



Management Committee Meeting Minutes

June 8, 2022 (DRAFT)

Hudson River Foundation – Remote Meeting

Participants

Management Committee: Pinar Balci (NYCDEP), Rick Balla (EPA), Lisa Baron (USACE), Tracy Brown (Riverkeeper), Elizabeth Butler (EPA), Lisa Congiu (NJDEP, WQWG), Chris Daggett (HRF), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC HREP), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Allison Fitzgerald (NJCU, CAC), Rachel Gordon (PANYNJ), Lingard Knutson (EPA), Jon Kramer (HRF, STAC), Marit Larson (NYC Parks, RWG), Tom Laustsen (PVSC/NJHDG), Jessie Murray (NOAA), Rob Pirani (HEP), Patti Rafferty (NPS), Clay Sherman (NJDEP), Shino Tanikawa (NYCSWCD, WQWG-CAC), Judith Weis (Rutgers, STAC), Peter Wepler (USACE), and Cathy Yuhás (Hudson County Schools, NJ-Educator)

HRF/HEP Office Staff and Guests: Vince Bacalan (EPA), Elizabeth Balladares, Rosana Da Silva, Jim Lodge, Melissa Sinisgalli (PVSC), and Isabelle Stinnette

Minutes

1. Welcome and agenda review

Rob Pirani welcomed the committee and reviewed the agenda.

2. Review and approval of March 2022 Meeting Minutes

Rob Pirani reviewed the March minutes. A discussion was held regarding a joint meeting between the Management and Policy Committee. After speaking with Chris Daggett, the Policy Committee chair, HEP will proceed with scheduling a joint meeting in September where HEP will plan to share the final BIL Workplan for review and approval. In addition, HEP will be introducing new Management Committee members for approval. Lisa Baron noted a minor change for the partner updates. Rob shared that Fran Dunwell is retiring and that this is her last meeting with HEP. Rob thanked Fran for her service and commitment to HEP and the greater Hudson-Raritan Estuary.

Action: March 2022 minutes were approved with Lisa Baron's amendments, motioned by Rick Balla and seconded by Jason Fagel.

3. Update on USACE Channel Improvement Harbor Deepening Project

Peter Wepler shared completed Harbor Deepening Project's channels are maintained at -50 feet MLLW and -53 feet mean lower low water in Ambrose Channel. The Recommended Plan is the National Economic Development Plan: deepening the pathways to Elizabeth – Port Authority Marine Terminal and Port Jersey – Port Authority Marine Terminal by 5 feet to a maintained depth of -55 feet

MLLW. This will accommodate the larger, newer ships that are coming into port. The shared placemat has additional details. Peter went through some of the highlights from the placement, including the millions of cubic feet to be dredged. While the use of dredged materials has not been laid out, the USACE plan is to reuse the material beneficially as they have done in the past. Approximately 1.92 acres of shallow subtidal habitat (-6 feet MLLW or shallower) under the State of New Jersey's jurisdiction would be converted to deep water habitat, therefore, compensatory mitigation is required. The USACE will pursue habitat restoration options and implement compensatory mitigation for the impacts to this shallow water or littoral (-6 feet MLLW or shallower) habitat. This will be coordinated with the Restoration Work Group with a goal of getting these projects into the next WERDA. Outreach was conducted in both the Staten Island and Bayonne communities about the project, potential impacts, and ways to avoid negatively impacting the community. Outreach will continue through the project.

Jim Lodge asked if USACE found a nonfederal partner. Peter clarified the Port Authority is the study and implementation sponsor and have agreed to go above and beyond to include restoration efforts. Peter also shared the HARS Placement was used for the cost analysis and acknowledged that there may be some differences in changes, but they are looking to beneficially use the dredge material.

4. Climate Ready Culverts, ADV Removal, and COW Day Updates by HEP Staff

Rosana Da Silva provided an overview of the Weehawken Cove and Hudson River Marine Debris Removal NOAA grant led by the City of Hoboken alongside Riverkeeper and HEP. A total of 17 ADVs were identified for removal, 14 within the cove and 3 in the upper Hudson. This May, the salvage company worked and removed all vessels from the Cove and are anticipated to remove the upper Hudson ADVs this fall. HEP has also kicked off the Natural/Nature-based Features (NNBF) shoreline monitoring within the cove to collect baseline data of the existing shoreline that will help inform the City's future efforts of installing a living shoreline.

