



Sea Grant
CONNECTICUT

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to another issue of Connecticut Sea Grant's annual report. We offer highlights of Connecticut Sea Grant (CTSG)'s accomplishments over the 2024-25 Sea Grant fiscal year, which includes February 2024 through January 2025. This brief and simplified report documents our efforts at developing partnerships and leveraging resources from within and outside the Sea Grant core budget. It provides a glimpse into the sources and allocation of our funds, and the research, extension and education efforts supported.

Some of our success stories appear as highlights summarizing selected accomplishments and impacts across our areas of investment. These range from continuing to work on developing a strong seafood sector, to helping communities become more resilient to a changing climate, maintaining healthy coastal ecosystems and training tomorrow's scientists, workforce and citizens.

You can find out more about our program via articles in our award-winning *Wrack Lines* magazine or on our website, <https://seagrant.uconn.edu>. We are proud to continue to work with many different stakeholder groups (including industry, government, non-government and academic partners) towards achieving our mission. Simply stated, we seek to sustain and support **"thriving coastal ecosystems, communities and economies"** by integrating research, outreach and education in partnership with stakeholders.

I look forward to hearing from anyone who would have feedback to offer on this report specifically, or on the program in general.

Best,



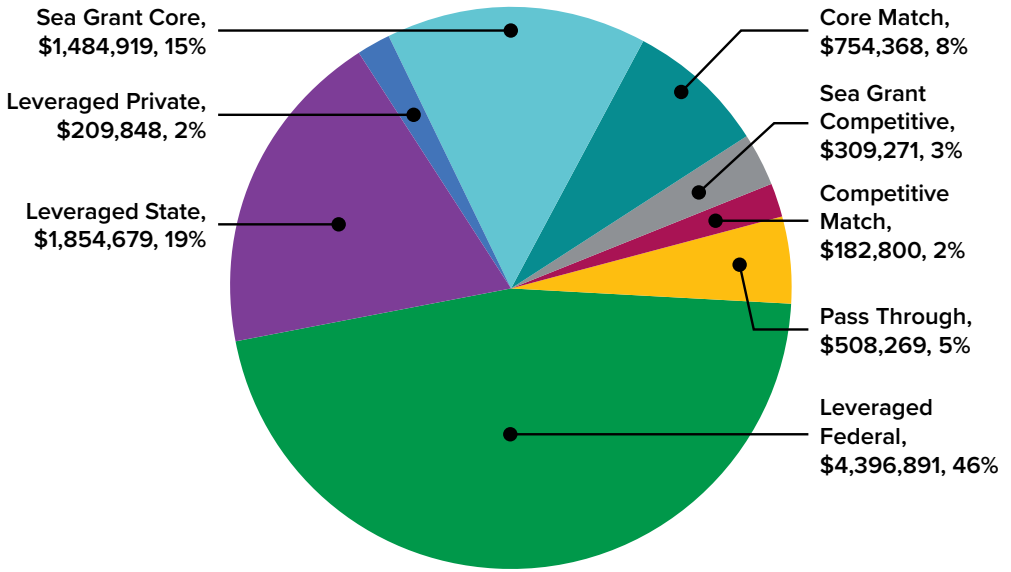
Sylvain De Guise, Director



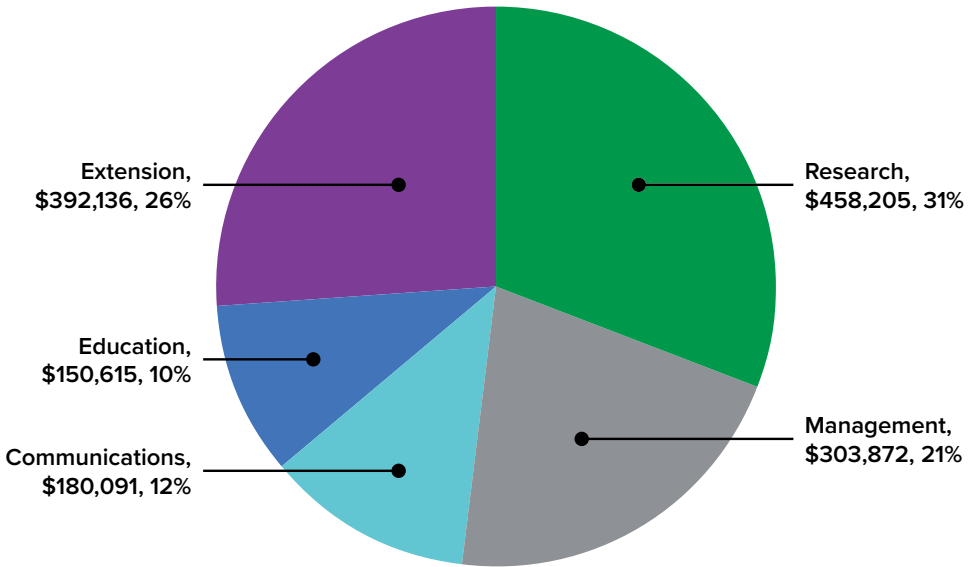
Summary of Connecticut Sea Grant achievements:

- CTSG managed **\$1,484,919** in core Sea Grant funding; **\$754,368** in state core match funding; **\$309,271** in other competitive Sea Grant funds with **\$182,800** in associated competitive funds match, **\$508,269** in pass-through funds, and an additional **\$6,461,418** in leveraged funds from federal, state and private sources, for a total of over **\$9.7 million**.
 - The Return on Investment ratio for state matching funds is **9.4:1**
 - The Return on Investment ratio for core federal funds is **5.5:1**
- Reached **2,206** K-12 students through professional development for educators
- Leveraged **347** hours of volunteer time towards CTSG-supported activities
- Supported **14** new and continuing undergraduate and graduate students in research, extension, workforce development and education activities.

Source of CTSG Funds



Distribution of Core Funds



FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

1. CTSG shell recycling coordinator-educator supported a new nonprofit, Collective Oyster Recycling and Restoration (CORR), that quickly grew into the second largest shell recycling operation in the country. The extension educator coordinated development of an interagency MOU on appropriate recycling policies.
2. CTSG helped advance domestic seaweed aquaculture by co-leading an international technology transfer exchange between Scottish and U.S. farmers, and successfully producing kelp seed string in a small-scale mobile seaweed lab.
3. CTSG developed a calculator tool to support verification of ecosystem services provided by shellfish aquaculture operations, and obtained feedback from growers, researchers and government agencies about how it can be improved.
4. CTSG supported the shellfish aquaculture industry through: publication and distribution of three fact sheets on PFAS and shellfish, plastics and shellfish and harmful algal blooms; offering the third year of the shellfish farming course; creating video series on Connecticut aquaculture; and publication of report on status and economic contribution of state's aquaculture sector.



“ The HACCP Training program taught under Zach Gordon’s leadership this fall has given great structure and added value to our operations here at Stony Creek Oyster farm. He was able to take an enormous amount of information and simplify it into terms my crew could understand. He made it easy for us to identify and apply practices to control food safety hazards to our day-to-day business model. ”

—Spencer Bartels, owner, Stony Creek Oysters, LLC

COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS AND WATERSHED

1. CTSG partnered with the CT National Estuarine Research Reserve (CT NERR) on research involving invasive plant mapping of the forests, shrublands and wetlands that comprise the 1,955-acre CT NERR; also collaborated on outreach events to introduce the two-year-old reserve to the public and on invasive species workshops.
2. CTSG worked with the Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) on a webinar and conference series for municipal officials about regional stormwater utilities.
3. CTSG worked with CT Department of Agriculture and shellfish harvesters to restore the state's largest natural shellfish bed and a main source of seed for the industry that was damaged by severe storms and sediment. Building on an ongoing project, 14 new farmers were engaged and compensated for restoration work, bringing the total amount of restored oyster habitat to more than 1,800 acres.
4. CTSG advanced nature-based approaches to resilience with five public presentations about their potential benefits, providing detailed information for the Long Island Sound Partnership's Resilience Resource Hub; and participation in research and monitoring of existing projects.



“ CT Sea Grant has been an important partner in a CT NERR effort to map, assess, and plan for the management of invasive plant species within our Reserve areas. CTSG staff provided critical training and guidance which allowed the rapid and efficient transfer of knowledge to teams of student investigators. This allowed us to maximize work in the field while simultaneously inspiring the next generation of researchers and scientists with real world applications of science and management. We frequently like to call Reserves ‘living laboratories,’ and CTSG has certainly helped deliver on this. ”

—Kevin O'Brien, CT NERR manager

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

1. Through creation of the Long Island Sound Resilience Resource Hub website and organizing funding workshops for local leaders, Sustainable & Resilient Communities extension educators helped advance community resilience across the region.
2. Free copies of CTSG's *Connecticut's Sandy Shores* book provided to public libraries statewide, and numerous presentations led by authors at conferences, workshops, libraries and land trust events, gave Connecticut residents and educators a deeper understanding of the unique characteristics of the state's coastline.
3. CTSG launched a project titled, "Filling the Emergency Preparedness Gap for Older and Underserved Populations in Select Coastal Connecticut Communities" in collaboration with UConn partners and began identifying current and anticipated preparedness needs and challenges of aging residents through listening sessions, roundtable discussions and a survey.
4. CTSG held 14 events in seven communities to enhance economic and community resilience, engaging 885 people on topics such as watershed health, food access, land use, green spaces and local environmental conditions.



