

REMARKS AS PREPARED

Representative Nick LaLota (NY-1)
Proposals for a Water Resources Development Act of 2024: Members' Day Hearing
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Thank you, Chairman Rouzer and Ranking Member Napolitano for hosting this important hearing today, and for allowing me to testify in front of this Committee.

I would like to take this time today to discuss an issue that is critical to my district – reauthorizing the Long Island Sound Program.

In 1985, Congress created the Long Island Sound Study (LISS), also commonly referred to as the Long Island Sound Program, to identify and address the major environmental problems affecting the Long Island Sound. The Long Island Sound Program was authorized at \$40 million annually through the LIS Restoration Act. Through this legislation, a bi-state Comprehensive Management Plan has been developed and is being implemented. In 2006 Congress also passed the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act, which provided federal dollars for projects to restore the coastal habitat to help revitalize the wildlife population, coastal wetlands, and plant life.

In 2018, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act, which combined and reauthorized the two complementary water quality and habitat restoration programs, was enacted as a part of the America's Water Infrastructure Act.

As of 2022, federal funding for the Long Island Sound has enabled programs to significantly reduce the amount of nitrogen entering the Long Island Sound from sewage treatment plants by 70.3% compared to the 1990s, reduce hypoxic conditions by 58% compared to the 1990s, restore at least 2,239 acres of coastal habitat, and fund 570 conservation projects. In FY23, the Long Island Sound received \$40 million, the largest funding level in the history of the program. The House and Senate have both included \$40 million for Long Island Sound in their FY 2024 appropriations bills, and we are extremely grateful for that.

But none of this matters if the program is not reauthorized.

While my good friend and colleague from Connecticut, Mr. Courtney and I have introduced legislation, H.R. 5441, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023 to reauthorize the program, we believe this legislation can and should be included in a WRDA (pronounced: WERDA) package. I look forward to continuing to work with this Committee to get this important program reauthorized and I thank you for the support you have already shown.

I also wanted to take just a few moments to highlight a critical local issue that has been going on in my district for quite some time — a crumbling seawall in the village of Asharoken.

The village of Asharoken connects the community of Eaton's Neck and the rest of the town of Huntington through a narrow road. Due to weather conditions and the elevation of the road, there are several times when the road has completely flooded – leaving stranded an entire community.

A brief survey of the seawall recently demonstrated devastating scouring of the beach. With every storm, the situation has become more and more dire. This has resulted in the toe stones dropping, exposure of more sheet steel and exposing the wall to total failure. This could result in the loss of the road as well.

Currently, there is red tape that is preventing the residents of Asharoken and Eaton's Neck from getting the help they need to fortify the seawall and ensure that the community is not stranded when a minor weather event occurs.

I look forward to working with this Committee and the Army Corps of Engineers to find a solution to this issue. My constituents deserve nothing less.

Thank you again to Chairman Rouzer and Ranking Member Napolitano for hosting this hearing today and I yield back.