



Management Committee Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2021 (DRAFT)

Hudson River Foundation – Remote Meeting

Participants

Management Committee: Rick Balla (EPA), Brett Branco (CUNY, WQWG), Hugh Carola (Hackensack Riverkeeper, PAWG), Meredith Comi (NY/NJ Baykeeper, CAC), Lisa Congiu (NJDEP, WQWG), Chris Daggett (HRF), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Allison Fitzgerald (NJCU, CAC), Margaret Flanagan (PAWG), Lingard Knutson (EPA), Marit Larson (NYC Parks, RWG), Tom Laustsen (PVSC/NJHDG), Jim Lodge (HRF, STAC co-chair), Jessie Murray (NOAA), Rob Pirani (HEP), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Clay Sherman (NJDEP), Shino Tanikawa (NYCSWD, CAC), Judith Weis (Rutgers, STAC), Cathy Yugas (Hudson County Schools, NJ Educator)

HRF/HEP Office Staff and Guests: Vince Bacalan (EPA), Elizabeth Balladares, Rosana Da Silva, Jonathan Kramer, Sue Rosenwinkel (NJDEP), Isabelle Stinnette

Minutes

1. Welcome and agenda review

Rob Pirani welcomed the committee and reviewed the agenda.

2. Review and approval of September 2021 Meeting Minutes

Rob Pirani reviewed the September minutes.

Action: September 2021 minutes were approved, motioned by Rick Balla and seconded by Brett Branco.

3. Looking ahead to the 2023 Workplan

Rob Pirani informed the Committee that the American Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will provide HEP with an additional \$900,000 on top of HEP's anticipated \$750,000 in base funding for FY 2023. Assuming the normal workplan process, HEP expects to receive guidance from EPA in January, work through the committee/work groups on opportunities to propose a draft workplan to the Committee in March/April for a final FY 2023 workplan in June.

Rob provided examples on potential projects that connect to the Action Agenda, Congressional Intent, Administration priorities, and also where we can add value. Rick Balla confirm environmental justice, climate change, and infrastructure are key priorities. Sue Rosenwinkel suggested to focus on-the-ground improvements as there is plenty of work to be done in the CSO world. Rosana Da Silva added working together with permittees in advancing the various projects and engage the community. Hugh Carola added thinking about water quality and habitat restoration together, but

also bringing access to the waterfront. There are pilot projects that are seeking to create micro-habitats to deal with sea level rise.

Marit Larson added looking at adaptation to look at topics related to marsh migration and putting boots on the ground on acquisitions to make progress. Fran Dunwell indicated the Hudson River Improvement fund would be great to aid local groups in implementing local projects. 11 communities have reached out to the program seeking support for flood resiliency plans, and the Hudson River Estuary Program was only able to fund two. It would be great to think about ways in which we can advance those plans including implementation.

Maggie Flanagan thanked the HEP staff time in coordinating the committees and work groups, and any time that we can connect our goals is an ideal use of funds. Maggie added, while the Parks is a great partner, there are a number of access sites that are privately owned. For Ports and Maritime, just emphasizing the importance of electrifying piers to enable battery powered vessels could be more talked about. NYC EDC is rebuilding a number of sites for ferries and local cargo barges, but making that infrastructure include electrified/battery vessels seems less emphasized.

Hugh Carola discussed the NJDEP's environmental justice listening sessions and indicated value added that would be ideal. Sue Rosenwinkel and Shino Tanikawa agreed. Rob asked if there are community engagement opportunities related to the LTCP implementation and help the public have a voice in those capital improvements. Sue indicated that they are planning to continue public engagement as part of the CSO permit, but do struggle to get more people involved, and certainly more can be done. Isabelle Stinnette added the Tributary Subcommittee often identify community engagement as a need. Brett Branco informed that what happens between conversations is the gap and an area to improve upon— keeping the public informed what happens between workshops is key. Rob highlight the interest in using the MyCoast tool in NY, which has been successful in NJ around the shore, but the possibility of that tool in ways to engage folks in coastal resiliency.

Action: Committee members are encouraged to reach out to HEP staff to continue these conversations and prepare for the Policy Committee meeting.

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

Rosana Da Silva recapped the discussions around the Action Agenda Priority WQ-A-2 regarding the proposed language. HEP staff worked with the states and the Citizen Advisory Committee leadership to address the CAC's comments and finalize the proposed language. In addition, the Water Quality Work Group has been concentrating on the actions that would support the states and EPA in their discussions around shared standards. The first action the group proposes to work on is on shared communications to help partners within the CAC, Public Access Work Group, and the Hudson-Harbor Educators Work Group in communicating to the public about why we have different standards in shared waters and how the public should interpret them.

Action: Revised Action Agenda Priority WQ-A-2 was approved, motioned by Rick Balla and seconded by Hugh Carola. The Water Quality Work Group's Shared Waters Communication Task was approved, motioned by Brett Branco and seconded by Rick Balla.

5. 2021 HEP Conference Review

Isabelle Stinnette provided an overview of [HEP's annual conference](#) in November that attracted more than 500 registrants for a week-long series of sessions on water quality and community. Attendee affiliations varied across different sectors and a significant number of attendees came from NY.

