

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 8, 2020

Contacts:

Martin Hain, Save the Sound, 415-225-8767

Laura McMillan, Save the Sound, 540-292-8429

Ed Gentile, Town of Darien, Director of Public Works, 203-656-7346

Save the Sound and Town of Darien Reach Sewage Pollution Prevention Deal

Collaborative Discussions yield proposed consent decree with clean water, public health, and open space benefits

New Haven, Conn. – Save the Sound and the Town of Darien have reached a collaborative agreement that will reduce water pollution and help ensure local residents can enjoy a clean Long Island Sound. The agreement is memorialized in a proposed consent decree that will be filed jointly in the Federal Court for the District of Connecticut.

As part of Save the Sound’s Campaign for a Sewage Free Long Island Sound, attorneys regularly review statewide Sewage Right to Know Act reporting data. As part of this review, Save the Sound identified overflows from Darien’s sewage collection system, including a release of approximately 600,000 gallons in October 2018 which posed potential threats to human health as well as ecological damage to Long Island Sound from nitrogen and other pollutants. If not regularly maintained, sewage collection systems can fall into a state of disrepair that can result in chronic sewage spills. When approached with the findings, the Town immediately made clear that it wanted to resolve the problem and reach a collaborative agreement with Save the Sound to protect and improve Darien and Long Island Sound waters.

The Town, already in the process of planning for substantial system enhancements, took the problem seriously, and fast-tracked retaining an engineering firm to address the problem even as talks were ongoing. “We commend Darien for taking a proactive and collaborative approach to this critically important issue, said Kat Fiedler, legal fellow for Save the Sound. “Together we’ve crafted a strong agreement that will protect the health of Darien residents and our shared environment by keeping sewage out of Goodwives River, Stony Brook, and Long Island Sound. We’re looking forward to our continued partnership as the Town conducts its investigations, maintenance plans, and any necessary rehabilitation.”

The parties agreed to file a proposed consent decree in Connecticut Federal Court under the authority of the Clean Water Act where Darien would agree to:

- Complete a Sewer System Evaluation Study to identify areas of the sewer collection system that need to be upgraded;
- Agree to a remediation schedule to make necessary repairs based upon the Study;
- Make the repairs in the time allotted in the agreed upon schedule;
- Develop a plan that would provide for maintaining the system after it is repaired;

- Provide funding to the Darien Land Trust for improvements to Olson Woods Pond that augment its function as a natural forebay protecting Long Island Sound and as habitat for sea-bound migratory fish, local wildlife and other migratory species; and
- Contribute to Save the Sound's attorneys' fees and engineering expert costs.

"The Town of Darien is pleased to continue our environmental partnership with the Darien Land Trust with our investment in Olson Woods Pond and the Noroton River Watershed," said First Selectman Jayme Stevenson.

"The Darien Land Trust protects nearly 220 acres in Darien and we couldn't be more pleased to deploy these funds to create a safer environment for all creatures, big and small, as Darien's water health is improved," said DLT Co-President Erika Morris.

As part of Save the Sound's Sewage Free Long Island Sound program, the organization has also reached agreements with the City of Danbury, the Village of Port Chester, the City of White Plains, and the Village of Mamaroneck and is in talks with several more towns and cities.

###