

# Water Quality Work Group Meeting

December 19, 2018

Location: Hudson River Foundation

## Minutes

Attendees: Anand Kumaraswamy (NYCDEP), Biswarup Guha (NJDEP), Brett Branco (Brooklyn College), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Greg Alber (NJHDG), Isabelle Stinnette (HEP), Judith Weis (STAC), Keith Mahoney (NYCDEP), Lisa Congiu, Marco Al-Ebus (NJDEP), Mick DeGraeve (NJHDG), Phil DeGaetano (WQWG Chair), Rick Winfield (EPA), Rob Buchanan (NYCWTA), Rob Pirani, Rosana Da Silva (HEP), Rosella O'Connor (EPA), Shino Tanikawa (NYC SWIM)

By Phone: Brent Gaylord (EPA), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Maria Colon (NYCDOHMH), and Stan Stephansen (EPA)

Next Meeting: February or March 2019, date TBD

### 1. **Welcome, Introductions and Overview of Agenda**

Phil DeGaetano opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda.

### 2. **Water Quality Work Group 2019 Chair/Co-Chair Succession (WQ-A-1)**

Phil DeGaetano announced the nominations of Biswarup (Roop) Guha and Dr. Brett Branco to serve as co-chairs beginning in 2019, representing both NJ and NY. The Management Committee approved the nominations and Phil will assist with the transition of the co-chairs during the next meeting in 2019. Rosana Da Silva and Rob Pirani thanked Phil for his support and service to HEP and the Water Quality Work Group.

### 3. **Communication of LTCPs, Beach Advisories, and Next Steps for the Work Group (WQ-B-1,4)**

A discussion, led by Rob Pirani, focused on framing the opportunities and challenges the Water Quality Work Group would like to tackle as part of 2019 to improve the state of water quality in the region. The following themes were discussed as areas of interest:

- Pathogens: Invite NJ and NYC permittees to present on the status of LTCP developments and the anticipated benefits to the harbor.
- Beach Advisories: Engage NYCDOHMH to become active participants in the Water Quality Work Group and present on their current advisory programs as it relates to public access points and active recreation in the region.
- Shared Waterways Action Plan: With NJ's LTCPs due in 2020 and NYC's citywide LTCP also extended to 2020, it is important to address how these investments will address meeting the Clean Water Act goals of fishable, swimmable waters. How each state is addressing EPA's 2012 Recreational Criteria will also affect the LTCP process.
- Use Attainability Analysis (UAA): With current modeling efforts (refined resolutions) for smaller waterbodies and modeling under LTCP, the review of spatial and temporal extents would be beneficial in revisiting a UAA or road map. This would assist in identifying the highest attainable use of waterbodies and hotspots where waterbodies may need to be

downgraded to reflect the designated use of the waterbodies and protect the public. This concept should consider EPA regulations, but recognize this as a long-term goal. Consider recreational attainment by identifying the maximum length of swimmable river mile days.

- Model Reviews: NJDEP and NYCDEP are considering the maximum length of swimmable river mile days or a comparable metric as part of the LTCP alternative analysis. EPA is suggested to lead discussions with NJDEP and NYSDEC to review UAA process/approach in utilizing improved models developed under the LTCP.
- CSO Advisories: Notification of real-time CSO alerts is important to engage the public and improve understanding of water quality. NJDEP and NYCDEP anticipate the spatial and temporal assessment of the LTCP models will be key elements to improve the advisories to engage the public.

**Action:**

- (1) Rosana Da Silva and the co-chairs will generate a proposed 2019 work plan for the Water Quality Work Group to address the challenges and opportunities on LTCP, Water Quality/Fish Advisories, and proposed modeling.
- (2) Cornell University's Urban Planning students will be presenting tomorrow (12/20/2018) at 3 PM, the preliminary opportunities and challenges in developing a harbor-bathing beach.

