



Management Committee Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2020 Final

Hudson River Foundation – Remote Meeting

Participants

Management Committee: Rick Balla (EPA), Lisa Baron (USACE, RWG co-chair), Brett Branco (CUNY, WQWG co-chair), Liz Butler (EPA), Chris Daggett (Policy Committee Chair), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Margaret Flanagan (Waterfront Alliance), Karen Greene (NOAA), Roop Guha (NJDEP, WQWG co-chair), Paul Higgins (PANYNJ), Jim Lodge (HRF, STAC co-chair), Lingard Knutson (EPA), Jessie Murray (?), Rob Pirani (HEP), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Patti Rafferty (NPS), Clay Sherman (NJDEP), Melissa Sinisgalli (NJHDG/PVSC, by phone), Shino Tanikawa (NYC SWIM, CAC), Peter Weppler (USACE), Judith Weis (Rutgers, STAC co-chair), Cathy Yudas (NJ Educator), and Anne Rosenblatt (EPA)

HRF/HEP Office Staff: Helena Andreyko, Elizabeth Balladares, Rosana Da Silva, Clay Hiles, Isabelle Stinnette

Minutes

1. Welcome and agenda review

Rob Pirani reviewed the agenda.

2. New Members

Rob Pirani introduced a new member for approval to join the Management Committee. Cathy Yuhas, from the Hudson County Environmental Science Academy (and former HEP staff person!), has agreed to serve as the New Jersey Educator on the Management Committee. Staff continues to identify possible candidates for the Environmental Justice seats which are still vacant.

Action: Cathy Yudas was approved to join the Management Committee, motioned by Rick Balla and seconded by Peter Weppler. Rob will continue to follow up with members and others on filling empty seats.

3. Review and approval of minutes of December 2019 Meeting

Rob Pirani reviewed the December minutes.

Action: December 2019 minutes were approved, motioned by Patti Rafferty and seconded by Peter Weppler.

4. EPA Five Year Program Evaluation

Rob Pirani shared that EPA has determined that HEP is making significant progress in our efforts and has renewed our funding for five more years. They also identified several key challenges, including water quality standards, communications, and funding.

- In terms of water quality, we continue as a region to work towards implementing the Long Term Control Plans (LTCPs) and publishing a Harbor-wide Water Quality report that already seeks to improve public understanding of water quality improvements and meaning. Going forward, the report along with other materials HEP is working on can be the foundation to revisiting shared standards and Use Attainability Analysis (UAA) in addressing EPA's recommendations.
- Communications is another area that HEP can improve; we are working on finalizing our shared communications plan with the Foundation and creating a HEP "case statement" as part of the CCMP revision.
- Rob shared HEP's current initiatives for securing funding for the Action Agenda implementation for committee comment. These include opportunities for federal and state funding (such as draft legislation from Congressmen Tonko (NY), the HRE_CRP Feasibility Study and Gov. Cuomo's proposed environmental bond act). We will continue to highlight grants/partner matches in the tracking table and our workplans.

Rick Balla thanked HEP staff for the tremendous effort into the entire program evaluation process and truly highlighting the great work that is happening in the estuary. EPA looks forward to working with HEP and the committee in addressing the challenges them.

5. Raritan Bay No Discharge Zone Update

Rosana Da Silva shared the final report on the No Discharge Zone stakeholder feedback process that HEP has been working on with NYSDEC, NJDEP, and EPA. Jason Fagel stated that the states are seeking to update the draft NEIWPC petition (2016) which would be required prior to submitting a request for action to EPA. Jason stated that NYSDEC is determining whether an intern program could complete updating the pumpout to vessel ratio over the summer.

Action: The final report and its released was approved, motioned by Jason Fagel and seconded by Shino Tanikawa.

6. Update on Harbor-wide Water Quality Report

Rosana Da Silva provided an overview on the status of the report where we are seeking to release the first public draft at the end of April. Rosana reviewed the top five comments and the steps that HEP has taken to address those comments. The document, as mentioned in the Program Evaluation letter, will be a cornerstone document to share how close we are to fishable swimmable/fishable and the next steps that as an estuary we need to move forward.

Action: A draft public-facing report will be prepared for the Management Committee and Water Quality Work Group to provide comments in April via email.

7. Proposed FY 2021 Workplan

Robert Pirani reviewed the draft FY 2021 (October 1, 2020-September 30, 2021) workplan. The workplan is a new format that clarifies proposed elements and tracking of progress to the 2017-2022 Action Agenda. The workplan calls for \$662,500 of expenditures for new funds anticipated

October 1, 2020. In Water Quality, we are looking to continue work in pathogens and dissolved oxygen where IEC has dedicated their funds to help support efforts. In addition, we are looking to build upon previous work in Perth Amboy on green infrastructure. In Habitat and Ecological Health, we are focusing on increasing investment of restoration projects and improving the CRP map to make it more useful. We will continue culvert monitoring and expand work with the HRPT on shallow and shorelines restoration projects. In Public Access and Stewardship, we will continue to support City of Water Day (scheduled for July 11th) by providing small grants to neighborhood stewards and increasing sea level rise awareness. We are also looking to update the Paddling Guide (now 10 years old), a timely effort that will benefit from the Harbor-wide Water Quality Report. In Maritime Activities, HRF will be continuing work on CARP II, a project sponsored by DOT. Under Community Engagement, we will continue support of the UFWP Ambassador positions, education, and communication efforts. The Policy Committee will be asked for approval at the May 5th meeting. Anne Rosenblatt helped HEP apply for additional Trash Free Waters funding for work in the Bronx River. EPA has also submitted a request for Urban Waters Partnership funds. If approved, these will be added to the workplan. Rick Balla thanked HEP staff for working on the draft workplan and for the support that partners are providing to advance goals in matching funds and time.