Filling the Emergency Preparedness Gap for Older Populations

This project seeks to support aging residents and their caregivers in the communities of Stamford, West Haven, and New London. We will assess the status of extreme weather emergency preparedness and provide additional resources to support these communities.



“ The LIS Resilience Resource Hub has been an invaluable resource for the Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Coalition. From pull-down filter menus you simply pick basic input information on project phase, location and subject matter and the hub provides a wealth of information from technical material sources, to workshop dates and locations to potential funding sources. One of the features we like best is that funding application dates and days remaining for each funding source are tracked and prominently shown. ”

—Jay Costello, Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Coalition (OSCR)

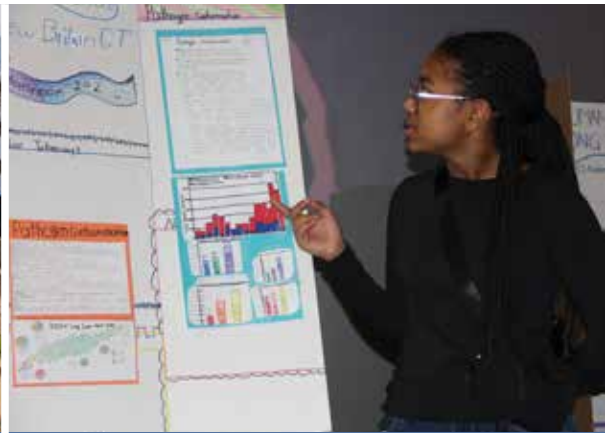
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

1. The Connecticut Aquaculture Educators Network and a new Early College Experience course for high school students in aquaculture were created, and surveys of industry members and educators used to develop content. Thus far 30 students have enrolled in the course.
2. Eleven UConn Climate Corps students completed independent study projects with community partners, including a vulnerability assessment for a coastal city park, a database of extreme heat policies and resources nationwide; and contribution to development of information for municipal officials about riparian buffers and a land cover analysis.
3. CTSG supported three early career marine science professionals in Knauss Marine Policy Fellowships, and one in the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship in Population and Ecosystem Dynamics and Marine Resource Economics.
4. A shellfish aquaculture internship program, developed in partnership with a local aquaculture farm, allowed participants to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings and gain hands-on trade skills. Since its launch in 2024, four individuals have completed the program, with one establishing a new business.



ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

1. Ten Connecticut and New York schools, involving 24 teachers and 2,164 students, participated in the Long Island Sound Schools Network during its inaugural year. Students implemented community action projects promoting a healthy Sound and fostered implementation of the seven Ocean Literacy Principles.
2. With CTSG Arts Support Award Program funding assistance, videographer/photographer Tomas Koeck produced the film *Flyway of Life* and a book of the same title about bird migration between South and North America, and artist Edith Reynolds painted portraits of Connecticut mollusks with text to highlight their importance.
3. Independently and in collaboration with other groups, CTSG staff delivered presentations, workshops and communication materials to K-12 students and other members of the public on various coastal issues, including through interpretive walks, tabling events, guided paddles and conference presentations. Work began to update the LIS Curricular Resource Guide.
4. Special issue of *Wrack Lines* magazine featured articles by three high school and three college students who received scholarships to write personal essays about the environment and their relationship to nature. The issue received a Silver Award in the annual Association for Communication Excellence Critique and Awards Program.



“ Our small New Haven school is so grateful to Judy and *Wrack Lines*! We met Judy on a school camping WILD (Wilderness Inspired Leadership Development) trip and connected through our love of nature and learning. Through our mutual appreciation for young people and the environment, we were able to create an opportunity for three seniors. *Wrack Lines* published essays written by the students and offered them a college grant. The publication and grant each received sky-rocketed their self-confidence and belief in their impact and future. This year Dominic is attending UCONN Storrs and studying computer science, Isaiah is attending Western CT State University immersed in music, and Eden is attending community college to become a CNA and then a nurse! Deeply meaningful experiences like this *Wrack Lines* partnership make all the difference in the lives of young people. ”

