

OPINION / OPED

By TIM BISHOP AND LEAH SCHMALZ

Opinion: Sound advice to save our Sound

 Views of Long Island Sound from Morgan Park

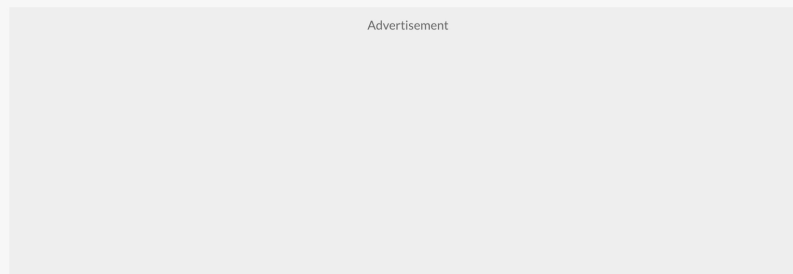
Views of [Long Island Sound](#) from Morgan Park in [Glen Cove](#). Photo Credit: Newsday/Audrey C. Tiernan

January 30, 2012 6:24 PM

PRINT SHARE

Rep. [Tim Bishop](#) (D-Southampton), is the ranking minority member of the House's Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee and a member of the Congressional [Long Island Sound](#) Caucus. Leah Schmalz is director of legal and legislative affairs for Save the Sound, a program of [Connecticut](#) Fund for the Environment.

The [Long Island Sound](#) recently received a report card.



The State of the Sound report uses state and federal data, vetted by a team of scientists from the Long Island Sound community, to grade the efforts of [New York](#) and [Connecticut](#) in protecting the Sound.

In some ways, the region is doing well. Protecting and restoring coastal marshes, dunes and forests earned an A; restoring access to rivers and spawning grounds for fish, an A-; keeping plastics and other trash off our shoreline, a B-

Other areas tell a different story. Ensuring that sea creatures are able to survive in the western Sound, preventing pollutants from running off city streets into our waterways, and taking care of our last great coastal spaces all receive a C-; stopping chemical and industrial pollutants, a C; and keeping untreated sewage out of our rivers and the Sound barely passes with a D+.

Overall, the State of the Sound report shows that while some improvements have been made in terms of habitat restoration, litter and low oxygen, there's still work to be done to make our Sound a healthier, cleaner place and to build on its \$9.5 billion-a-year [benefit](#) to the regional economy.

Local land-use commissions and municipal planners make decisions every day that have an impact on our coastal open spaces, stormwater runoff, public access areas and wildlife. Keeping the health of Long Island Sound in mind as they act or advise on applications and municipal projects is the first step. For instance, green infrastructure or low-impact projects should be required for all new development proposals along the coast.

Sign up for The Point

Go inside New York politics.

By clicking Sign up, you agree to our [privacy policy](#).

State legislators in [New York](#) and Connecticut wield enormous power over the health of the Sound. From supporting planning for climate adaptation to ensuring that state funding is available for communities to improve their stormwater and wastewater systems -- and create thousands of jobs -- these elected officials have vowed to work together as a united front.

And our federal delegation is fighting hard in Congress to secure resources for sewage treatment plant upgrades, habitat restoration and green infrastructure. Congressional leaders can also help improve our grades by continuing to fight for reauthorization and for the appropriation of ample funding for preservation and restoration projects on Long Island Sound -- such as water-quality monitoring programs in local embankments and harbors, sea-level-rise planning and educational programs for kids. Without federal funds, we won't have the resources to protect this regional gem.

Advertisement

But the burden doesn't fall solely on government officials. The residents of this region own Long Island Sound, and there are steps everyone living in its watershed can do to help the Sound get a better report card next year:

Enjoy the wildlife when visiting our marshes and beaches, but don't disturb them.

Volunteer at beach cleanup or habitat-restoration projects.

Get involved with your local watershed association, land trust or conservation commission.

Reduce use of fertilizers and toxic pesticides.

Clean up after dogs -- near beaches, rivers and even in your own yard -- to keep bacteria out of the water.

Dispose of trash properly to help keep cigarettes and other litter off beaches.

Purchase a Marine and Coastal District license plate in New York.

Let your elected officials know you care about protecting the Long Island Sound.

The grades in the State of the Sound aren't just a wake-up call -- they're a call to action. Many generations have enjoyed the beaches and habitats of the Sound; now we must work together to protect our legacy and ensure our children, and their children, can build the same fond memories we did.

[f SHARE ON FACEBOOK](#)

[SHARE ON TWITTER](#)