

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Status and Trends of Wetlands in the Long Island Sound Area: 130 Year Assessment

Executive Summary

Wetlands are declining globally. This report provides the first 130 year assessment of tidal wetland change for the entire Long Island Sound Area. **The results indicate a 31% loss of Long Island Sound's tidal wetlands with a 27% loss in Connecticut and 48% loss in New York. Despite tidal wetland legislation passed in 1970, wetland decline in the Long Island Sound continues.** After 1970 New York sustained a higher rate of loss than Connecticut (-19% and 8% respectively). Current research points to multiple, nuanced and complex causes of present-day tidal wetland decline.



Wetland change was assessed in the urban areas of CT and NY that fall within the Long Island Sound Study boundary (red)

A major present day concern is wetland vulnerability to loss due to potentially increased amounts of open water on the marsh surface. In this report we present the results of an open water assessment initially conducted in Connecticut. The literature suggests on average, healthy



An increased amount of permanent open water on marshes throughout the Northeast is a concern. This study assessed extent of permanent open water on marshes in Connecticut.

unditched New England marshes have 9% permanent open water on their surface. Our study indicates an average of 47% permanent open water on the marshes studied.

Understanding the extent and context of tidal wetland change is important for effective future protection. In addition to overall loss, we discuss the historic

extent, present-day stressors and importance and implications of wetland decline to the Long Island Sound ecosystem. We summarize other local studies of marsh decline and degradation in portions of the Long Island Sound and conclude with recommendations for protecting this valuable habitat type given historic context and current stressors.

