



## Management Committee Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2021 (DRAFT)

Hudson River Foundation – Remote Meeting

### Participants

**Management Committee:** Pinar Balci (NYCDEP), Brett Branco (CUNY, WQWG), Liz Butler (EPA), Meredith Comi (NY/NJ Baykeeper, CAC), Lisa Congiu (NJDEP, WQWG), Chirs Daggett (HRF), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Margaret Flanagan (PAWG), Hugh Carola (Hackensack Riverkeeper, PAWG), Lingard Knutson (EPA), Marit Larson (NYC Parks, RWG), Jim Lodge (HRF, STAC co-chair), Jessie Murray (NOAA), Rob Pirani (HEP), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Patti Rafferty (NPS), Clay Sherman (NJDEP), Melissa Sinisgalli (PVSC/NJHDG), Judith Weis (Rutgers, STAC), and Peter Weppler (USACE)

**HRF/HEP Office Staff and Guests:** Helena Andreyko, Vince Bacalan (EPA), Elizabeth Balladares, Shane Church (MCUA), Rosana Da Silva, Clay Hiles, Jonathan Kramer, Sara Powell, and Isabelle Stinnette

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome and agenda review

Rob Pirani welcomed the committee and reviewed the agenda.

#### 2. Review and approval of June 2021 Meeting Minutes

Rob Pirani reviewed the June minutes.

**Action:** June 2021 minutes were approved, motioned by Liz Butler and seconded by Peter Weppler.

#### 3. FY 2021-2022 HEP Workplan and other Updates

Rob Pirani announced the \$770,000 workplan was submitted to EPA for processing the FY starting October 1, 2021. Rob thanked the EPA staff for their assistance throughout the process for approval. In addition, HEP is also working to update its Quality Management Plan which will be shared with the committee at a later date. HEP staff were successful in a couple of grant applications and funding initiatives to advance HEP priorities. Rosana Da Silva worked with the City of Hoboken and Riverkeeper to receive a NOAA grant to remove ADVs in Weehawken Cove and the Hudson River and Liz Balladares will be receiving funding to support water quality monitoring efforts in the Paterson Great Falls working alongside NPS and USGS.

Rob shared that we are up to 12 co-sponsors to the NY-NJ Watershed Act introduced by Congressman Tonko and the HRE Feasibility study as well as the bipartisan infrastructure bill, if approved, would

provide an additional \$900,000 per year for five years. The USACE was successful in receiving funds to design four projects – the Bronx River, Flushing Creek, Marsh Island in Jamaica Bay, and Oyster work at Naval Station Earle – as part of the president’s budget for next year. Peter Weppler thanked all the stakeholders for their support. This process enabled the USACE to establish a standard for processing these types of projects. Liz Butler thanked everyone for their efforts in the workplan.

#### **4. Request for Approval: Objectives and Tasks Regarding Water Quality Standards**

Rob Pirani recapped the April 21 Policy Committee meeting from which Chris Daggett and Walter Mugdan proposed updated language for the Action Agenda Priority WQ-A-2. Rosana Da Silva outlined the process to date and anticipated next steps. The CAC leadership expressed concerns on the proposed language and worked together with HEP staff to further revise the language while still working within the boundaries that the states and EPA had placed for HEP. Jason Fagel asked if the committee approved the CAC revision today whether this would go back to the Policy Committee. Rob clarified that if approved by the Management Committee today it would be submitted to the Policy Committee for formal adoption and the update for the Action Agenda would be sent to EPA headquarters. Jason stated he would need to bring this back to colleagues in DEC to discuss. Clay Sherman agreed and asked when would approval be needed. Rob indicated the Policy Committee will meet this fall and formal adoption should be completed in November. Both Clay and Jason agreed the timeline was doable. Chris Daggett asked if anyone in the committee objected to the CAC changes? With no objections, Rob indicated he will submit a memo with the suggested revisions to the states for their formal approvals. Upon the states approval, HEP will submit the revisions for formal adopt to the Policy Committee at the next meeting. Rosana indicated the Water Quality Work Group has been focused on identifying tasks that would help advance both the states and EPA in their discussions around shared standards. The Water Quality Work Group has proposed to work on a communications strategy that would help the public understand why there are two separate standards in the shared waters. Rob added that this ties in nicely with the communications work that HEP will be doing this year, so there will be a lot of support to help advance this effort and then of course gets us on the path of the more technical work.

