

Minutes (DRAFT)

Management Committee Meeting

New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program

June 10 1:30 – 3:30 PM VIA ZOOM

Participants

Lingard Knutson, Melissa Sinisgalli, Brett Branco, Cathy Yuhas, Hugh Carola, Jason Fagel, Shino, Dan Rearick, Tom Laustsen, Clay Sherman, Judith Weis, Pinar Balci, Rick Balla, Peter Weppler, Evelyn Powers, Elizabeth Butler, Jessie Murray, Lisa Baron, Fran Dunwell, Margaret Flanagan, Congiu, Marit Larson, Carrie Roble, Pam Reilly, Fran Dunwell, Patti Rafferty, Rob Pirani

HRF/HEP Office Staff and Guests: Jim Lodge, Elizabeth Balladares, Rosana Da Silva, Jonathan Kramer, Sara Powell, Isabelle Stinnette, Clay Hiles, Chris Daggett,

Minutes

1. Welcome and agenda review

Rob Pirani welcomed the committee and reviewed the agenda.

2. Review and approval of minutes of March 11 2021 Meeting

Rob Pirani reviewed the March minutes.

Action: March 2021 minutes were approved, motioned by Rick Balla and seconded by Jason Fagel.

3. FY 2021-2022 HEP Workplan update

Rob provided a few updates regarding the FY 2021-2022 Workplan. It was approved by the Policy Committee in April and the final draft has been submitted to EPA for processing. Only change from March is that EPA secured an additional \$70k for Passaic UWFP. Thanks to Lingard, Rick, Liz Butler, Irene Purdy and everyone at EPA for their help.

Rob also shared a few other budget updates regarding several outstanding grant applications, most notably, Liz Balladares has been working with USGS & NPS to put together an application to support water quality monitoring work around Great Falls in Paterson. Rosana is also waiting to hear back about an application to support marine debris removal in Weehawken Cove in Hoboken. Looking forward: some good news is that the President's budget that was submitted to Congress did include funding for the NEP – it was not initially zeroed out as had been done in the previous administration. Through ANEP & with help of CAC partners, held meetings over the past few months to communicate to members of Congress a desire for more \$ per NEP (ask was \$1 million/NEP location).

4. Update: HEP role on Standards and Water Quality Report

Rob provided an update on the recent work to update the language for AA item (WQ-A-2-A) regarding advancing consistent standards appropriate for Estuary's waters. Following the PC meeting in April, and working with key partners, HEP drafted a revised version to clarify intent and role of HEP. PC Chair Chris Daggett and Walter Mugdan from EPA submitted a memo to Policy Committee for review June 10. Have requested comments from Policy Committee by 6/30, then the Water Quality Workgroup will discuss at their August 10 meeting. Proposed changes and a draft workplan that describes tasks, deliverables, costs, etc. will be presented at the next Management Committee meeting in September.

Question: Peter – was USACE copied on submittal to Policy Cmte? Rob – you should have received a copy, it came from Chris Daggett. Rob will resend to everyone.

Rosana gave a brief update regarding the Water Quality Report. Deadline for final comments was March 31, and she anticipates finalizing report by June 24. Goal is to have it published online by June 30. Based on CAC & Management Committee feedback, instead of printing the entire document, we will instead print the regional water body summaries as tri-fold brochures. Entire document will be available as a PDF online, and tri-folds will also be available as individual PDFs. Hope to have them in hand later this summer, probably around the same time as the forthcoming paddling guide.

5. Update: Water Quality Monitoring Initiatives

In the past year, HEP partners have launched several specific water quality monitoring efforts around the estuary. Evelyn Powers provided an overview of IEC's water quality monitoring initiatives, beginning with the NJDEP/IEC Harbor Monitoring Network funded by NJDEP, IEC's Coordinated Volunteer Pathogen Monitoring Program as well as their continuing partnerships with NPS at Gateway National Recreation Area as well as USGS & the Bronx & Harlem UWFP. Linaard Knutsen and EPA is working with the Lower Raritan Partnership and NJ DEP on monitoring efforts there, specifically as it relates to conditions at the Perth Amboy beaches. Dan Rearick from NYS DEC then presented an overview of their upcoming effort to monitor conditions in the mid and lower Hudson River. Pam Reilly discussed their efforts to monitor on microbial source tracking efforts in the lower Passaic River basin.

Discussion: Hugh Carlola noted a great partnership with IEC. Rob Pirani asked Dan why no sampling under wet weather conditions? Dan – focus is on baseline conditions; they are thinking that wet weather could be a focus for year 2. Carrie Roble noted that there was no WQ sampling south of Yonkers and no macro inverts sampling south of Poughkeepsie. Fran Dunwell noted that funding was an issue for sampling and bacteria/methodology was limited. Would be great to do the whole river and they are looking for sources of funding. Hugh Carola noted that human and canine are largest sources of pathogens for Saddle River and asked whether USGS was able to measure the contribution from NYS Saddle River plant. Pam indicated that they are just sampling the lower stretch of the River as they are always limited on funding.

6. Offshore Wind Undersea Cables GEIS

NYSERDA is launching a GEIS to help plan for and address potential issues related to development of undersea electric cables from offshore wind power development. Gregory Lampman from NYERDA presented their goals and initial considerations for this effort and addressed questions.

Project is being driven by two state initiatives: Wind power leases are being put out to bid for NY Bight sites and the need to bring power directly in nyc to specific on shore stations. Understanding the value of better understanding and consolidating impacts, they want make sure that process is coordinated. Will use SEQRA process as a planning tool. Next step: Draft scope in July, NYSERDA is thinking about how to bolster stakeholder engagement.

