



# LISTEN TO THE SOUND 2000

## LI Sound effort moves to name key habitat sites

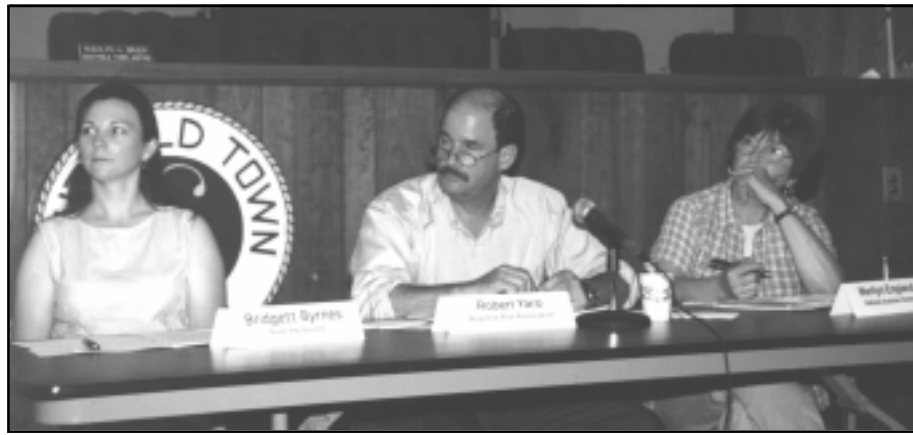
### Staff Report

The first phase of the Listen to the Sound 2000 program has now been completed and was a tremendous success. National Audubon Society of New York State, National Audubon Society of Connecticut, Regional Plan Association and Save the Sound held ten public hearings from May 30 through June 29. In total, 94 organizations joined the partner organizations as cosponsors, over 200 individuals testified and nearly 600 individuals attended the hearings.

Hearings were held in Connecticut: Essex, New Haven, Norwalk and Greenwich; as well as New York: Mamaroneck, City Island, Manhasset, Cold Spring Harbor, Port Jefferson and Southold.

Listen to the Sound 2000 achieved an auspicious beginning as Senator Joseph Lieberman "kicked off" the hearings on May 22 with an open-air press conference at Save the Sound, at which he urged the public attending to testify at their local hearings. He said their input would be important to legislation that he was considering introducing early next year, to establish a Long Island Sound reserve system. The Listen to the Sound 2000 hearings brought together a wide array of government officials from federal, state, county and municipal agencies.

Most witnesses enthusiastically endorsed the reserve concept, many



Mary Mulcahy

From left to right, Bridgett Byrnes, Robert Yaro and Marilyn England serve as panelists during a Listen to the Sound 2000 hearing in Southold.



Mary Mulcahy

Mike Burger, Ph.D testifies at the Southold Listen to the Sound 2000 hearing.

with eloquent personal reference to their own beloved places on the Sound. Each individual was asked to identify their priority sites by marking the area on a large map. This information will be categorized and recreated on a GIS mapping system.

Priority sites recommended for inclusion in the reserve ranged from currently protected shoreline jewels such as McKinney National Wildlife Refuge and Nissequogue State Park to the few large, unprotected open parcels still left on the Sound such as Calves Island. Other sites included transitional industrial areas, street ends and paved lots at the water's edge, underwater marine protected areas, watertrails for conoers and kayakers, and even the entirety of the Fishers Island.

Three prevailing themes were

presented at virtually all the hearings:

- Funding for open space protection is critical;
- The need to reach upstream to encompass tidal rivers, wetlands and fragile watersheds must be addressed; and
- Habitat restoration programs are a key aspect of developing the reserve concept.

Testimony also focused on land use issues such as planning assistance, regional cooperation, and regulatory and tax reform, as well as pollution issues such as runoff of pesticides and fertilizers from our lawns. Other issues discussed included life style issues of consumption, recreational impacts to ecosystems (no jet skis enthusiasts at these hearings!) and education of the general public. At each hearing, individuals spoke about specific sites along the Sound and the natural history of these special places. Their testimony stressed the need to protect these sites for generations to come.

One of the most powerful testimonies was from Professor Paul Adams, who spoke of the tragic bulldozing of the Grandifolia Sandhills in Riverhead to create a golf course. This is an area of several hundred wooded acres with miles of Sound frontage. The area is geologically, botanically and zoologically unique. The high ridges of this site are Pleistocene sand dunes - rare worldwide; the site is named for the extremely rare dwarf Beech trees that grow on the bluffs above the Sound;

and the site is habitat for breeding humming birds - one of few such places on Long Island.

Robert Yaro of Regional Plan Association responded that we need a category of "crime against nature," as the destruction of the sandhills was such crime. He stressed that this place should not die in vain, but be used, as the land preservationists used the destruction of Penn Station, as a wake-up for land preservation reform. "Right now the de facto plan for the Sound is that every acre gets developed. We ought to turn that around. The presumption ought to be that every undeveloped piece of waterfront on the Sound gets protected."

David Miller of National Audubon Society of New York State will be coordinating the production of the final report due out by February 2001. This report will provide an agenda to create a Long Island Sound Reserve Program, a listing of potential sites and summaries of all ten hearings. Listen to the Sound 2000 is off to a great start. The partnership of these sponsoring organizations has provided tremendous leadership and the diversity of strengths will help the concept of a Long Island Sound Reserve System come to fruition.

For more information, please contact David Miller, executive director, National Audubon Society of New York State, 200 Trillium Lane, Albany, NY 12203; phone (518) 869-9731; fax (518) 869-0737.



Mary Mulcahy

Charles Cetas of the Norfolk Environmental Council testifies at the last of 10 Listen to the Sound hearings.

## New federal wetland rules take effect in New York and nationwide

### Staff Report

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed major changes to the wetlands nationwide permit system, which took effect last spring. Regulators now must administer revised and new general permits regulating everything from home building sites to mining, and agriculture to road crossings. The Corps also dealt with exceptions to the new permit rules and issued what are called "regional conditions." A new 65-page guide contains recent nationwide permit rules. You may also find details at the Corps' website, [www.usac.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwo/reg/](http://www.usac.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwo/reg/). Each district office has its own site for reviewing the regional conditions. In Buffalo, contact the Corps staffer at [bridget.brown@usac.army.mil](mailto:bridget.brown@usac.army.mil), and in the remainder of New York, contact [Kelly.S.Rosendahl@usac.army.mil](mailto:Kelly.S.Rosendahl@usac.army.mil).



Constitution Marsh Photo

Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro canoes the waters of Constitution Marsh Sanctuary with Audubon's David Miller last spring as they surveyed where the new boardwalk will be built.