**Action:** HEP to send CAC’s revisions to the A-2 language to the states to move forward with an approval. Management Committee to provide comments on proposed communications task no later than October 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### **5. Timeline for Action Agenda 2025 Revision**

Rob Pirani shared that the HEP staff have developed a proposed timeline and set of milestones for revising the Action Agenda by 2025. HEP has received an approval from EPA to work on an update of our Action Agenda and a timeline for the revision which would be drafted in 2023 put in place in 2025. HEP proposed an update to the Action Agenda so that we have some time to accomplish our actions, devote the time to work with stakeholders on a revision, work with the Hudson River Estuary Program on a shared interest for a joint State of the Estuary report, and the timeline places the program in line with the Program Evaluation schedule.

Fran Dunwell added that her program is looking forward to working with HEP but had initially thought the release of the joint report would be 2025 and not 2024. This would be difficult for the Hudson

River Estuary Program to accomplish particularly now that John Ladd has indicated his intention to retire in the next 4-6 months. Rob noted that we can further discuss the needs of the two programs. Rob announced that HEP staff have reached out to the STAC and is also seeking to recruit new people. If anyone knows of scientists and technicians that we should consider in this process, please let HEP staff know.

#### **6. Update on Planning for HEP's Annual Conference November 15-19**

Rob Pirani updated the committee that the annual conference will be held virtually over the week of November 15-19. The theme this year is Waterway Stories: Water Quality, Access and Community - bringing together partners to talk about water quality and how it affects our lives and our community. Isabelle Stinnette has been working on a format and schedule for the conference which will be in a similar format as last year. HEP staff is considering about having an in-person event, but the decision would be made closer to the date. A draft agenda was shared and HEP staff thanked the steering committee for their help which includes members of the CAC, NYCWTA, EPA, NYSDOH, NJDEP, and EPA. An RfP was released to collect presentations, but if anyone else is interested in presenting, please let the HEP staff know. Peter Weppler recommended having Corps Operations Division talk to Operations and Maintenance/Drift and Floatables Collection and talk to Richard Thorsen at their Caven Point facility. Isabelle Stinnette added that we will also be working on 5-minute videos to feature waterway stories to add to the conference. Fran Dunwell added there is a project up in Troy near the dam where short video of water quality is captured. The group is called Media Alliance. Lingard Knuston asked is any of the USACE captains have fun waterway stories? Either Water Quality or changes in the harbor over the last years?

#### **7. Request for Comments: HEP Communications Plan**

Rob Pirani distributed a revised draft Communication Plan, incorporating HRF's decision to hire a part-time Communications Director (a recommendation from the FISH consultants) who will work with staff to advance these recommended actions. The communications plan has been drafted in conjunction with HRF and hope that by November we have hired that individual to help us implement this work. The plan is layout in an overall goal, a set of target audiences, and seven strategic objectives – the long term: telling our story better; skill set; coordinating and collaborating with our stakeholders in our committees and elsewhere; and in the short-term: host events and gathering; engaging media outlets; monitoring information and sharing what's out there in the media world about the estuary; and better manage our relationship records.

**Action:** Committee comments are requested by October 7th with the final to be submitted for Committee approval during the December 2021 meeting.

