January 2025

Interstate Environmental Commission

Working For New York

About Us

The Interstate Environmental Commission (IEC) is a tri-state agency committed to protecting, conserving, and restoring New York's environment, particularly in the area of water quality. One of IEC's most valuable resources is its independent, accredited environmental laboratory. IEC's laboratory primarily analyzes non-potable water samples collected throughout the tri-state area in conjunction with coordinated projects designed to support IEC's mission. The laboratory holds primary National Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (NELAP) accreditation through the Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP) of the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH).

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How We Are Funded

According to the IEC's Tri-State Compact, each member state must appropriate funds to support the IEC. In the 2024 fiscal year, New York appropriated $96,600, or 4.7%, of IEC's total funding from its state fiscal year budget. While the majority of IEC's funding comes from federal grants, state appropriations are critical for IEC to meet the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 106 grant non-federal match requirement.

Education and Public Information

IEC participates in and welcomes opportunities to collaborate with educators, organizations, and the public to promote awareness of water quality issues and environmental stewardship. In 2024, IEC hosted its second annual open house, welcomed laboratory tours for high schools, universities, and science professionals, participated in SubMerge, a marine science festival coordinated by Hudson River Park Trust, and collaborated with BioBAT art space on an exhibit featuring IEC's monitoring.

Partnerships

IEC actively participates in many stakeholder initiatives, workgroups, and committees to enhance communication and coordination of water quality efforts within the region. These include the NY-NJ HEP Management Committee and Water Quality Workgroup, the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) Management Committee, the LISS Science and Technical Advisory Committee, as well as several LISS workgroups, and the proposed monitoring collaborative coordinated by Riverkeeper.

Support for Citizen Science

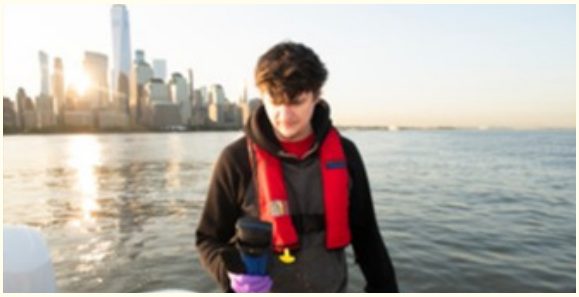
Since 2016, our volunteer monitoring, or citizen science, program has been an opportunity for community members to participate in ambient water quality monitoring surveys. Volunteers from community groups collect high-quality data with the help of IEC staff and laboratory services to better understand their local waters. Funded through IEC's CWA Section 106 agreement awarded by EPA Region 2, this program targets public access areas not routinely monitored by established programs or agencies. In 2024, the program included five groups in New York: Hudson River Park Trust, Freshkills Park Alliance, the Billion Oyster Project, Friends of +POOL, and the Gowanus Canal Conservancy.

NYSDEC 604b

With an increase in secondary contact recreation in NY waters, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) amended its water quality standards to include criteria for secondary contact. In 2024, funded by NYSDEC, IEC launched the 604b water quality monitoring program, aiming to assess water at ten sites affected by these standards. Sites were selected for their lack of bacteriological data and proximity to public access points. Weekly monitoring was conducted from July to October. In 2025, the program will expand to cover the entire recreational season.

NY-NJ Harbor Monitoring Network

In 2021, IEC initiated a Harbor Monitoring Network funded by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). Although it is primarily focused on New Jersey tributaries, the program also provides assessments of shared waters, including the Raritan Bay, Arthur Kill, Upper Bay, Lower Bay, Kill Van Kull, and the Hudson River. Comprehensive monitoring in both New York and New Jersey provides a fuller picture of water quality in the greater New York Harbor watershed.



Long Island Sound Study

Since 1991, the IEC has conducted water quality sampling surveys in support of the Long Island Sound Study. Staff monitor dissolved oxygen (DO), as well as parameters that may influence DO, in the New York waters of the Long Island Sound, its embayments, and the Upper East River. Over the years, the scope of these surveys has expanded to include additional stations, year-round surveying, and added parameters to assess coastal acidification. IEC disseminates weekly survey summaries to stakeholders and produces a season summary with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP), which are available on our website.

LISS Pathogen Monitoring Network

While long-term monitoring programs of the ecological health of the open waters and embayments of Long Island Sound are well-established, a data gap exists for pathogen indicators. In 2023, through funding provided by LISS, IEC piloted a Pathogen Monitoring Network, which coordinates pathogen monitoring across Long Island Sound embayments and tributaries. The network, developed in conjunction with NYSDEC and CTDEEP, recruits watershed-based groups to collect samples for pathogens, which are analyzed by a state-certified environmental laboratory. The program seeks to build a coordinated, geographically strategic monitoring network for fecal indicator bacteria in the Sound. As of 2024, this program includes 10 groups in 17 waterbodies across NY and CT.

Unified Water Study

Long Island Sound embayments are more prone to hypoxia and other impairments than open waters. With this in mind, the Unified Water Study, coordinated by Save the Sound, Inc., aims to compare water quality within and among Long Island Sound embayments. IEC has been a partner in this effort since 2017, performing water quality monitoring of dissolved oxygen, salinity, temperature, turbidity, and macrophytes (algae) in Little Neck Bay and Manhasset Bay. Learn more about the results of this study at: www.savethesound.org/water-monitoring-ecological-health.

Alley Creek and Bergen Basin Pathogen Reduction

In 2023, through funding from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection and a subaward from the Research Foundation of the City University of New York (CUNY), IEC partnered with Brooklyn College and the Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay to perform laboratory analyses to assess the performance of two nature-based solutions in improving water quality. The first project, in Alley Creek, Queens, includes a constructed wetland aiming to reduce pathogen, nutrient, and suspended solid loads to the creek, which flows into Little Neck Bay. The second project involves assessing the effectiveness of a ribbed mussel installation in Bergen Basin (Jamaica Bay) in reducing pathogen indicators and other water quality benefits. Pilot sampling and analysis began in June 2023 and the project is anticipated to continue through 2025.