Isabelle highlighted several sessions, keynotes Paul Greenberg and Congressman Tom Malinowski, interactive trainings, and co-partnership panels. Rick Balla thanked the HEP staff and all the partners for their efforts, shining a light on DEIJ issues, and all the follow up efforts. Maggie Flanagan echoed thanks to the HEP staff.

Shino Tanikawa echoed and thanked the staff for their tremendous efforts. Shino asked if we did worse this year or about the same in terms of NJ attendee involvement? Isabelle indicated last year it was not as quite off balanced in comparison to this year. Judy Weis had picked up a feeling that the program disadvantages NJ by being in NYC and may be helpful to see if there is any soul searching needed to determine if that is true. Rob Pirani added that we do try to have balance in all that we do, and certainly not a lack of effort to be balanced, but worth to check in on how we are doing. Judy added it may be helpful to consider bringing the conference to a NJ venue, Allison Fitzgerald agreed. Hugh Carola thanked the HEP staff and really enjoyed the Whova platform.

6. Launch 2025 Environmental Monitoring Plan and STAC Nominations

Rosana Da Silva outlined the process for updating our [environmental monitoring plan](#) and estuary indicators. Nominations are requested for scientists and other experts interested in joining the STAC that will help guide this effort. Rob thanked NYSDEC on their efforts to think about good additions. Fran Dunwell added that NYSDEC has suggested Jason Fagel to participate on the STAC and they are also looking for someone else in the research reserve to participate. Judy Weis noted that she will reach out to HEP staff to continue this conversation. Isabelle Stinnette added it would be ideal to increase diversity representation on the STAC.

Action: Committee members are encouraged to send nominations to HEP staff.

7. Request for Approval: HEP Communications Strategy

Rob Pirani distributed a revised draft Communications Plan, incorporating HRF's decision to hire a part-time Communications Manager (a recommendation from the FISH consultants) who will work with HEP staff to advance these recommended actions.

Action: Communications Plan was approved, motioned by Rick Balla and seconded by Jason Fagel.

8. Quality Management Plan

Isabelle Stinnette, with help from EPA, has updated HEP's Quality Management Plan, which guides our quality control on HEP and HEP-funded research, projects, and responsibility structure. The Quality Management Plan is required to be updated with EPA every five years. Rick Balla thanked Isabelle for working on this and noted that EPA puts a high priority on data collection in which the states can utilize data to inform on impaired waterbodies (303d list). Rob Pirani thanked Lingard Knuston for her help in getting the QMP approved.

9. Updates from Work Groups and Committee Chairs

- **Public Access Work Group:** Hugh Carola shared the Work Group has established a Swimming Subcommittee further discussions from HEP's Conference. Pratt SAVI received funding from the Hudson River Estuary Program to expand on the Paddling Guide and will aid in the creation of an online presence for the guide as a living document to add more information on sites to connect people to the water.

- Restoration Work Group: Isabelle Stinnette shared progress has been made in the Tributary Subcommittee which have identified target actions for the next three years to prepare for shovel-ready projects including looking at dam removal, dam safety and other improvements. A great annual meeting was also held at the Harbor Herons. Hugh Carola added that twenty islands were surveyed and of those, three islands had the majority abundance. The greatest problem on the colonies is predators – raccoons (increased number indicates possibility of live-trapped raccoon releases), feral cats (known problem), and expansion of ghost crabs.
- Water Quality Work Group: Lisa Congiu informed that Brett Branco’s term as NY co-chair is coming to an end and we are actively working to identify a new co-chair to serve a two-year term. Looking towards 2022, the work group will be further advancing efforts around shared waters focusing on communications as well as climate change, coastal resiliency efforts, the water quality implications of solutions such as sea gates.
- Harbor Educators Work Group: Rosana Da Silva shared the group has applied to two grant opportunities – the Pisces Foundation and City Parks Foundation – to support work around the [Safe Space Commitment](#) and increasing capacity to develop climate justice curriculum. We also have begun to work on a wish list of projects and programs to improve our ability to collaborate with one another and identifying funding opportunities.
- Citizen Advisory Committee: Meredith Comi shared that the CAC did touch on the lack of NJ participation in the context of A Day of the Life to brainstorm what the challenges are as there are many groups that could be engaged. The CAC discussed art at the blue line as part of City of Water Day as a way to interact with other partners and students.
- Urban Waters Federal Partnerships: Liz Balladares informed the Partnership was successful in a third year of funding for microbial source tracking starting next year. In collaboration with [USGS and the Great Falls National Historic Park, a Baseline Water Quality Inventory](#) project has been launched where the team is creating an inventory of chemical and biological data and requesting data by January 31st. Rob Pirani shared that Sara Powell, the Bronx/Harlem Ambassador, has left the Program, but before she left she had put together a [great celebration for the Partnership](#). The first round of interviews to replace Sara has been completed and we expect to have someone in place by the end of January.

10. Partner Updates

- Rick Balla shared that Lisa F. Garcia has been appointed as EPA R2’s administrator. Lisa comes with deep roots here in New Jersey and New York as well as her background in environmental and climate justice. Rick also informed that R2 is awaiting a final approved budget and hopes that it is resolved by February in addition to more information regarding the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill as a significant investment in water resources.