

INTERSTATE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

A TRI-STATE WATER AND AIR POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

Brooklyn Army Terminal, 140 58th Street, Building A, Box 202 • Brooklyn, New York 11220

PHONE: (646) 222-9616 WEB SITE: www.iec-nynjct.org

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Testimony of the Interstate Environmental Commission Before the New York State Joint Legislative Hearing on 2026-2027 Executive Budget Proposal

Environmental Conservation

January 28th, 2026

Thank You Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Pretlow, Senator Harckham, Assemblymember Glick, members of the Legislative Fiscal and Environmental Conservation Committees for this opportunity to offer written testimony on behalf of the Interstate Environmental Commission regarding the Governor's proposed budget for State Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

The Interstate Environmental Commission commends Governor Hochul for continuing to demonstrate, through the Executive Budget, her commitment to protecting New York's environment. The funding appropriated through these budget actions, demonstrates New York's understanding of the need to invest resources to protect and restore New York's environment.

New York had a long history of supporting the work of the IEC until 2009 when financial stresses caused the state to cut previous appropriations of over \$300,000 to the statutory minimum level of funding—\$15,000—as set forth in the *Tri-State Compact of 1936*. Going forward, IEC is requesting that the annual non-federal match of \$214,051 be provided by our three member states in accordance with the structure set forth in the *Tri-State Compact*—45% support from New York and New Jersey and 10% support from Connecticut. **The Executive Budget proposal released in January 2026 included a SFY2026-2027 appropriation of \$41,600. We respectfully ask the Legislature to increase the appropriation in the New York State FY2026-2027 budget for the Interstate Environmental Commission (located in *Aid to Localities*) to a minimum of 45 percent of the required \$214,051 matching funds—\$96,323.**

This level of funding is supported by environmental advocacy partners including **Riverkeeper, The Nature Conservancy, Save the Sound, and Environmental Advocates of New York**. This nominal increase in appropriation is critical to ensure IEC's continued eligibility to apply for and receive federal funding of over \$2,000,000 annually, yielding New York State a significant return on its investment.

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The Interstate Environmental Commission (or IEC) is a tri-state water and air pollution control agency similarly committed to protecting, conserving, and restoring New York's environment, particularly in the area of water quality.

In brief, the Interstate Environmental Commission's District runs west from a line between Port Jefferson, New York, and New Haven, Connecticut, on Long Island Sound; south from Bear Mountain on the Hudson River to Sandy Hook, New Jersey (including Upper and Lower New York Bays, Newark Bay, Arthur Kill and Kill Van Kull); and embraces a portion of the Atlantic Ocean out to Fire Island Inlet on the southern shore of Long Island and the waters abutting all five boroughs of New York City. Our entire district is either New York water, or water that is shared by New York and its neighboring states of New Jersey and Connecticut. Just as water knows no state borders, the IEC is committed to taking a regional approach to water quality management, yet recognizes that water quality protection needs vary across our member states and in fact across different regions within the state.

The IEC's mission is to protect and enhance environmental quality in the Interstate Environmental District through monitoring, cooperation, regulation, coordination and mutual dialogue between government agencies and citizens. The IEC fulfills this mission through a number of strategies developed to meet regional water quality needs. Since 2021, IEC has significantly expanded its water quality projects and leveraged diverse sources of funding to support these projects. Some of the projects which benefit New York State, and their funding sources, are highlighted below. Despite increased federal funding, the need for state, non-federal support remains critical, now more than ever, as the future accessibility of federal funding is threatened by Presidential executive orders.

- ***Long Island Sound Long-Term Monitoring***: In response to the increasingly critical need to document summer hypoxic conditions in western Long Island Sound and its embayments, IEC has monitored dissolved oxygen, as well as key water quality parameters relevant to hypoxia, in far western Long Island Sound every summer since 1991. IEC continues to expand this monitoring, with monthly "winter" surveys added, resulting in a year-round monitoring program. In 2022, IEC expanded this monitoring further to include additional parameters to assess coastal acidification. IEC also partners with Save the Sound to perform monitoring in support of the Unified Water Study, a comprehensive project to assess and compare the ecological health in over 30 Long Island sound embayments using consistent methodologies and schedules. IEC has received expanded funding from EPA's Long Island Sound office to perform pathogen trackdown surveys in areas adjacent to shellfish harvesting waters to mitigate pathogen sources and ultimately reduce the size and duration of these closures. IEC has also received supplemental funding through EPA's Long Island Sound office to build a regional volunteer pathogen monitoring network in the Long Island Sound watershed and fund a subaward to support the **Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor's** core monitoring

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program. In federal fiscal year 2025, IEC was awarded \$1,538,890 in funding from EPA's Long Island Sound Office.

