pequonnock River that was backed by a federal Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership. This new public space, once completed, will serve as a public location for people to fish, kayak, and enjoy the water, while also providing flood control benefits in Connecticut's most populous city.

We must also invest in our children's understanding of why Long Island Sound is so special and why we must protect it. We will push to fund educational programs that not only share the Sound's beauty but also the science behind it. These efforts will help kids in Connecticut appreciate the Sound, and give them the knowledge they need to continue the fight to protect and preserve it.

I continue to work to support the programs that focus on climate-ready education and teach students about Long Island Sound, while also fighting for federal resources to expand public access. I call for:

- **Increased funding for the National Park Service Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP)**
- **Passage of my Summer for All Act.**
- **Federal support for the many organizations focused on climate-smart STEM education in Connecticut, including through Congressionally Directed Spending projects.**
- **\$15 million for NOAA's Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program.**





Office of Senator Chris Murphy | **2024**

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