



## **\$65,000 grant for Saugatuck River watershed nitrogen reduction**

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A Nature Conservancy-led initiative to help address the problem of excess nitrogen in Long Island Sound is the beneficiary of a Long Island Sound Futures Fund award from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The \$65,000 grant award will support community-based planning for improved water quality in the Saugatuck River Estuary — where the river meets Long Island Sound — in Westport.

A separate \$150,000 Long Island Sound Futures Fun award will support the Conservancy-led construction of a fishway on Beaver Creek in Mill Neck, Long Island.

“The Nature Conservancy is extremely grateful for support from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund and the many other partners who are making this work possible,” said Holly Drinkuth, director of outreach and watershed programs for The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut.

The Saugatuck River Estuary work stems from a recent Conservancy study of eight coastal sub-watersheds in Long Island Sound that showed nitrogen pollution from fertilizers and wastewater in Saugatuck Estuary significantly exceeds the threshold for seagrass survival.

Excess nitrogen fuels the growth of harmful algae that choke seagrass meadows, destroy salt marshes and deplete oxygen in the water — killing fish and other marine life.

The largest contribution in Saugatuck comes from onsite septic systems, underscoring the need to find new solutions. The Saugatuck award will be used to evaluate and compare the feasibility, cost and effectiveness of traditional and non-traditional nitrogen reduction techniques, and develop a set of options for the fastest, least expensive approaches to improve water quality and support recovery of seagrass, saltmarshes and marine life.

“We’re looking forward to working with Saugatuck River Watershed communities to find new approaches for cleaner, healthier water in the Sound’s harbors and bays,” Drinkuth said.

This grant was among 22 grants awarded totaling more than \$1.3 million that were announced this week in Stratford, Conn. The grants are for projects that improve water quality, restore habitat, enhance living resources, and educate and involve the public with the ultimate goal of protecting and restoring the Long Island Sound.

This public-private grant program pools funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Saugatuck grant requires a match of more than \$48,000, which the Conservancy will secure through donor support and in-kind contributions.

<http://bit.ly/1JrSKXE>