

# Environmental Organizations Are Critical to Restoring Long Island Sound

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I recently attended the opening of Save the Sound's eastern office at the University of Connecticut, Avery Point campus. The office is to help coordinate their educational and outreach efforts at the eastern end of the state. Save the Sound is one of several marine educational and lobbying organizations that champion the restoration of Long Island Sound. From my perspective, I share that vision because I can remember a part of that past.

During a recent vacation to Maine, I told my son Willard that I used to be able to see the seaweed and rocks off shore in Madison as it is in Rockport. He looked amazed. "Back home, Dad?" He asked. "Yes." I responded. He looked away. "You could see through the water like this?" He questioned still not believing. "Yes I could. I even speared fish from piers." I suspect my credibility was gone with that explanation. After all, it was only last summer in Madison when we couldn't see our toes for the brown algae. This was at The Madison Surf Club – the same place I earned my Red Cross life saving certificate in 1965. The beach was still great, but the water had changed.

Madison in the 1960's was for me a memory of simpler times and a much cleaner Long Island Sound. My family had moved to the shore and I

loved to fish. What could be better for a ten-year-old? The sea life changed with the seasons -- porpoise, blue crabs and fluke in the summer; seals and clamming in the winter; flounder and mackerel in the spring; and menhaden chased by blue fish in the fall. Year after year, the cycle never ended. It was great. One thing is for certain, I could see a lot farther into the water.

*“You could see through the water like this?”*

sandy bottom of the sound. I used to bounce sinkers off them with my fishing line. This was discouraging in the least to a kid trying to bring home a catch. (I found out when they feed on shrimp, you can forget the worms.) I then noticed that a new shiny lead sinker would attract the flounder, I could see this in about 8 foot deep water. I soon perfected this strategy in the form of a large stainless steel serving spoon with a drilled hole in the handle. I would use my fishing pole to cast it out and retrieve it slowly along the bottom. The flashing of the spoon attracted many flounder – sometimes as many as ten. The largest fish were always closest to the spoon. Two ten-foot sections

I had used that clarity to my advantage. I noticed early in the morning that I could see the outline of flounder on the

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of 3/4-inch pipe with an eel spearhead completed this new fishing method. It was very easy and soon I was selling fillet of flounder to neighbors.

But last summer, Madison was different. The water was brown and slimy. Foamy brown algae covered the surface so much so that Will and I had to splash to clear an area for the two of us to swim. We swam for a couple of minutes but soon the globs of brown made staying in the water unappealing. At waist deep, I couldn't see the bottom! Will called the water dirty. However, I told him, "No, it is just full of algae." I wanted to give my talk about eutrophication, but the educable moment was lost.

So was some of the Sound's history.

Clear water is difficult to comprehend with no basis of value or measure. For Will, it was his ability to see the seaweed. For me, it was the ability to spear fish. For others, it may be a different perspective. That is why environmental groups like Save the Sound are so important. They act to gather our perspectives for a specific cause, in this case restoring Long Island Sound. No one doubts that Long Island Sound needs some help, but organizations such as Save the Sound help bridge individual perspectives, strengthen public opinion, and transform that opinion into political action. Clear goals for a much cleaner Long Island Sound. *Let's hope so!*