



Policy Committee Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

November 9, 2017

Hudson River Foundation

Participants

Policy Committee: Chris Daggett (HRF, Chair), Peter Lopez (EPA), Col. Thomas Asbery (ACE), Jim Tierney (NYSDEC -alt), Angela Licata (NYC DEP), Michele Putnam (NJ DEP-alt, phone), Bernice Malione (PANYNJ), Phyllis Reich (NJ Local Government- alt, phone), Charles Warren (CAC), Dennis Suszkowski (STAC), Javier Laureano (EPA-alt),

Management Committee: Clay Sherman (NJ DEP), Sean Dixon (CAC), Rob Pirani (HEP), Lisa Baron (ACE), Peter Weppler (ACE), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Rick Balla (EPA), Phil DeGaetano (WQWG chair, phone)

Others in attendance: Peter Brandt (EPA, phone), Rick Winfield (EPA), Nesmarie Negron (EPA), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC), Joe Seebode (ACE)

HRF/HEP Office Staff: Ariane Giudicelli, Isabelle Stinnette, Sarah Lerman-Sinkoff, Sara Powell, Clay Hiles

- 1. Introductions and agenda review:** Chris Daggett chaired the meeting and welcomed two new members: Peter Lopez, the new regional Administrator at EPA and Col. Thomas Asbery. Both Mr. Lopez and Col Asbery indicated their interest in the work of HEP. Introductions were made and the agenda was reviewed.
- 2. Approval of March 31 Meeting Minutes:** The committee reviewed the minutes from the March 31 Policy Committee Meeting.

Action: The Committee approved the minutes from the March 31 PC Meeting.

- 3. The Draft Climate Vulnerability Assessment:** presentation by Rob Pirani

The process for this assessment began a year ago and resulted in the identification of 5 stressors and 17 risks. The risks were ranked based on consequence, likelihood of occurrence and spatial extent and a consequence probability table was developed. The seven key risks are identified in the powerpoint presentation.

To help address risks to water quality from inadequate infrastructure and watershed management, HEP will be focus on helping localities and utilities address stormwater management; EPA and the utilities have focused on adaptation measures at WWTPs post-Sandy. In terms of dissolved oxygen issues, HEP proposes assisting monitoring and research efforts to

address this. HEP will focus on helping communities understand the risk associated with remobilized toxic contamination. For habitat restoration, HEP proposes to address risks associated with loss of wetlands and sea level rise, ocean acidification, impacts of invasive species through research and improving monitoring. The last two risks focus on community engagement including assessing potential adverse impacts of coastal adaptation measures and the value of the estuary. HEP's ongoing work to promote natural and nature-based resiliency features will help address the first issue and on-going communications efforts will address the latter. Next steps include integration with the final Action Agenda and organizing a workshop to refine proposed actions of two- three key risks.

Discussion on the draft Climate Vulnerability Assessment included the following points:

- i. Billions are being spent by USACE and NYCDEP and HEP should consider its particular niche and how to move the ball forward with this in mind. HEP's restoration work group is addressing wetlands issues and impacts, while also having a monitoring and research role.
- ii. HEP can help move green infrastructure projects forward and could expand its efforts beyond NJ.
- iii. The USACE Harbor and Tributaries Study is a long-term resiliency plan that combines retreat and public works construction. HEP has a unique opportunity to put additional pieces into this resiliency planning through its network of partners. This could be done in collaboration with the Hudson River Estuary Program.

4. Roadmap to shared WQS: Rick Balla

EPA is currently synthesizing a comments document on DO, nutrients, pathogens and toxics. It will be circulated to the states shortly and then will be shared more broadly. A report out for the next policy committee meeting is anticipated.

Discussion on shared WQS included the following points:

- i. Although not directly related to shared WQS, EPA can bring NY and NJ together on the need for setting up marine No Discharge Zones (NDZ), as the only gaps are the Harbor including Raritan Bay. EPA should take the lead on this effort.

5. Draft Action Agenda: presentation by Rob Pirani

As a reminder, the action items are focused on priorities where HEP can add value. There are a total of 5 goals, 17 objectives and 40 actions. The draft was released at the May conference. HEP received 62 comments and is in the process of addressing these.

For water quality, an immediate action item is the joint water quality report.

The focus for habitat restoration is the implementation of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP), which includes convening a workshop focused on shorelines and shallows to address the question of how to measure the ecological value of these systems.

Increasing access and improving stewardship are the immediate focus for public access. HEP has started working with the Waterfront Alliance to survey boathouses in order to re-release the Paddling Guide.

Understanding changing sediment contamination issues through CARP 2 (Contaminant Assessment and Reduction Project) is the focus for the Maritime goal.

Community engagement is a new goal that was not previously articulated. This section will focus on the Urban Waters Partnership, citizen science and public understanding of the Harbor Estuary. HEP and its Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) are currently inventorying citizen science efforts in the Estuary which may help identify shared protocols used by various organizations. Staff will present detailed elements at the Dec 5th Management Committee meeting.

HEP received some general comments about recognizing other plans within this area. HEP will identify the plans in the final document and highlight key opportunities for coordination and collaboration.

Other comments included being sure to provide a watershed focus when appropriate, as well as clarifying the timeline and prioritization of the agenda. In the context of available capacity and resources, HEP will highlight key issues where the action on the watershed scale, in collaboration with the Hudson River Estuary Program and other watershed based initiatives.

Discussion on the draft document included the following points:

- i. HEP should pay special attention to opportunities for leveraging with universities and scientists; there is possibility for collaboration with USACE's research and development center.
- ii. Data accessibility tends to be problematic and needs to be addressed.
- iii. The Policy Committee (PC) should endorse official plans/documents where this can advance HEP's work. The revised Action Agenda will include a table highlighting compatible planning efforts. Staff will discuss how best to endorse such plans at the Management Committee meeting on Dec 5th.
- iv. Watershed thinking is encouraged in order to increase partnerships and opportunities.
- v. HEP needs a consistent and clear way to address the ecosystem and various geographies it relates to (e.g. Harbor, Hudson River estuary, Hudson–Raritan Estuary). This is something that can be addressed through HEP's communication strategy.

Action: HEP is requesting formal comments from the PC by November 23rd

Action: Additional discussion will take place at the MC meeting on December 5th followed by the redrafting of the Action Agenda.

6. Funding options update: Rob Pirani and Chris Zeppie

The options on funding report was circulated which included possible funding sources to help support program activities. A committee chaired by Chuck Warren helped refine the report. The report is submitted to HEP for consideration; The Policy Committee is not being asked to accept the report or its recommendations.

Action: Please comment on the proposed funding alternatives.

7. Progress on the State of the Estuary Report: Isabelle Stinnette

This document will report out on the environmental health of our region. The list of indicators is in the process of being finalized. Indicators with good quality data will go into the State of the Estuary (SOE) report, while indicators lacking rigorous data will be included in the Environmental Monitoring Plan (EMP).

The Science and Technology Advisory Committee (STAC) has been reconvened and now includes more than 25 members from 12 universities and seven agencies. They were asked to review the list of indicators provided with the meeting materials. They provided good feedback while some have offered to assist with data analysis. For data analysis, trends will be reviewed as far back as possible where it makes sense.

Discussion included the following points:

- i. HEP success will depend on agency cooperation in terms of data sharing. PC support for this effort is critical.

Action: HEP will share the list of STAC members with the Management Committee. The revised draft list of indicators will be presented to the Management Committee for approval.

8. Other business:

The next Policy Committee meetings will be held in April and November 2018.