



Connecticut
NATIONAL ESTUARINE
RESEARCH RESERVE

eNewsletter

Winter 2024



Marsh at Great Island, Old Lyme. Photo by Judy Preston

Please welcome our new Director

We have another exciting announcement!

Craig Tobias, a **UConn Department of Marine Sciences faculty member**, has joined our team as the Reserve's UConn Center Director. In this position, Craig will act as a liaison to our state partner, UConn, and assist the manager and staff in carrying out the Reserve's mission and vision. Below is a note from Craig, sharing a bit about his background and hopes for the Reserve as he steps into this new role.

A note from the Reserve's UConn Center Director, Craig Tobias

Greeting from the Director's corner. The

new year brings with it a transition in leadership at the Reserve. We say goodbye to George McManus who served as the interim Director/Manager as the nascent Reserve took its first steps. We are all grateful to George for his leadership, and he is a tough act to follow! That said, I couldn't be more excited to step into the UConn Director role. My research has taken me on a journey from watersheds to the continental shelf, working in nearly all the Long Island Sound habitats that are under Reserve stewardship. Having been part of the Reserve's Steering Committee during its 'design phase', serving as Director seems like a natural transition. The Reserve team brims with expertise and their enthusiasm is contagious. Although my time here has been short, the Reserve feels, well, like 'home'.



In the coming years I look forward to helping grow the Reserve into key regional partner for science, education, stewardship and training for all things coastal. With support from the NOAA Reserve program, we stand on the broad shoulders of our partners at University of Connecticut and CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The intellectual and natural resources provided by our partners has empowered us to move forward in long strides. I envision the Reserve at the forefront of producing actionable science, being a trusted broker of facts, and leading integration of that information into education and decision making. More importantly perhaps, I envision the Reserve as regional champion of the ecosystems within our care. To promote the pure joy of being immersed in them, their intrinsic value, and how fortunate we are to have access to them. Each and every one of us. My hope is that the Reserve can help knit together countless stakeholders in Long Island Sound who have shared this philosophy for decades. If we do it right, we fulfill the promise of one of my favorites quotes – “In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand and we will understand only what we are taught.”

Stay tuned and buckle-up. I've got million ideas and not enough time. But if you'd like to make it a million and one, or two, or ten, please reach out. I can be emailed at craig.tobias@uconn.edu. I'd love to hear your thoughts, especially if they involve getting me outside!

[Visit our Website](#)

System Wide Monitoring Program: Establishing our long-term water quality stations

Each Reserve's monitoring activities fall under the System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP), which has a purpose of measuring short term variability and long-term changes on water quality, biological systems and land use/cover within each Reserve's boundaries. Reserves are able to do this by maintaining specific monitoring stations and following strict sampling protocols in order to contribute to the larger, ***nation-wide dataset***.

While some Reserves have had their stations operating for nearly 30 years (!), one of our early tasks as a new Research Reserve is to actually determine where our SWMP stations should be placed and to establish the necessary infrastructure and routines to collect long-term, quality data.

There are many factors to consider when choosing our stations - they must have long-term access; they must be easily accessible; and they must characterize the estuarine gradient without our Reserve boundaries. In our first two years since designation, we have conferred with many users of the waters – including researchers, industry members and recreational users – to give input on where these stations would best sit.

We now have some specific locations in mind and are looking for some final input and discussion from the local stakeholders! Reach out to our Monitoring Lead, Ashley Hamilton (ashley.hamilton@uconn.edu) for more information. We thank everyone for their continued interest in getting our research and monitoring activities up and running!

Reserve Updates

The Reserve turns TWO!

Two years ago, on Jan 14, 2022, the Reserve was officially designated! So much has happened over the past two years and, to celebrate, we're highlighting each member of our team over the next couple of weeks on social media! Follow us on **Facebook** or **Instagram** to learn more about who we are and what we do.

Funding secured for Bluff Point State Park improvements

The Reserve is proud to announce that we were the recipient of approximately \$198K from the Long Island Sound Futures fund to conduct planning and design work in Bluff Point State Park. Working with SLR engineering, we will be conducting a series of public meetings, listening sessions and other survey work to improve our understanding of how we can improve the resilience and accessibility of the Park. This funded project will help us seek additional funding for implementation of these restoration projects.

Apply for CT's Coastal Management Fellowship!

Did you know our Reserve's Manager and CTP Coordinator are both NOAA Coastal Management Fellow Alumni? Here is your chance to become a Coastal Fellow too since Connecticut's coastal access project was chosen for this year's round of fellowship applications!

Learn more about the opportunities in different states on **NOAA's Coastal Management website**. This fellowship program matches postgraduate students to work on projects proposed by coastal states and selected by NOAA. The two year opportunity is for postgraduate students and offers a competitive salary and medical benefits.

Up to nine fellows are placed with state coastal programs every year. CT's fellow will be hosted by our state's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) Land and Water Resource Division. Since our Reserve is committed to equitable coastal access, we will be working with DEEP to support this new effort.



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UConn

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