

Long Island Sound Marine Debris Action Plan

2025–2026 Progress Summary

Overview

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, **14 partner organizations** reported implementation of the Long Island Sound Marine Debris Action Plan, advancing efforts to prevent, research, and remove marine debris. Reported activities supported all three Action Plan goals through education and outreach, community science, cleanup efforts, research, infrastructure improvements, and development of innovative technologies.

Goal 1: Preventing Consumer Debris and Single-Use Plastics

Partners continued to expand outreach, education, and public engagement to understand, prevent and mitigate the impacts of single-use plastic and other water/land-based consumer debris

Key accomplishments included:

- CTSG launched the **#DontTrashLISound** social media campaign, with over 100 social media posts over four platforms, and op-ed articles in 13 newspapers.
- University of Hartford Professor and artist Kat Owens **engaged over 300,000 people** through podcasts, exhibitions, and hands-on sewing workshops that highlight marine debris impacts on wildlife. Kat was interviewed on Alec Baldwin's Here's the Thing Podcast, exhibited art at the Bradley Airport, and facilitated workshops with Long Island Sound audiences of all ages.
- NYSDEC installed water refill stations at Sunken Meadow State Park through a project performing targeted **Community Based Social Marketing** strategies to engage beach goers to change behaviors surrounding reusable water bottles.
- Educational programming reached **715 students and 40 educators**.
- **Community science** initiatives collecting marine debris data (MyCoastNY Litter Watch, MDMAP, cleanup audits) were promoted to nearly 1,000 participants.
- Eight organized cleanup events removed approximately **647 pounds of litter** with participation from more than **200 volunteers**.

Goal 2: Preventing and Removing Abandoned and Lost Fishing Gear

Partners reported particularly strong progress under Goal 2, with substantial collaboration among the LTRAP work, including Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, Save the Sound, Project Oceanology, Connecticut DEEP, Remote Ecologist, and other regional partners.

Major accomplishments included:

- Removal of approximately **30,900 pounds of abandoned fishing gear** from Long Island Sound.

- Recovery of **618 traps**, with **641 traps recycled** and more than **32,000 pounds of gear** recycled or sustainably disposed of.
- Return of **121 traps** to their original owners, and **partnerships with 5 vessel captains**.
- Recovery and documentation of **64 species** and more than **4,400 individual marine animals** associated with recovered gear.
- Removal of **10 abandoned or derelict vessels** by the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation Office of Marine Debris Disposal and Vessel Surrendering.
- Continued use of innovative detection technologies, including side-scan sonar, to improve gear recovery efforts.
- Development of new disposal protocols, gear disposal events, funding opportunities, and inventories supporting long-term marine debris management.

Goal 3: Addressing Microplastics and Microfibers

Partners, particularly New York Sea Grant, continued to advance outreach and research focused on microplastics and microfiber pollution.

Highlights included:

- Creation and dissemination of digital educational resources and technical information on microfiber pollution and filtration technologies.
- Development of new educational materials reaching **476 students** and **78 educators**.
- Delivery of **five workshops and presentations** highlighting current research on microplastics and microfibers, engaging **73 participants**.
- Continued development of monitoring programs for microplastics in Long Island Sound.
- Reporting of a new grant supporting continued microplastics research and monitoring.

Looking Ahead

The 2025–2026 reporting period demonstrates continued momentum toward achieving the goals of the Long Island Sound Marine Debris Action Plan. Partner organizations made significant progress in reducing consumer debris, removing abandoned fishing gear, expanding education on single-use plastic, supporting community science, and advancing research and public awareness on microplastics and microfibers. Continued collaboration across federal, state, academic, nonprofit, and community partners remains critical to protecting the Long Island Sound.