Water Quality Work Group Meeting
New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program
January 17 2017 10:30 AM –1:00 PM
Location: Hudson River Foundation

Minutes

Attendees:

Phil DeGaetano, WQWG Chair; Rick Winfield, USEPA; Rosella O'Connor, USEPA: Jason Fagel, NYSDEC; Clay Sherman, NJDEP; Evelyn Powers, IEC; Marzooq Al-Ebus, NJDEP; Sean Dixon, Riverkeeper, CAC Co-Chair (NY); Keith Mahoney, NYCDEP; Michele Langa, NYNJ Baykeeper; Dan Van Abs, Rutgers/Jersey Water Works; Judith Weis, Rutgers, STAC Co-Chair; Rob Pirani, NYNJ HEP / HRF; Mick DeGraeve, Great Lakes Environmental Center (GLEC)/NJHDG; Susan Rosenwinkel, NJDEP; Rob Buchanan, NYC Water Trail Association; Stan Stephansen, USEPA; Maria Colon, Noreen Gallagher, Bianca Hernandez. NYCDOHMH; Mark Tedesco, LISS; Beau Benheim, NYC DEP; Isabelle Stinette, NYNJHEP; Marco Alebus, NJ DEP; Nancy Kempel, NJ DEP; Biswarup Guha, NJ DEP; Francisco J. Artigas, , Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Overview of Agenda (Phil Degaetano - 15 min.)

   Phil DeGaetano noted that Ariane Giudecelli the water quality manager for HEP had steped down. Rob Pirani stated that HRF had posted the job and would be reviewing resumes in February with the goal of having someone on board.

   Phil reviewed the agenda and the meetings underlying goal of helping coordinate monitoring plans, data sharing and support of on going monitoring efforts underway in the Harbor and specifically at HEP and IEC. This includes the HEP Environmental Monitoring Plan and State of the Estuary, the work of IEC and their shared monitoring work group, and the ongoing monitoring work undertaken by the agencies and organizations that make up the WQWG.

   Rob Pirani clarified the distinction between the members of the WQWG and the Shared Waterways Monitoring Work Group, noting that the WQWG was primarily focused on the users of the data including a variety of agency managers, the IEC Work Group was focused more on the producers of the data.

2. State of the Estuary Report and Environmental Monitoring Plan (Isabelle Stinnette - 25 min.)

   Isabelle Stinnette provided an overview of HEP's State of the Estuary and Environmental Monitoring Plan, including content, relationship, and timeline for production (see PPT for details). Comments/questions from the group (and responses from HEP) included the following:

   - Will there be a standard protocol and requirements for presenting the data and metadata? (yes)
   - Will data that has not gone through a QAQC process be included? (No)
   - The water quality data should include information from the NYC DEP including the Harbor Survey, LTCP characterization studies, JB watershed plan

- NYC DEP (Beau) and NJHDG (Mick) noted their interest in developing a shared portal for data. (The water quality report could be a vehicle for this and HEP will follow up)
- Will the State of the Estuary indicate desired water quality conditions? (No, but to the degree there are standards, that information will be conveyed in the text)

Additional comments are due by February 1.

3. IEC Regional Monitoring Program Matrix (HEP Action Item WQ-B) (Evelyn Powers - 25 min.)

Evelyn reviewed the monitoring program matrix that IEC has worked with partners from the shared waterways monitoring work group to produce (see PPT for details). The matrix is a living document that identifies ongoing water quality monitoring efforts in the Harbor and Long Island Sound. IEC uses the information as a basis for communicating with the Monitoring Work Group and to help them determine how best to use the 106 monitoring funds. The Montitoring work group will meet once a year or so to help keep the document fresh. HEP is helping assemble the data and will use the same information in the Monitoring Plan.

Comments and (responses) included:

- The matrix notes QAQC and whether a certified lab was utilized
- It will note whether the data is available on STORET
- Hyperlinks could help guide people directly to the data

4. Proposed Analyses for State of the Estuary Water Quality Parameters (Isabelle Stinnette - 45 min.)

Isabelle reviewed the proposed analyses (See PPT for details)

Comments were the following:

- The impacts of sporadic discharges from CSOs are difficult to assess as impacts are downstream, need to coordinate with tidal cycle but could be an important consideration for smaller tribs such as the Bronx River
- Sediment oxygen is an important consideration for oxygen
- Consider using models including NYC DEP/NJHDG collaboration to ID oxygen hotspots in shared waterways. Look at overview conducted by TMDL work groups
- Use comparable data sets (eg common sites from 2003 as opposed to all historic records)
- Convey historic progress. Consolidate water quality data by 10 year increments to show general trends. INlcude timeline to show contribution of specific decisions
- Use heat maps to show hotspots for poor water quality
- Aggregate water quality data by subbasins. Show data in individual sites with the subbasins to convey remaining challenges
- Who is the audience for this work? Talk to educators about what is needed.
- Entero – EPA recommends using 30 day (as opposed to 120 day)
- Use max values

- Need to address / illustrate the difference between mid channel and shoreline estimates
- Include temperature on a seasonal or monthly basis, not annual, to show impacts and communicate climate change issues. Winter changes may be more significant than summer (?).
- Are we comparing to criteria / standards – include explanatory notes
- Consider where NY bight data would be appropriate to include
- Report should convey both long terms trends as well as current challenges
- Use median values along with 95/5 ranges
- CSO discharges not in current list – needs to be updated
- Consistent methology for contaminants is a critical focus.
- Include PFOA and PFOS

5. Update on State Water Use Designations and Standards (Action Item WQ-A-2) (Rick Winfield - 10 min.)

Rick noted that EPA is working with the states on this. Current litigation may be settled in the next few weeks. New administration in NJ is just starting. Progress will resume soon, ideally in the next few weeks.

6. Update on Long Island Sound Modeling (Mark Tedesco – 30 minutes)

Mark provided an update on the modeling efforts in the Sound (see ppt for details). Commenters noted that there was a need to identify common parameters across all the water bodies. For example, NYC DEP is working with NJHDG on enhancing the spatial resolution of their pathogen models and it would be helpful to include NJHDG and NJ DEP in the conversations going forward.