Isabelle Stinnette reported out on the Aquatic Connectivity Through Climate-Ready Infrastructure. The first year of assessments have been completed and HEP won the Coastal Watershed Grant from EPA administered by RAE. Rutgers Interns assessed over 100 culverts and bridges. The project looks at aquatic connectivity and hydrological capacity and have predominately focusing on New Jersey – the Lower Passaic and Lower Raritan. This coming summer, HEP will be working further in the Lower Raritan with over 100 assessments to go. Isabelle shared some results which highlighted how to understand the connectivity and nature of the different watersheds. Each watershed notably had different problems and different needs – from fish passage, to infrastructure, roadway flooding issues, etc. A fact sheet was created for each subwatershed to provide recommendations. Summary fact-sheets for each watershed on the lower South River can be found here: <https://www.hudsonriver.org/article/actcri>. HEP has engaged an engineering design firm who will develop an engineer-design study for one of the priority culverts based on the assessment alongside an Advisory Committee to choose the right sites. This will include 30% designs of projects and a toolkit.

Liz Balladares shared that City of Water Day will be held on July 16th! A day dedicated to celebrating the resiliency of our Harbor. There will be two major events, the first Art of the Blue Line in Seaport where local artists are featured. And the second, In Your Neighborhood events where every waterfront is encouraged to participate and celebrate their waterfront. HEP has established a

registration for organizations/community group to sign up, HEP will provide a small grant to support programmatic activities, and this year we have encouraged organizations to engage local artists as part of those small grants. HEP has been able to raise \$45,000 to support programs, with roughly 43 In Your Neighborhood events already registered with a mix of both in person and virtual events.

5. Update on HEP FY 2023 and Proposed BIL Workplans

Rob Pirani provided an update on the proposed BIL funding, what our process for reporting on the BIL funding may look like, and activities that we would launch under year one. HEP anticipates sharing the workplan by the September 14th meeting. 10 projects were identified that support UFWP, restoration efforts, culverts and shallow water, and water quality. HEP is thinking about establishing a small capacity grant program that would start in year one and continue throughout the BIL funding timeline. Rob asked the Management Committee for feedback on an RfP for organizations based-in or supporting work in disadvantaged communities focused on climate change impacts to water quality and whether it should be broad or targeted.

Rick Balla shared that he would have hoped that EPA's guidance would be available, but hopeful to have that by July 22. Environmental Justice, Climate Adaptation and Resiliency are clear focuses for the funding. Lingard Knutson added that without the guidance being completed, we don't know our final direction, but headquarters is looking at the EJSCREEN to refine the indices. Unclear if the final guidance will include approvals for utilizing state tools rather than EJSCREEN, but more to come on that. HEP's goal is to use both EJSCREEN and the state maps to refine eligibility of any RfPs as the state maps may further refine our scope. Fran Dunwell shared that HREP and DEC's office does target grants in disadvantaged communities and can share their experience. What they have noticed is the more targeted the RfP, the less applications and sometimes receive none. Judy Weis indicated that if you are looking for something unique and special, and the interest is somewhere else doesn't mean that you should do something else. Fran noted while this is true, as an example, HREP has yet to receive a proposal for river access flood resiliency plan in the past three years. Fran added the team has increased funding, changes to scoring points, and promoting the work, but still no proposal has been received. The DEC EJ office is a resource that HEP should engage where they have found a way to work very well with EJ groups and build their capacity. Fran suggested broadening watershed management to include modeling of precipitation and the neighborhoods being affected, adaptation for climate change, and related resource management. Rob added that yes, stormwater, green infrastructure, resiliency of waterfront parks, etc. would be included as it connects back to our Action Agenda.

Regarding eligible activities that were listed, Rob asked the Committee if there is a specific area of interest. Tracy Brown requested the inclusion of not-for-profits who may have that grant writer on staff to help with increasing the capacity at the local organizations. It's a great way to help establish a network and support for those local communities. Shino Tanikawa asked if a group must write a QAPP, and if so, will funding be available to support the development of it? Shino requested that the QAPP not be a barrier for organizations to apply for the funding. Marit Larson added there is an opportunity to connect between existing and planned municipal projects – components that a city project may be missing but want to emphasize the conversations across departments and organizations. Rob shared several options regarding communications with community and asked which are preferred. Marit indicated that it could be a spectrum. Rob asked the agencies whether they would want to come in with community groups or rather provide a letter of support. Marit shared that outside of letters of

support, not sure what other tool is available to ensure that partners are in communications or engaged together.