Action: Written comments especially RE: recognition of partner activities are welcomed and requested by April 10. Staff will be submitting final draft to the Policy Committee for review and approval at the May 5th meeting.

8. State of the Hudson River

Isabelle Stinnette updated the Committee on HEP's collaboration with the New York State Hudson River Estuary Program to prepare a State of the Hudson Report. This is a companion to HEP's State of the Estuary document. Isabelle shared some draft visuals. The full report for the Management Committee will likely be sent via email in April. Historical data provided additional context and led to additional edits and changes to the draft that the team is currently working through. NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program aim to approve and release the report by May. Fran Dunwell stated how pleased she has been working with HEP on this report. Rob Pirani shared Fran's comment and is looking forward to further collaborating with the Hudson River Estuary Program in a shared 2025 State of the Estuary.

Action: The final draft public-facing report will be sent to the Management Committee via email for comments in April.

9. Hudson Raritan Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Plan Feasibility Study

Lisa Baron shared that the final report for 20 restoration projects on 621 acres throughout the estuary has been submitted and the district approved its release for State and Agency (S&A) review without changes. The report proposes \$408M in federal funding. It is under review by state agencies with comments due April 15th. Pending approval from the Chief of the USACE anticipated this Spring, authorization could be included in the next WRDA Bill, which could happen in 2020. A draft "Placemat" summarizes the report and proposed restoration projects,

including the known stressors, general benefits and details on the 20 restoration sites. Rob Pirani highlighted this effort as a high priority for HEP and partners and asked how best can we support USACE? Lisa suggested any engagement with elected officials would be of great support. Col. Asbery would be pleased to make the announcement of the projects at the Policy Committee on May 5th. Maggie Flanagan asked if resiliency co-benefits are displayed and/or calibrated in the report. Lisa clarified that eco-benefit values from certified functional assessment models are used to quantify habitat units, but within Appendix C – Engineering Appendix includes a relative sea level change (RSLC) analysis to show how these projects will perform under low, intermediate and high sea level curves over the 50 year period. The USACE HQ was impressed with this RSLC work and plan to use this report as a national model. Rick Balla congratulated the USACE on their hard work to get to this stage. Lisa also provided an update on the effort to secure approval of projects included in the Hudson River Habitat Restoration Feasibility Study which is planned for submittal to HQ USACE in late June 2020.

Action: Lisa will share an email to the Management Committee with details of where to access the final HRE Feasibility Study report. Please send feedback and/or recommendations to the summary “Placemat” are welcomed by April 15. Rob will work with HEP partners to show support for the report’s recommendations by the April 15 deadline

10. HEP Communication on Comprehensive Restoration Projects

Following up on MC recommendation from the December meeting on HEP comments and public testimony, Rob Pirani shared a drafted standard written response to use when asked to weigh in on permit requests and other decisions concerning sites identified in the Hudson-Raritan Estuary Comprehensive Restoration Plan. The intent is to be able to quickly let decision makers know that the area has been identified as important by HEP and the Restoration Work Group and the reasons why. Shino Tanikawa asked to clarify who typically asks for this kind of support? Rob indicated that these requests typical come a few times over the year from municipalities, agencies, civic groups, and researchers/scientists requesting grant funding.

Action: Draft letter approved, motioned by Shino Tanikawa and seconded by Patti Rafferty.

11. Updates from Work Groups and Committee Chairs

- Water Quality Work Group: The Continuous Monitoring Subcommittee will be meeting remotely next week to discuss sites for a new sonde. Presentations on CARP II and microbial source tracking led to discussions on further support for REMAP and potential funding to extend microbial source tracking in the Passaic River by USGS and PVSC.
- Restoration Work Group: Harbor Herons conference was held and information is now available online. The RWG is working on prioritizing the Action Agenda. Completed projects and research results were shared on Aquatic Connectivity and Eel grass in Sunset Park.

- Public Access Work Group: Reconvening on April 3rd and looking to review the recommendations from HEP's January workshop on community stewardship.
- Citizen Advisory Committee/Urban Waters Federal Partnerships: CAC was focused on a citizen science workshop which now is postponed to a later date. UWFP went out with USGS and PVSC to select sites along the Second and Third River for microbial source tracking. Joe Reynolds provided an update on seal monitoring and it was a great presentation.

12. Partner Updates

- Rob Pirani let the committee know about a January workshop developed by Liz Butler and Liz Balladares and the Lower Passaic Urban Waters Partnership.
- Rob Pirani, Isabelle Stinnette, and Jim Lodge are working with Battery Park City Authority on shallow shoreline restoration efforts to include science behind their coastal resiliency work with AECOM.
- Peter Weppler announced that the May 5th PC meeting will be Col. Asbery's last meeting.