



## SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

# Technical Soil Services

## Special Projects Region and NRCS Connecticut

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## USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff Attend Annual Gathering of Connecticut Shellfish Commissions

### Purpose

At the request of NRCS Connecticut, Braden Fleming, soil scientist with the Soil and Plant Science Division (SPSD) Special Projects Region, attended the annual gathering of shellfish commissions in February at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven. The event is sponsored by the Connecticut Sea Grant, UConn Extension, and Connecticut Department of Agriculture Bureau of Aquaculture. Fleming set up a table at the event with soil cores and demonstrated how to find and use the recently published Long Island Sound coastal zone soil survey product. This product allows the shellfish commission members to examine data in their areas by using this publicly available data.

### Background

The aquaculture sector contributed \$33.6 million to the State economy and supported 481 commercial jobs statewide in 2022. Connecticut ranks in the top five of all shellfish producing States and third along the Atlantic coast of the U.S. Towns assemble commissions that manage shellfish aquaculture. These commissions are responsible for managing, protecting, and conserving shellfish resources by issuing permits and establishing and enforcing regulations.

Each year, the commission members meet to discuss their successes and summarize the previous year. A variety of speakers discuss environmental factors relevant to productive aquaculture. In 2023, SPSP Special Projects Region staff attended the gathering and presented information on the Long Island Sound coastal zone soil survey project. This sparked interest among the shellfish commission members since subaqueous soils play such a key role in shellfish management, from making management decisions to identifying suitable locations for both recreational and commercial shellfishing.

The Long Island Sound coastal zone soil survey project was completed in fall 2024 (fig. 1). There had been such interest in the project at the 2023 gathering that Special Projects Region staff attended the 2025 gathering to share the final product with commission members and demonstrate how to access the data.

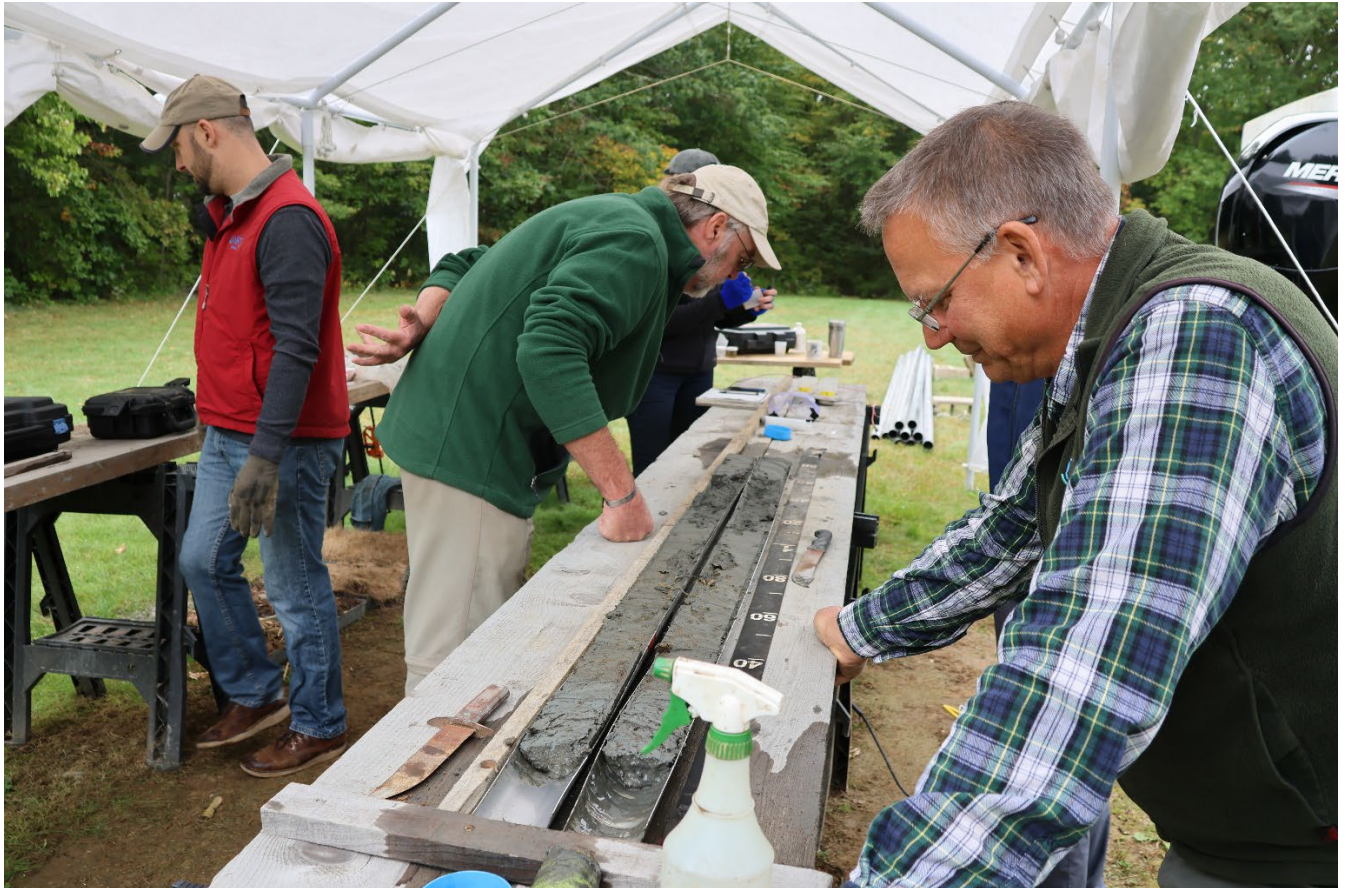


Figure 1.—NRCS staff describing subaqueous soil cores collected in the Long Island Sound (left to right: Matt Dorman, David Lindbo, and Donald Parizek).

## Key Outcomes

The commission members were extremely grateful for the demonstration, as many of them have not used Web Soil Survey in the past. The commission members who were present at the last gathering were eager to see the results of the Long Island Sound project. Many commissioners plan to use the new coastal zone soil survey information to help with projects such as shellfish restoration and aquaculture leases. The commissioners also plan to share the coastal zone soil survey information with aquaculture producers to aid with management of their shellfish beds.