

## Management Committee Meeting Minutes

March 4, 2019 (DRAFT)

Conference Call

### Participants

#### **Management Committee:**

Rob Pirani (HEP), Ann Fraioli (NY Educator), Ursula Howson (NOAA), Douglas Adamo (USDOJ), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Dana Mecomber (PANYNJ), Dennis Suszkowski (STAC), Clay Sherman (NJDEP), Peter Brandt (EPA), Lisa Baron (RWG Chair/USACE), Marit Larson (RWG Chair/NYS Parks), Brett Branco (WQWG Chair/CUNY), Biswarup Guha (WQWG Chair/NJDEP), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Peter Weppler (USACE), Dana Mecomber (PANYNJ), Rick Balla (EPA)

**Others in attendance:** Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC/HREP), Rick Winfield (EPA), Greg Alber (NJHDG), Shino Tanikawa (CAC/NYC SWIM Coalition), and Nesmaire Negron

**HRF/HEP Office Staff:** Rosana Da Silva, Isabelle Stinnette, Elizabeth Balladares

### Minutes

#### **1. Review and approval of minutes of December 12, 2018 Meeting**

Rob Pirani reviewed the December 12<sup>th</sup> draft minutes. The committee approved the minutes.

#### **2. Review of Action Agenda Tracking Tool**

Rob Pirani presented on the revised tracking tool, now available on google drive at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1a04ZdiuSxuuwGFyFV1sAcVZaatE7DfNUmEApZwQs61/edit?usp=sharing>. This tracking tool is how we will be tracking the process of the 2017-2022 Action Agenda. As requested, there is a section for "Related Partner Activity" for partners to incorporate activities that HEP is involved in and advances the Action Agenda goals. This format will be used in our 5 year program evaluation and we will continue to use for workplans going forward. This tool will be revisited once per year to check in on the progress on our 17 objectives and 40 actions.

**Action:** Committee to provide input into the document by March 29th

#### **3. Wetland Migration Pathways and Aquatic Connectivity Assessment**

Isabelle Stinnette discussed two research initiatives that seek to address climate adaptation and habitat restoration objectives. The first project focuses on stream crossing and culvert assessments in NJ to identify good retrofits to improved habitat. This project is building off NYSDEC work that HEP has been engaged in. A pilot project will be applied into NJ once grant funding is secured. Isabelle will be incorporating terrestrial connectivity into the scope that was shared with NJDEP for comments and recommendations of local organizations. Shino Tanikawa suggested to check with the local Soil Conservation District once a watershed has been identified

for the project scope. The second project was a report completed by Blair Environmental for Protecting Wetland Migration Pathways. NJ Bay Shore and Raritan Bay consists of the highest opportunities for wetland migration pathways. The Restoration Work Group will prioritize the recommendations and a clear need to increase awareness and education on wetland migration pathways was identified. HEP is also exploring other options to increase awareness through webinars, newsletters, or fact sheets. Ursula Howson offered to further discuss the regulatory process with Isabelle as it relates to wetland conservation recommendations.

**Action:** Identify possible partners and funding opportunities for the stream crossing and culvert assessments in NJ. HEP to discuss wetland conservation regulatory process with NOAA to support wetland migration pathways.

**4. Update on Harbor-wide Water Quality Report**

Rosana Da Silva shared the approved goals and outline of the harbor-wide water quality report and the current timeline for its preparation. The subcommittee of the Water Quality Work Group (WQWG) has been formed and actively engaged in the process of the report. The subcommittee and the WQWG have agreed upon the draft outline and HEP has proceed to contract GLEC to conduct the data analysis portion of the report. Rosana shared regional waterbodies for consideration as fact sheets for the report (limited to 10) which will be gathering input from the CAC later this week. Fran Dunwell suggested if the report's scope could include the mid-Hudson River (Troy Dam to the Tappan Zee) as a fact sheet would be great. Fran and Jason Fagel will be regrouping on March 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss monitoring along the Hudson and can review the available data. Rosana will regroup with Fran and Jason to further discuss the possibility of a mid-Hudson River fact sheet and its connection to the shared waters report. Lisa Baron suggested that when a final list of regional waterbodies is completed that there be a connection to the CRP waterbodies.

