

Policy Committee Meeting Minutes (DRAFT) April 9, 2019

Participants

Policy Committee: Chris Daggett (HRF, Chair), Bruce Friedman (NJDEP-alt), Javier Laureano (EPA-alt), Dennis Suszkowski (STAC), and James Tierney (NYSDEC-alt, phone)

Management Committee: Pinar Balci (NYCDEP), Rick Balla (EPA), Lisa Baron (USACE), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Marit Larson (NYC Parks, phone), Rob Pirani (HEP), Phyllis Reich (NJ Local Government), Clay Sherman (NJDEP), Peter Weppler (USACE), and Judith Weis (STAC)

Others in attendance: Peter Brandt (EPA), Matt Cosby (USACE), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC), Chris Lyon (EPA), Beth Rooney (PANYNJ), Joe Seebode (USACE), and Shino Tanikawa (CAC)

HRF/HEP Office Staff: Elizabeth Balladaras, Rosana Da Silva, Clay Hiles, James Lodge, and Isabelle Stinnette

- 1. Introductions and agenda review:** Chris Daggett chaired the meeting and the agenda was reviewed.
- 2. PANYNJ Port Master Plan and Harbor Deepening:** Beth Rooney, PANYNJ, Joe Seebode, and Matt Cosby (ACE)

Beth Rooney discussed the PANYNJ's recently prepared draft Port Master Plan 2050 which will act as a guide for port improvements at facilities in New Jersey and New York. With a 1/3 of the nation's GDP in the Harbor Estuary region, container volumes are projected to double or triple by 2050. Vessel size is anticipated to continue to grow, with cargo being carried by fewer but larger ships. Currently, 80-90% of the container volume goes through the Kill van Kull to Port Elizabeth or Port Newark. Beth indicated the plan is set into two phases, the first focusing in the +/- 15 years looking at the two wetland areas in Elizabeth and Howland Hook that will likely be lost to development to support port activities; the second focuses on the remaining 15-30 years of the plan that will look at developing additional land in Port Jersey and Port Newark. Final plan will be released Summer 2019.

Joe Seebode and Matt Cosby stated that the USACE New York District received permission to explore deepening of the navigation channels and other changes that will be required to accommodate the next generation of container ships. The USACE completed the last harbor deepening (channel depth of 50 feet) project in 2016. That 20-year old study looked at ships ranging at 6,000-6,400 TEU, while ships today have doubled in size. Navigation through the Kill van Kull poses challenges for future expansion of port activities and larger vessels. The USACE is conducting the NY-NJ Harbor Deepening Channel Improvement Feasibility Study to look at the economics and environmental opportunities of the channel system to be able to ensure safe passage by larger shipments. Scoping of problems, opportunities and constraints would be

conducted fall 2019 with the goal of formulating a focused array of alternatives. Joe noted that in 2019, the USACE will also request for \$500M to support environmental restoration (21 sites in final design and study to be completed in September/January) under the 2020 Water Resources Development Act bill for the Hudson Raritan Estuary.

Dennis Suszkowski asked how PANYNJ and USACE will tie in the land expansion and channel deepening fill. Beth stated that additional land will be needed and ~200 acres of fill would likely be the best option. Matt indicated the USACE update to the deepening study is needed to understand what depth the channels need to be to safely maximize the best economical plan. The completion of the study would enable PANYNJ to forecast shipment capacity and inform the next steps to prepare for larger vessels (expecting largest vessel to be 24,000). Dredged material has not been estimated at this time, but the USACE intends to use it for a wide array of beneficial uses. Judy Weis asked whether the USACE will be drilling more bedrock? Joe indicated that the greatest challenge due to bedrock is in the Bayonne Bridge area, but roughly the 34-mile stretch of channel is mostly sediment. The concentration of the study will focus on the Kill van Kull which poses the greatest challenges due to its turning radius and is what prompted the study with PANYNJ. Rob Pirani asked for clarification on the sequencing of the PANYNJ improvements. Beth indicated that improvements to utility infrastructure, railway, and roadways to increase efficiency would be undertaken first. The plan will be developed by July 1st and current stakeholder outreach is being completed now to be incorporated into the final plan. Fran Dunwell asked whether sea level rise will be address when evaluating railways and roadways. Beth indicated with 15% of cargo deployed by rail, any building or reconstruction will be looking at sea level rise projections. Mr Daggett noted the on-going interest on the part of HEP in both of these efforts.

3. Environmental Monitoring Plan: Rosana Da Silva, HEP

Rosana Da Silva reviewed the proposed recommendations for expanding and/or sustaining current environmental monitoring programs that have been prepared with input from all technical work groups and committees. The Environmental Monitoring Plan consists of three tools: an interactive map that inventories existing and historic efforts, a companion digital storymap, and the research and monitoring recommendations report. Rosana reviewed the research and monitoring recommendations report, specifically addressing the top 10 monitoring program recommendations.