**4. Preliminary Evaluation of the Physical Influences of Storm Surge Barriers (WQ-E-1)**

Rob Pirani provided an update on the preliminary evaluation of storm surge barriers in the Harbor Estuary proposed by USACE (NYNJHATs); a study funded by HEP that was complete as part of HEP's Climate Change report, which identified 17 risks in the Harbor Estuary. According to the models, barriers with open gates can reduce tidal ranges, currents and mixing through the rest of the estuary with greater salinity intrusion due to stronger stratifications. Dr. Orton received a NOAA grant to continue this study and perhaps conduct an evaluation on the proposed smaller barriers. Keith Mahoney stated NYCDEP has worked with the USACE to explore the Jamaica Bay proposed barrier: <http://structuresofcoastalresilience.org/locations/jamaica-bay-ny/>. HRF also received several proposals around this issue and Phil DeGaetano recommended a holistic approach to include water quality improvements as part of implemented solutions.

**Action:**

- (1) To view the recorded seminar and access the complete study, please visit: <https://www.hudsonriver.org/article/fall-2018-ames-seminar-orton-ralston>

**5. Environmental Monitoring Plan Update (WQ-E-2)**

Rosana Da Silva reviewed the status of the three tools that make up the environmental monitoring plan: interactive map, storymap, and monitoring recommendations report. Out of the 51 indicators of importance, Rosana discussed the Water Quality indicator gaps and future recommendations for input by the work group. The group also suggested separating monitoring programs and research-related recommendations within the report as additional research might be needed to inform the establishment of monitoring programs. Connections to the Long Island Sound monitoring, LTCPs, and CARP are also important factors to connect.

**Action:**

- (1) All Water Quality Work Group members are welcomed to submitted comments on the presentation until February 15, 2019.
- (2) Rosana will be sending a survey for monitoring recommendation priorities by February to be addressed in the Monitoring Recommendations report.

**6. Long Island Sound Nitrogen Endpoints (WQ-C-2)**

Phil DeGaetano shared LIS's monitoring network has been evaluating indicators for dissolved oxygen and nitrogen endpoints. A study has been released that looks at utilizing eel grass as an endpoint to enhance the predictability of their model for dissolved oxygen. Improved communication and understanding of methods/criteria between LIS and HEP would benefit the region. Rosella O'Connor highlighted the study is part of an action plan to understand TMDL deficits and identify whether targets have been met, specifically looking the main stem and the embayments. NY state and CT are also conducting similar studies in 38 embayments.

**Action:**

- (1) To review the study, please visit: <http://longislandsoundstudy.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Summary-of-Establishing-Nitrogen-Endpoints-for-Three-Long-Island-Sound-Watershed-Groupings.pdf>
- (2) A future presentation can be requested from the Long Island Sound to the work group

**7. Harbor-wide Water Quality Report (WQ-D-1)**

Rosana Da Silva outlined the concerns raised by the subcommittee and proposed a two tiered structure to the report. the first tier would discuss water quality parameters harbor-wide (without focusing on sampling points) indicating percentage of samples that exceed EPA's 2012 Recreational Criteria for pathogens and the 2000 Dissolved Oxygen criteria. This tier will focus on long term investments needed to address challenges and attain fishable, swimmable waters. The second tier of the report will focus on regional waterbody summaries that will act as standalone "fact sheets." In this tier, the waterbodies can be assessed in each state's standards and discuss the opportunities for improvements (i.e. CSO permits, MS4 permits, superfund), the challenges (i.e., legacy toxics) and investment gains (i.e., advisories to protect public health, improved models). Overall, the group agree the proposed outline is the right path forward and recommends the subcommittee to provide final feedback and approval. It was affirmed that the target audience for the report is the public and suggest engaging the CAC to confirm appropriate direction.

**Action:**

- (1) Water Quality Work Group agreed the proposed path forward is acceptable
- (2) Rosana to share an updated outline to the Water Quality Work Group and Subcommittee for final approval prior to moving forward with the report.