



**Testimony of Save the Sound,  
a bi-state program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment,  
before the Environment Committee on February 27, 2015  
*in support of:***

**House Bill No. 6035 / Governor's Bill No. 6839  
An Act Concerning a Long Island Sound Blue Plan and Resource & Use Inventory**

Dear Sen. Kennedy, Rep. Albis, and members of the Environment Committee,

The Long Island Sound region is the most densely populated estuary in the country. It is truly an urban sea with a wealth of unique habitats, a variety of traditional marine industries, and a vibrant recreational culture. However, the Sound's special role and location has resulted in many controversial battles. From the Islander East pipeline to the Broadwater LNG terminal, we have seen numerous times what happens when new development comes into direct conflict with existing interests. Other uses, which are not necessarily controversial and could potentially benefit our region, are also appearing on the horizon—seaweed farming, aquaculture expansion, and harbor improvements—and we need to plan to adapt.

With this in mind, on behalf of CFE/Save the Sound, we would like to express our support for the Blue Plan bills, which would establish a process to inventory the current uses and resources, and a build a guide for the future. The Blue Plan is a science-based, stakeholder-driven, bi-state approach to ensuring a good and prosperous future for Long Island Sound.

The water off our shore is a busy place. From marshes to beaches, boaters to fishers, swimmers to sailors, tankers to cruisers, conflicts among interests are common and growing. It is time to take an inventory what we have—including the ecological, cultural, recreational, and commercial resources. Fully understanding what is out there will provide an essential baseline for how Long Island Sound's natural resources will be protected and how marine industries will grow in the future.

When it comes to new development, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has many tools to protect Long Island Sound. Unfortunately, each tool tends to operate individually, on a permit-by-permit basis, and without reference to any overall goals. Generally, unless DEEP can prove explicit adverse impacts, the agency cannot reject a proposal, even if it is an obvious inappropriate use of public trust land or water. The Blue Plan would put these proposals into a broader, scientifically-derived context and allow us to conserve the Sound and its traditional uses while appropriately promoting new industries.

A Blue Plan would also provide developers and industries with a guide for new or expanded projects by indicating areas that may be appropriate for a given use. Applicants will save time and money by supplying DEEP with a more thorough application from the start, thus limiting the back and forth. And starting with more and better information will allow DEEP to shorten the permitting process as well.

Additionally, Long Island Sound is governed by both Connecticut and New York, but until recently, the states rarely coordinated on policies of mutual interest. Over the last few years Connecticut legislators and agency staff have made a concerted effort to coordinate with their counterparts in New York. The Blue Plan would strengthen those connections and provide an ongoing forum for identifying, discussing, and developing solutions for issues of joint concern.

There are many proactive reasons to move forward with the Blue Plan, but there is also a critical defensive reason: Connecticut is one of the only northeast states without a coastal marine spatial plan, and without one, we could become an easy target for controversial projects. For nearly a decade, neighbors Massachusetts and Rhode Island have been national leaders of the coastal and marine spatial planning

movement and results from environmentalists and industrialists alike have been very positive. Meanwhile, Connecticut has had an open season, reacting with legal battles and damaging language to whatever proposal is thrown at the Sound, and only widening the divisions in our communities. This is no way to move forward. Our waters are vulnerable and we need to protect them.

Connecticut has invested heavily in protecting the maritime history and environmental health of Long Island Sound. In return, the Sound provides our region with nearly \$9 billion of economic output each year. Passage of the Blue Plan would ensure that our efforts will go toward understanding better the Sound's unique ecosystem, encouraging the growth of existing economic and recreational pursuits, and welcoming new businesses to our shores.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today, and please support the Sound's future by approving the Blue Plan.

Sincerely,



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*Save the Sound is a bi-state program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment, a non-profit organization with over 5,500 members working to protect and improve the land, air, and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound. Learn more at [www.ctenvironment.org](http://www.ctenvironment.org).*