- ***Long Island Sound Septic System Replacement Program*** In 2025, IEC entered into a contract with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Division of Water to administer a septic system replace program in portions of Nassau and Suffolk counties within the Long Island Sound watershed. This program is supported by federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding. Eligible property owners may be reimbursed up to \$10,000 of eligible costs toward the installation of Innovative and Alternative Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (I/A OWTS). These advanced systems have enhanced capability to remove nitrogen, which has historically been a major pollutant in the Long Island Sound linked to harmful algal blooms, low dissolved oxygen, coastal acidification, and habitat degradation. Increasing the rate and number of septic system upgrades can significantly improve water quality in the Sound. Further, this funding can be combined with existing state, county and local funding, resulting in reimbursements totaling \$20,000 or more to eligible property owners.
- ***New York Harbor Monitoring Network:*** In 2021, IEC initiated a Harbor Monitoring Network, funded by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The program incorporates sites in shared waters (Raritan bay, Arthur Kill, Upper New York Bay, Lower New York Bay, Kill Van Kull and the Hudson River). In 2024, with funding passed through to IEC from NYSDEC from federal 604b funds, and in consultation with NYSDEC, IEC implemented a complementary monitoring program, incorporating both shared water sampling locations as well as sites in New York State tributaries to the Harbor. The resulting monitoring network will provide a more robust, balanced, independent assessment of the waters of New York Harbor.
- ***Monitoring and Analytical support for public access, including Governor Hochul's NYSWIMS initiative:*** IEC supports initiatives to increase safe public access to New York's waterways for all New Yorkers. Since 2021, through IEC's Coordinated Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program, IEC has provided sampling and analytical support to Friends of +Pool in order to inform the siting of water-filtering, floating pools using the natural waters of New York State. In 2024, IEC provided sampling and analytical laboratory support during a 90-day pilot of the filtration system designed and installed at the future site of the floating pool. This partnership continued in 2025 with weekly monitoring surface water quality monitoring at the proposed site. IEC's laboratory is NYSDOH ELAP certified to perform a wide scope of parameters including pathogen indicators in surface water. Having an ELAP certified laboratory, IEC is uniquely positioned to generate the high-quality data needed to inform and guide NYSWIMS.

IEC also supports monitoring by the **Hudson River Park Trust, Gowanus Canal Conservancy, Billion Oyster Project, Friends of the Bay** and other community groups

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to enable the generation of high-quality data to inform public recreation in regional waterways. IEC has partnered with the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program to participate in Citizen Science and education initiatives such as City of Water Day (<https://waterfrontalliance.org/what-we-do/city-of-water-day/about/#in-your-neighborhood> .)

These efforts are all funded through IEC's federal CWA Section 106 assistance agreement awarded through EPA Region 2.

- ***Expanding capabilities to address contaminants of emerging concern:*** EPA Region 2 has provided IEC funding to begin developing the capacity to analyze PFAS in wastewaters and ambient waters. IEC's laboratory is primarily supported by federal funds provided by USEPA Region 2. Additional funding would allow IEC to procure additional instruments to expand nutrient analytical capabilities and capacity.

In addition, IEC has the capability to perform short-notice inspections—sampling, monitoring, and analyses— in response to regional environmental emergencies, concerns, or natural disasters. In the past, IEC has assisted local environmental agencies to determine environmental impacts after natural or manmade events.

- IEC's ability to mobilize quickly and perform sampling and associated analyses quickly at the request of local, state and federal agencies makes IEC a valuable resource.
- In October 2022, the Commission opened a new laboratory and headquarters at the Brooklyn Army Terminal. The newly constructed facility was made possible through funding provided by BioBAT, Inc, IEC and the EPA. BioBAT, Inc is a partnership created by the Research Foundation for SUNY, on behalf of Downstate Health Sciences University, and the New York City Economic Development Corporation. The 2800 square-foot, state of the art facility has enabled IEC to expand its analytical capabilities and regional monitoring efforts. Since 2000, the laboratory has held accreditation through the National Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (NELAP). The IEC laboratory holds primary NELAP accreditation through the New York State Department of Health's Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP). The Commission's laboratory is dedicated to producing technically defensible environmental data, through sound science and a comprehensive quality control and quality assurance (QA/QC) program.

The IEC performs coordinated, tailored inspections and projects designed to assist, rather than duplicate, compliance efforts of the New York State DEC:

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- IEC has a robust, coordinated, and tailored inspection program which includes inspections at SPDES-permitted wastewater treatment plants (water resource recovery facilities), industrial dischargers, pump stations, combined sewer systems as well as municipal separate storm sewer (MS4) systems focusing on state priorities designed to complement efforts of regulatory authorities. IEC's staff conducts inspections with sampling at industrial facilities and municipal wastewater treatment plants year-round. These inspections, which are planned in coordination with regional NYSDEC staff, include effluent sampling and an inspection of processes, equipment, and plant records. Samples collected at these facilities are analyzed in the IEC's certified laboratory to determine compliance with the IEC's Water Quality Regulations and with each facility's specific SPDES permit. In New York State, IEC is frequently the only agency performing effluent compliance monitoring at SPDES permitted discharges. Thus, IEC's compliance monitoring is, in many cases, the only verification of data reported by permittees on discharge monitoring reports.

