



Save the Sound®

Action for our region's environment.

February 14, 2023

Good afternoon. My name is David Ansel, and I'm the regional director of water protection for Save the Sound, an environmental action organization with a 50-year record of protecting, restoring, and transforming the health of Long Island Sound and the surrounding communities in New York City and Westchester County and across Long Island.

I am also a longtime resident of Westchester County, and like our neighbors in communities all across the state, I have lived through weather events that have increased in frequency and severity. Last October, we marked the 10th anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, which devastated communities along Long Island Sound and throughout New York City, those along the coast and inland as well. Just before that, we marked the first anniversary of Hurricane Ida, which delivered its own brand of destruction to our area. Both storms left Harrison, where I've lived for 14 years, temporarily impassible.

But it isn't just the named storms that we have to worry about anymore. Think back to last July 18th – a typical summer Monday with about an inch of rain in the forecast. Instead, we got blasted. Tarrytown got 4.3 inches of rain in just a few hours. New Rochelle got 4.1.

These intense rain events overwhelm our stormwater and sanitary sewer infrastructure. Flash floods sweep over paved roads and sidewalks and across yards, picking up lawn fertilizer and harmful pathogens, and carrying those contaminants into rivers and streams that feed Long Island Sound. As we outlined in our latest Long Island Sound Report Card, issued just a few months ago, nitrogen pollution remains a significant challenge, especially for the Eastern and Western Narrows of the Sound. Warmer temperatures and wetter conditions can exacerbate water quality problems, and the water temperatures in the western Sound are rising at a rate of 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit per decade.

And so Save the Sound encourages the legislature to include in the budget for fiscal year 2024:

- A \$1 billion investment in the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, which will enable our communities to reduce water pollution and become better prepared for the flooding and devastation of the inevitable next big storm.
- This includes the upgrade and expansion of wastewater and stormwater treatment facilities, as well as funding nature-based solutions such as living shorelines that provide critical flood protection and enhanced coastal resilience.
- It also includes the New York State Septic Replacement Program, which has benefitted Suffolk County greatly. The program should continue there and be expanded from there.

We also recommend that the budget provide for:

- Adequate staffing to ensure a swift, smooth, and transparent implementation of the \$4.2 billion Environmental Bond Act.
- Continuation of the record funding for the Environmental Protection Fund with no offloads.
- \$90 million for the Department of Environmental Conservation, which is understaffed for the critical services it provides.



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- Governor Hochul's proposed cap-and-invest policy, which will reduce emissions, prioritize health, and offset the high cost of utilities
- The elimination of subsidies for new gas hookups in homes.
- The governor's plan to electrify more than one million New York homes by 2030. Electrification would ensure greener, healthier homes, and is intertwined with strengthening community resilience across the county, particularly those the state has designated as disadvantaged communities, which usually are the ones hit hardest by climate change.

On behalf of our supporters across the region, I appreciate your commitment to fighting for the health of Long Island Sound and for our communities across the region and the state. And I thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

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