**Action:** Committee to provide input on regional waterbodies by March 8th

**5. Review of Environmental Monitoring Recommendations**

A draft recommendations report for expanding and/or sustaining current environmental monitoring programs has been prepared with input from the STAC, HEP Work Groups, and the CAC. Rosana Da Silva reviewed the process of how recommendations were identified and presented the results of monitoring program surveys to prioritize recommendations. The proposed recommendations are separated in two parts: the first highlighting the top 10 monitoring program recommendations and the additional 9 program recommendations identified; the second part highlights the science and research needs per HEP goal. The proposed recommendations were provided for review and comments by Management Committee.

**Action:** Comments and approval requested by March 18<sup>th</sup>

**6. Review of Communications Findings**

HRF commissioned a strategic plan for communications for HRF and HEP. Rob Pirani shared the findings and organized the recommendations in three buckets: Management & Coordination; Media & Materials; and Messenger/Audience. A menti.com survey was shared with the

Management Committee and will stay open till the end of the week. The survey is to help us identify what our top priorities should be as we draft our communications strategy. Since we are going through our 5 year program review, HEP dedicated a total of \$100,000 towards communication and this does not include the funds provided by HRF. As the survey progress, members of the committee identified that those recommendations rated low should be perceived as something that HEP does well and those that are being rated higher are communication strategies that we could improve on. Peter Wepler agreed that the quality and access of materials from HEP are great but keeping track of who we interact with and identify a key set of people we may be missing would be an important task to consider. Shino Tanikawa and Ann Fraioli suggested that in order to increase capacity to raise more diverse sources, it would be helpful to have an elevator pitch so that the committee can be equipped to elevate HEP, our partners, and the work we do. Based on this input and input from the CAC, we will develop a HEP specific communications strategy to be shared with the Policy Committee and also inform investments from HRF.

**Action:** [Following the meeting Draft Plan was presented to Policy Committee and Management Committee by email and comments requested by April 30<sup>th</sup> ]

#### 7. **Updates from Work Groups and Committee Chairs**

The chairs of the Water Quality, Restoration, Public Access Work Groups and the Citizen Advisory Committee highlighted progress on HEP priorities and upcoming activities.

- **Public Access Work Group:** Maggie Flanagan was unable to join the meeting and Rob Pirani provided an updated on her behalf. Waterfront Alliance has started up three task forces, one being a Public Access Task Force. Since the task force consists of the same people in the work group, the two groups will be combined for a year. The focus of the task force will be on increasing public access in high need communities, directly related to HEP's public access goal. Another focus of the group is how to engage other audiences that may not be actively using the waterfront. The first meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> and three additional meetings are scheduled for the year. Waterfront Alliance will then draft a white paper where the Public Access Work Group take on to inform actions to take in the future.
- **CAC:** Shino Tanikawa shared that the CAC surveyed civic organizations to assess the hardships and challenges of citizen science programs. A challenge identified focused on the recruitment and retention of volunteers in the programs. Data visualization, analysis, and QAPP development were also high on the list of needs. The Citizen Science committee of the CAC led a workshop at the November Conference that provided feedback that the CAC will be taking action later this year. Training and protocol-specific workshops were also discussed as future work for the CAC. The CAC will continue to work with HEP on several Action Agenda goals, specifically on informing on the LTCPs, public access, and restoration efforts.
- **Restoration Work Group:** Lisa Baron updated the group of the progress that has been ongoing to achieve the Estuary's Target Ecosystem Characteristics (TAC). A list of activities and projects that have been underway was shared and the value of

coordinating the use/application of all the projects that relate to the CRP. The other actions of focus by the work group is on improving quality and success of habitat restoration, the support of restoration monitoring, and advance the understanding and incorporation of climate change impacts in habitat restoration.

- Water Quality Work Group: Rosana Da Silva, on behalf of the two chairs Roop and Brett, provided an update on topics of high priority for the group: (1) US EPA's Short-term Action Plan on Consistent WQ Standards was hoped to have been accomplished by EPA and the two states last year. (2) Long Island Sound Comprehensive Integrated Model Framework Study is important to continue supporting this effort to include the harbor and encourage engaging partners like the Port Authority. (3) Near-shore pathogen monitoring, as indicated in the Environmental Monitoring Plan, is a high priority and future efforts of the WQWG will focus to support efforts.

#### 8. Other Updates

Rutgers University is hosting a two-day Microplastics Conference at the end of the month. The conference registration is online for those that are interested: <https://cues.rutgers.edu/microplastics-conference-2019.html>