

[Editorial](#) OPINION

Cooperation among states and EPA crucial to clean L.I. Sound

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Water on the Long Island Sound. Photo Credit: File

Progress on cleaning the waters of Long Island Sound has been hard-won and steady. But the federal Environmental Protection Agency says that what's being done to reduce nitrogen, while significant, will not be enough to restore the Sound. It's a sobering warning, but one that must be heeded.

The relevant players — including the EPA, state Department of Environmental Conservation and Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo — seem ready to collaborate despite past tensions between some of them. Sewage treatment plants on Long Island and in Connecticut have been meeting their nitrogen-reduction targets, but New York City has not; that must change. But the solution does not lie with municipalities and state agencies alone.

Individual septic systems — across the north shores of Nassau and Suffolk counties, and in Westchester and Connecticut — are known to be bigger contributors to nitrogen pollution than once thought. The Long Island Sound region needs to emulate Suffolk's ongoing program to identify more efficient septic systems and reduce costs for homeowners to install them. Fertilizer use also must be reduced.

State officials must block an Army Corps of Engineers plan to keep dumping Connecticut dredge spoils in the Sound for 30 more years. And our congressional representatives need to increase funding for the Long Island Sound Study, whose work includes restoring eelgrass and tidal wetlands. President Barack Obama's 2017 budget asks for \$2.9 million, less than the current \$3.9 million and the \$7.8 million in 2010.

The EPA's effort dovetails nicely with work being done on Long Island to reduce nitrogen in our waters. Now everyone must work together in a sustained way to return the Sound to the economic engine and recreational playground we all want it to be. — *The editorial board*