#### **8. Restoration Activity Map**

Rob Pirani, on behalf of Isabelle Stinnette, presented on the new restoration activity map. Based on extensive conversation with the Restoration Work Group, she and our consultants at Pratt Institute SAVI have prepared a [new interactive map](#) (please do not share this link) that will help us advance and track the over 600 restoration project sites around the estuary. Improve functionality of the map, but also something that we can maintain in house. Isabelle thanked the RWG, CAC, and PAWG which helped correct and update the data to keep the CRP sites alive for restoration opportunities. Lisa

Congiu suggested instead of former opportunities, perhaps past candidates or defunct opportunities is a better term.

Fran Dunwell shared the map is great and indicated that the Hudson River Estuary Program is compiling sites north of where the HEP map ends and would be great to have a side-by-side map extending up. Maggie Flanagan asked how we add more sites in the more urban core of the estuary? She has always felt that restoration tends to be away from where the core of people are located. Isabelle indicated that there is a form to add sites to the map which then is vetted by the RWG for approval. New nominations are always welcomed. Maggie suggested getting that form and the map out to grass-roots would help identify more opportunities. Rob Pirani added in addition to get the form out there, we are also looking for photographs for sites. Isabelle added any idea in how to make a bigger splash with the release is welcomed. Maggie added there are a number of advocacy groups that could utilize the map, particularly for its vetting process. Rob added that HEP can also send a letter regarding the site referring to its value in the CRP. Hugh Carola added the map is really impressive and a can see it be useful in many ways.

## 9. Updates from Work Groups and Committee Chairs

- Public Access Work Group: Maggie Flanagan shared the group reviewed the draft [Staten Island Waterfront Plan](#) and looking to advance outreach. During City of Water Day, there was more than 50 in your neighborhood events and HEP was able to support 26 of those events. Hugh Carola added the number of people served that day, was great and people are loving the paddling guide!
- Restoration Work Group: Marit Larson reported on the Wetlands Management Framework that looks at marsh migration and has example of buyout sites. NYC Mayor's office talked about different opportunities for structuring a buyout program. Jim Lodge recapped the list of priorities for reuse of dredge materials for the RWG that the group will continue to be working on.
- Water Quality Work Group: Rosana Da Silva shared the group has been focused on identifying activities to help advance the states and EPA in their discussions around shared started. NEIWPC presented on the Economic Analysis and we will be working to build upon the conference theme to develop waterway stories.
- Harbor Educators Work Group: Rosana Da Silva shared the group held three breakout sessions on the use of new tech tools, working with big data, and social-emotion support for students. The group also heard from Dr. Jerel Ezell's research team at Cornell who will be looking at how black and latinx youth experience water such as water consumption.
- Citizen Advisory Committee: Liz Balladares shared the committee discussed the impacts of Ida and how to work together to help communities be more prepared. The group also discussed the Hudson River Park installation that took place this summer and the Water Quality priority action of A-2 where members provided comments.
- Urban Waters Federal Partnerships: Liz Balladares shared she is working with City of Newark to host rowing programs with Wilderness Inquiry. This will be the first time they will be in the Passaic in the last 10 years. Sara Powell shared she is actively planning a celebratory 10 year of the UWF on the 13th. The guest list will be small, but hoping to expand it and host the Secretary of the Interior. She is also working with Wilderness Inquiry to get students out on the Harlem on the

13<sup>th</sup>. This summer, they kicked off shoreline monitoring work that was funded by EPA in the Bronx/Harlem Rivers, a two year project that will continue next year.

#### **10. Partner Updates**

- Hugh Carola shared the Harbor Herons will hope to have a full survey next year. The Hackensack Riverkeeper's paddling programs have been quite successful and people do want to get out.
- Peter Wepler shared the NYNJ HATS study has been on hold funding wise, but hopefully FY22 funds come through which may be able to use to move forward on the evaluation. With Justice 40, the USACE will advance an evaluation and be included in our reporting as well as addressing that in the Harbor Deepening improvement. Coastal Texas proposed some storm surge barriers and just go the chief's report signed and while it was for coastal and ecosystem, Peter wanted to share how another district looked at it - <https://www.swg.usace.army.mil/Business-With-Us/Planning-Environmental-Branch/Documents-for-Public-Review/>.