Pinar Balci recommended that #1 and #11 be combined as one recommendation as they are equally important, complementary, and pointed that citizen science data is used to support water quality modeling activities. Jason Fagel and Bruce Friedman echoed that citizen science plays an important role though also recognized that there are different needs and variability between organizations and their objectives. Javier Laureano requested safety protocols to be explicitly written into the Citizen Science recommendation.

Chris Daggett asked for clarification on the asterisk noting the monitoring recommendation for Mid-Hudson Water Quality monitoring. Rosana clarified that the recommendation came after the prioritization process and HEP staff agreed that NYSDEC's monitoring goals for the mid-Hudson is a critical program to address an existing monitoring gap for the Hudson Raritan Estuary. Fran Dunwell requested to move the recommendation to the newly #11 in the list with a footnote.

Action: The Committee approved the Environmental Monitoring Plan subject to the changes to be made to the research and monitoring recommendations report, including joining current monitoring recommendations #1 and #11 as #1a and #1b, adding language concerning safety protocols for citizen science, and moving the Mid-Hudson Water Quality Monitoring to # 11 with a footnote.

4. Program Director Report: Rob Pirani, HEP

Rob Pirani shared the draft 2019-2020 workplan and budget with the committee. EPA is likely to be able to provide a \$600,000 budget for HEP. EPA Region 2 requested an additional \$180,000 to support the Passaic and Bronx/Harlem River Urban Waters Ambassadors. There is about \$ 40,000 in unspent funding from prior years that will be reallocated from staff to direct project support. HEP staff provided proposed actions that will be the focus of the staff time starting October 1 as well the expenditure of the unspent funding. HEP will track staff time to these specific activities.

Action: Rob will request Policy and Management Committee for their thoughts on the proposed priorities via email. Based on feedback, a draft workplan and budget will be presented to the Management Committee in in June for approval.

Rob reviewed the live Google Drive link to HEP's tracking tool that will be used to show progress towards achieving each action in the 2017-2022 Action Agenda. Per the Management Committee request, a funding category was added to the tracking tool to identify funding needed, where HEP has received funds and what other opportunities exist. Javier Laureano suggested alternative sources that could be explored for this funding. HEP has also submitted its Program Evaluation package to EPA HQ and Javier congratulated HEP for getting the report in on time and for the high level of detail included.

Action: Partners are asked to document their work in support HEP will provide notice to the Committee regarding the planned site visits with EPA HQ as part of HEP's Program Evaluation process the week of July 22nd.

5. Discussion of Communications Strategy: Rob Pirani, HEP

The Hudson River Foundation commissioned a strategic plan for communications for HRF and HEP. HRF is reviewing recommendations for staffing. Specific recommendations for HEP were reviewed by the CAC and Management Committee, 16 activities were prioritized, and the seven most important actions were called out in a draft Communications Strategy for the Policy Committee's review.

Pinar Balci highlighted one action – information exchange with partners - as something HEP is very successful in doing and asked in what way will HEP improve? Rob stated that this strategy is indeed at a core of what the HEP staff does. The strategy does identify where we can improve communication to this target audience. Chris Daggett noted that the overarching goal of the plan is to expand the audiences that HEP and HRF reaches in appropriate ways. Javier Laureano requested that EPA and the two states consider signage for the estuary and ads in Facebook to

raise is public presence. He noted that HEP would need to assess whether Facebook ads are an allowable expense.

Chris Daggett noted the importance of communications for expanding the resources available for estuary management. Dennis Suszkowski stated some of the states did put more funding towards their estuary programs. Peter Brandt stated a Long Island Sound's branding gives a sense of place which people can connect to and helps elevate their program. Joe Seebode stated the ACE's Hudson Raritan Estuary study request of \$500 million can be a test as to the visibility of the Harbor Estuary. The ACE has continuously requested funds for Liberty Island State Park, the 2nd most visited national park, and has never been granted funding. This led to the committee suggesting to consider the importance of the communications strategy to garner support of the Harbor Estuary, in particular means of highlighting the economic importance of the estuary.

Action: The Committee to provide any additional comments and suggested edits on the draft Communications Strategy to Rob Pirani by April 30, 2019. In particular, the Committee is asked to consider how to increase visibility of HEP and partner efforts on the progress being made in the Harbor Estuary, as a means of garnering additional support for implementation of the Action Agenda. Final approval will be requested later this spring.

6. Other business:

The next Policy Committee meeting will be held in November. HEP's Program Evaluation site visits will be held the week of July 22nd and members of the committee will be invited to attend.