While the majority of the IEC's funding comes from other sources—primarily federal Clean Water Act Section 106 grants—state funding is critical to enable the Commission to implement the work plan of the grants and to meet the match requirement for federal grants. In federal fiscal year 2025, IEC was awarded over \$2,000,000 in federal funds from CWA Section 106 and Long Island Sound appropriations. IEC is only eligible to apply and receive this annual federal funding if it can demonstrate and document non-federal matching support in the amount of \$214,051.

On behalf of the IEC, I would like to thank the Legislature and, in particular, the legislative committees on environmental conservation, for their continued leadership and diligent oversight of State environmental policy. The IEC genuinely appreciates this opportunity to present testimony at the budget hearing, is hopeful that the Legislature will consider our request, and looks forward to continuing our important water quality work in support of New York State.

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January 2026

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 2025 fiscal year, New York appropriated \$41,600, or 0.48%, of IEC's total funding from its state fiscal year budget, less than half of IEC's appropriation request of \$96,328. 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 2025, IEC participated in two marine science festivals-SubMerge, coordinated by **Hudson River Park Trust**, and City of Water Day, coordinated by **Waterfront Alliance** and **New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program** (HEP). In addition, IEC hosted its third annual open house and welcomed tours to science professionals, artists, and partners. Staff presented posters at various water quality events throughout the year and participated in multiple conferences, including BioBAT's Currents of Change symposium and the annual HEP conference.



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 HEP Management Committee and Water Quality Workgroup, the **Long Island Sound Partnership** (LISP) Management Committee, the LISP Science and Technical Advisory Committee, as well as several LISP workgroups.

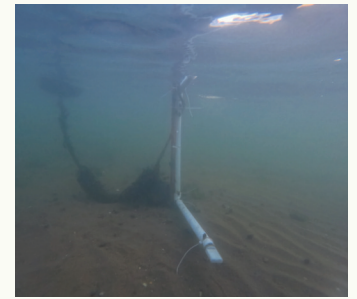
NYS Septic System Replacement Fund

The Septic System Replacement Fund Program, supported by EPA Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding passed through **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation** (NYSDEC) to IEC, provides financial assistance to eligible homeowners in Nassau and Suffolk County to aid in replacing septic systems or cesspools that impair water quality in the Long Island Sound (LIS) watershed. Conventional discharge systems have been identified as a significant source of nitrogen pollution in the LIS watershed, and new septic systems can reduce nitrogen output by up to 80%, improving water quality in the Sound. This funding mechanism provides an additional funding source to supplement the existing New York State and County programs for the installation of advanced nitrogen-reducing septic systems, providing up to \$10,000 for eligible participants. As of January 2026, 8 septic systems have been installed in Nassau County, with 68 more on the way. This project supports LISP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP).



NY-NJ HEP Eelgrass Restoration

In conjunction with HEP, EPA, and **Stony Brook University**, IEC is monitoring the success of eelgrass plants planted by Stony Brook University adjacent to the Living Breakwaters on the southern coast of Staten Island. Success was measured using habitat and water quality parameters in the summer and fall of 2025 and will resume in the spring of 2026. Eelgrass has several vital functions in aquatic ecosystems and can improve water quality and habitat stability. This study will help determine if environmental conditions can support further eelgrass restoration in the NY-NJ Harbor.



Long Island Sound Monitoring

Since 1991, IEC has conducted water quality sampling surveys in support of the Long Island Sound Partnership. In 2025, LISP celebrated 40 years with a new name, a new logo, and a new CCMP, establishing “goals, objectives, and actions for the next 10 years to further restore and protect the Sound.” IEC’s participation in LIS monitoring contributes to this updated CCMP. 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 IEC’s website. In 2025, through funding provided by LISP, IEC received a subaward to support **Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor’s** core monitoring, which conducts testing at 21 sites in Hempstead Harbor and Glen Cove Creek. Since 2017, IEC has also participated in the **Unified Water Study**, coordinated by **Save the Sound, Inc.**, performing water quality monitoring in Little Neck Bay and Manhasset Bay. Learn more about the results of this study at: www.savethesound.org/water-monitoring-ecological-health.



LIS 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 LISP, IEC piloted a Pathogen Monitoring Network 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 2025, this program includes 9 groups in 17 waterbodies across NY and CT.

NYSDEC 604b

In response to the NYSDEC update to water quality standards to include secondary contact recreation regulations, IEC launched the New York Harbor Monitoring Program funded by NYSDEC through CWA Section 604(b). 2025 marked the second recreational testing season, with weekly monitoring from April-October aiming to assess water quality at eleven sites, including one additional site added in 2025, affected by secondary contact criteria. These sites were selected for their lack of bacteriological data and proximity to public access points. This program compliments IEC’s **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection** funded **NY-NJ Harbor Monitoring Network**, which provides assessments of shared waters such as the Raritan Bay, Arthur Kill, Upper Bay, Lower Bay, Kill Van Kull, and the Hudson River.



Support for Participatory Science

Since 2016, the volunteer monitoring, or participatory 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 2025, the program included five groups in New York: **Hudson River Park Trust**, **Freshkills Park Alliance**, **Billion Oyster Project**, **Friends of +POOL**, and **Gowanus Canal Conservancy**.