—Dianna Carter, magnet resource teacher, High School in the Community

CTSG-MANAGED RESEARCH

1. Assessments made of 170 experimental plots in four tidal marshes treated with sediment additions to inform coastal management and promote more resilient coastlines. **Beth Lawrence, Ashley Helton, Chris Elphick, UConn; Min Huang, CT DEEP.**
2. The impacts of oysters grown in submerged cages within eelgrass beds on the growth of the eelgrass and shellfish are assessed to demonstrate whether eelgrass bed restoration can occur in tandem with aquaculture. **Craig Tobias, Jamie Vaudrey, CT National Estuarine Research Reserve and UConn.**
3. Assessment of the life cycle of litter in the Mill River watershed depicts transport and degradation of the debris as it moves to Long Island Sound, to determine the most efficient way to manage and reduce plastic litter entering the estuary. **Gaboury Benoit, Mill River Watershed Association.**
4. Stomach contents of black sea bass analyzed to assess the impact of this growing population on Long Island Sound and regional food webs. The findings inform state and regional fisheries management efforts. **Hannes Baumann, Catherine Matassa, Paola Batta-Lona, UConn; Kurt Gottschall, CT DEEP.**
5. Over 200 college students engaged in environmental science activities are surveyed to understand the factors that influence their career decisions. The findings inform strategies to diversify the environmental workforce. **Anita Morzillo, Laura Cisneros, UConn.**



“ I am confident that flourishing eelgrass communities and shellfish aquaculture can co-exist in coastal waters, but questions remain as to how best to conduct aquaculture activities to optimize co-existence with eelgrass habitat. CTSG’s support of the CT NERR’s ongoing project is a critical step for guiding both the CT aquaculture industry and growing efforts for eelgrass habitat restoration. Producing relevant and actionable science is a mission of the NERR and having a like-minded partner in CTSG is invaluable. ”

—Craig Tobias, UConn professor, director of the CT NERR

CONNECTICUT SEA GRANT STAFF

Sylvain De Guise

Director and Professor
sylvain.deguise@uconn.edu

Nancy Balcom

Associate Director and Extension Leader

Deborah Abibou

Asst. UConn Extension Educator–Sustainable & Resilient Communities

Juliana Barrett

UConn Extension Educator Emerita–Coastal Habitats

Judy Benson

Communications Coordinator

Anoushka Concepcion

Associate UConn Extension Educator–Aquaculture

Margaret Cozens

Long Island Sound Outreach Coordinator

David Dickson

UConn Extension Educator and Director, UConn CLEAR

Syma Ebbin

Research Coordinator
Professor in Residence

Tessa Getchis

UConn Senior Extension Educator–Aquaculture

Michael Gilman

Asst. UConn Extension Educator–Aquaculture

Zachary Gordon

UConn Extension Educator–Regional Aquaculture Liaison

Michelle MarcAurele

Fiscal Officer

Clayton McGoldrick

Lab Technician

Diana Payne

Education Coordinator
Associate Professor in Residence

Owen Placido

UConn Asst. Extension Educator–Nature-Based Resiliency

Robert S. Pomeroy

Research Professor, Aquaculture and Fisheries
UConn Extension Specialist Emeritus

Sarah Schechter

UConn Asst. Extension Educator–Sustainable & Resilient Communities

Caitlyn Smith

Financial Assistant

SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD

Pamir Alpay

Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (chair)

Bonnie Burr

Assistant Director, UConn Extension

Robert Johnston

Director, George Perkins Marsh Institute, Clark University

Bill Lucey

Long Island Soundkeeper, Save the Sound

Kelly Matis

Vice President of Education and Conservation, Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration

Thomas Morgart

State Conservationist, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Connecticut

Donald Murphy

Chairman, Stonington Shellfish Commission/ U.S. Coast Guard (ret.)

Tracy Romano

Vice President of Research and Chief Scientist, Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration

Mark Tedesco

Director, EPA Long Island Sound Study

Michael Theiler

Captain and owner, Jeanette T Fisheries

Brian Thompson

Director of the Land and Water Resources Division, CT DEEP

Gerald Torres

Professor of Environmental Justice, Yale School of the Environment, Professor, Yale Law School



Six young writers featured in the Fall-Winter 2024-2025 issue of *Wrack Lines* shared their insights and interactions with nature and the environment in a special issue of the magazine. Their thoughtful and varied stories drew on experiences in Pakistan and Texas, Nantucket, Puerto Rico and home in Connecticut. All the students received scholarships for their essays while the issue received a Silver Award in the Association for Communication Excellence annual contest. In the Spring-Summer 2025 issue, six individuals who have made a positive impact on their communities are profiled under the theme of, “Finding their niche: unique ways of serving people and the environment.” Their stories span the worlds of kelp aquaculture, community resilience, shellfish science, marine invasives and urban environmental initiatives. *Wrack Lines* reaches a growing cross-section of the Connecticut population through its print and electronic editions, and is distributed to libraries, high schools, colleges, nature centers, businesses and dozens of other venues statewide. Find current and past issues here:

<https://seagrants.uconn.edu/publications/wrack-lines/>.

A digital version of this report can be found at: seagrants.uconn.edu.

UConn
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT



www.facebook.com/ctseagrants
www.instagram.com/ctseagrants
CTSG-26-01

Sea Grant
CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Sea Grant
University of Connecticut
1080 Shennecossett Road,
Groton, CT 06340
seagrants.uconn.edu