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From the EDITOR

MARKING A SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARY

As a young mother 30 years ago, I had different priorities than I do today. Quitting my job as a daily newspaper reporter for the first year of my daughter's life, I met the challenges of taking care of my child and making ends meet on my husband's modest income by limiting my world to little beyond my immediate household. Then, the poor state of Long Island Sound and the elevation of a force to help restore its health stayed mostly outside that small scope. But the ensuing years changed that.

That year, 1988, marked a turning point for the Sound. A mass fish die-off caused by oxygen depletion in the western Sound the previous summer caught everyone's attention. People who cared about the Sound realized that without immediate action, the state's most important waterway would continue to deteriorate, perhaps beyond repair. That same year, the University of Connecticut was designated as a Sea Grant College, the highest status attainable in the National Sea Grant network. That enabled it to become fully engaged with other partners in the work of restoring and protecting the Sound.

Starting in the 1970s as a modest extension effort, where the latest science is applied to practical economic and environmental projects, Connecticut Sea Grant grew into a full-fledged public-service organization focused on research, education, and outreach. Since becoming a Sea Grant College Program, Connecticut Sea Grant has funded numerous research projects on the Sound and its watershed; partnered with communities along the shoreline and inland on habitat restoration and climate resiliency projects; educated hundreds of teachers about how to incorporate marine science and the Sound into their classrooms; helped keep commercial and recreational shellfish beds productive while fostering new endeavors in kelp farming; and communicated with the public through this magazine, educational publications, events and its website.

Over the last three decades, as my personal awareness of environmental challenges in Connecticut grew, I developed an attachment to the Sound. My family was lucky enough to be able to move close to the shoreline, and started spending many hours in our small boat exploring the sandy beaches, islands and marshes in Sound's eastern end. In the "way leads on to way" of things observed by Robert Frost, my journalism career eventually moved into covering the environment full time and pursuing a complementary master's degree. In those years, I came to know and admire Connecticut Sea Grant's work and mission, and accepting a job here felt like a natural progression.

My journey and the evolution of this organization can be considered converging episodes of environmental history. That, according to the American Society of Environmental History, is the discipline of "the interaction between humans and the natural world, or among humans and nonhumans, through time." Now, as Connecticut Sea Grant marks a significant anniversary year, this issue reflects on the parallel environmental history of the Sound over those 30 years. From the harbors of Norwalk and New Haven to Niantic, the Sound is much cleaner, but ongoing challenges remain. Two iconic species – lobsters and American shad – have gone in opposite directions in their survival stories. As the articles in this issue point out, there is much to celebrate, much to mourn, and no time for complacency.

Judy Benson, Editor
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Above: Norwalk wrack line. Photo: Dave Sigworth/ The Maritime Aquarium

Cover, Top: Wrack line at Lighthouse Point New Haven. Photo: Judy Benson

Cover, Center: Oystercatcher trio in flight near Cockenoe Island. Photo: A.J. Hand