Discussion: Judy Weiss noted that understanding this is a new york state initiative, but wouldn't it be better to work regionally with NJ and CT. NYSERDA: Agreed in general although some legal issues with coordination and more importantly the key focus is on connections to substations in NYC including Astoria, Gowanus, the Narrows as a key constraints. They are not looing north of Manhattan, Maggie Flanagan asked about whether the true costs of this new system is being accounted for. NYSERDA: Yes – the purpose of the study is to rationalize this.

7. Update: Economic Analysis Project

Rob Pirani provided an overview of the project which launched last year with EPA support. Goal of the study is to determine a way to communicate the economic value of clean water in the Estuary in a way that's responsive to numerous stakeholders, but also rigorous & meeting standards of EPA & economists. First question to answer is what do we mean by clean water? There are a variety of definitions. A contractor (ICF) has been chosen, and they are working through the QAPP approval process with EPA now. This summer, once the QAPP is complete, the Management Committee & others will see an email survey from the ICF team. Answering the survey will help them link their index to things that people value (e.g., recreation, fishing, aesthetics, etc.)

Emma Gildesgame from NEIWPC is project manager, egildesgame@neiwpc.org. Lingard shared that EPA has gone through the first review of the QAPP, very minor changes needed (QAPP is now approved). Rick offered thanks to everyone working on this effort and hopes that there will be a section in final report with recommendations for further research questions, identified gaps in data/research, etc. Rob concurred and agreed that an expected outcome of this project is that others will be interested in furthering the work.

8. Safe Space Commitment

Liz introduced HEP's DEIJ subcommittee – joint effort between CAC & Harbor Educators Network. If you're interested in joining the conversation on the fourth Wednesday of each month, reach out to Liz or Rosana. Tanasia Swift (BOP) discussed how the Safe Space Commitment was developed. Tanasia manages BOP field stations where community members host regular field days around oyster installation. In 2020, BOP renewed their focus on justice and inclusion in their work, and decided to

develop a Safe Space Commitment to encourage themselves and other partners to be proactive in creating safe, supportive spaces for BIPOC individuals. However, BOP didn't want to be gatekeeper of such an important document. Other groups & partners needed to be involved. In addition to having partners sign on to the commitment, the group has developed a list of goals to help advance this work:

- Provide safe outdoor spaces for BIPOC communities
- Develop a coalition of partners
- Diversity training & workshops
- (paid) Internships for BIPOC students
- Host an annual conference (progress, ways to keep the work going)
- Safe space signage

Next steps: currently developing an appendix & FAQ with resources for partners to use, applied for funding from JM Kaplan Fund (2 years of support to pilot this program, e.g., create workshops, training, internships, etc.), recruiting partners to sign on.

Rob asked how public agencies can get involved? Tanasia said the first step is to read through SSC & share with your network. Next, as trainings & workshops are developed, we'd like to include leadership/decision-makers as well. If you know of organizations or individuals within agencies that the group should be sure to reach out to, please email her at tswift@nyharbor.org. Liz noted that the group plans to discuss this exact question at the June DEIJ meeting, maybe a tiered framework? Recognize that smaller organizations may find it easier to sign on. Rob noted that HEP is trying to find resources to help groups build capacity to do this work... if anyone is aware of other sources of funding, we'd be happy to hear about it.

9. Updates from Work Groups and Committee Chairs

Water Quality Work Group: Brett Branco shared about the most recent Frontiers of Monitoring, Modeling, & Management series speaker from NYU. They shared research results on modeling sunlight activation of pathogens, monitoring of SARS/COVID in WWTP, and the development of a flood sensor network & the potential to integrate that into CSO monitoring. The Work Group will be evaluating whether this speaker series program is helping meet our Action Agenda goals. The Work Group also spent a lot of time discussing the language of Action A2 as was discussed previously in this meeting.

Restoration Work Group: Lisa Baron shared that the group got an update on HEP Aquatic Connectivity project from Isabelle and Marit Larson presented on the recently published [NYC Wetland Management Framework](#). Also, continuing to identify and advance opportunities for beneficial use of dredged materials. Surveyed partners on how they are dealing with contamination during restoration project planning, design, etc. Figuring out next steps on this front. Working with Isabelle to update CRP sites in database, expect to have map updated and finished in September. Oyster sub-committee meeting was held in April, and the Tributary Connections sub-committee was resurrected in May – it hadn't met since 2011!

Public Access Work Group: Hugh Carola provided an update on the NYNJHEP Paddling Guide update. Action Agenda goal was to update guide from 12 years ago, Rob & Sam Gordon worked with Pratt

Institute and PAWG partners to prepare. [The updated map covers 160+ sites throughout the Estuary](#). Thanks to everyone who provided feedback. HEP hopes to advance a companion website. If you want hard copies, let Rob know.

Citizens Advisory Committee: Liz shared that at the latest CAC meeting, NJDEP talked about their Climate Change Resilience Strategy, JBRC discussed their programs and what they have planned for City of Water Day, and there was discussion around what groups are doing regarding recent menhaden die-off's seen throughout the Estuary.

Urban Waters Federal Partnerships: Liz Balladares (Lower Passaic) is working with USGS and NPS to put together a proposal to create a WQ database around Great Falls in Paterson, have made it to 2nd round of application process. If approved, project cost would be~100k total, with \$20k from NPS and \$25k from USGS. Sara Powell (Bronx & Harlem) is working with Natural Areas Conservancy and NYC Parks to launch nature based resiliency features monitoring project – will beginning to train students on the framework next week. The Bronx & Harlem UWFP is also beginning to plan a 10th Anniversary celebration event in October.