Tracy Brown and Marit Larson asked if there is a size or number of grants that HEP had in mind? Rob estimated four \$50,000 grants but interested in hearing what others would recommend. Shino added that the scale sounds right, but looking at the eligible activities, some of these do not look like a \$50,000 project. A range would be better, but some of those activities may be above that funding range. Tracy agreed and recommended a two year project, or two phase effort may be able another way to go about it. Pinar Balci asked if there would be a match required? Without EPA guidance, Rob could not confirm, but believes that HEP will not need to match the funding and rather we may ask for some indication of in-kind contributions. Shino recommended tailoring the rubric that if in-kind contributions are included, additional points would be given to the project.

Action: Fran Dunwell will connect Rob Pirani with the DEC EJ Office. Rob Pirani will incorporate the Management Committee recommendations into the HEP BIL framework as we wait on EPA guidance before finalizing.

6. 2025 Environmental Monitoring Plan

Rosana Da Silva outlined the process for updating our [environmental monitoring plan](#) and estuary indicators. From the last update, a total of 47 environmental indicators were adopted. Each committee and work group were invited to review the indicators and suggest others. A total of 73 indicators has been submitted for review to the STAC. In thinking about the various indicators and recognizing each have their own importance, a poll was released for the Management Committee to provide feedback on the top two indicators per goal that may be utilized to focus HEP's communication efforts. Allison Fitzgerald recommended HEP to consider the term water quality in which it seems vague. Comparing bacterial abundance to marine debris is apples to oranges. if you're talking about nutrient addition, or if you're talking about sediment – it will define your 'quality' in a different way (and all are useful but asking to define more important is tough). Upon completion of the poll, a discussion was held around climate change and environmental justice indicators and how best to discuss those indicators.

Fran Dunwell shared that HREP decided to separate climate change on its own as rather than across the various goals. Fran added that for EJ, they have great success in education but not on habitat. Shino Tanikawa suggested both ways would be important – across each of HEP's goals would provide an interesting story and framework while also highlighted together in their own section. Judith Weis indicated that it would be easier to connect climate change indicators within each goal, but EJ will likely not fit and would need its own section. Shino suggested EJ be embedded in each goal when thinking about geography, it would be interesting to see high levels of enterococcus, for example, and the location of the EJ communities. Judith agreed but cautioned correlation is not necessarily causation and may not be as productive. Pinar Balci indicated that NYCDEP also working to carve out EJ and define disadvantage communities. Rob Pirani shared that relative to the BIL funding, while we wait for EPA guidance, potentially what we may do is use the federal tools and overlay the state designations on top of that to see how all three partners correlated with one another. Lingard Knutson added that NY, NJ, and EPA EJ screen do correlate well in their identification of Disadvantaged communities. Isabelle Stinnette informed the Management Committee of the importance on the indicators we are looking to track are trackable. Tracy Brown suggested that EJ

indicators should look towards making progress in not making those communities EJ. HEP already has some of those EJ indicators, but looking at it in an EJ lens, for example, reducing bacteria levels increases on-water recreation, increases public access locations and opportunities for riparian buffers.

7. DC Legislative Update

Rob Pirani provided an update on the Federal FY 23 appropriations and thanked the CAC for their efforts and assistance in advancing the appropriations. There are several projects that will be advanced by the USACE, NYCDEP, NJDEP, and NYC Parks. Scenic Hudson and Baykeeper have been pushing the NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act. This has bipartisan support but seems to be stuck in committee. Lisa Baron shared that the Harlem River Feasibility Study did not make it the cut. There were several community grants that were submitted, and our submitted projects were not included. Marit Larson and Pinar Balci thanked Lisa for her effort.

8. Updates from Work Groups and Committee Chairs

- Water Quality Work Group: Lisa Congiu shared the WQWG focused on the IUP where HEP's CCMP is included in the state's scoring, we encourage the Management Committee to reflect on the process and how the WQWG could help advance it. The WQWG also received an update on the LIS Modeling effort and encouraged the Committee to consider ways in which we may support NYCDEP in calibration and validation efforts for the entire NY Harbor.
- Restoration Work Group: Lisa Baron shared the work group was able to walk through Soundview and discuss lessons learned from the ecosystem restoration. In addition to program updates, it was great to see transformation of various sites. Marit Larson added that while they were a small group, it was nice to bring everyone together again and moving forward something the work group will evaluate for future in person meetings.
- Urban Waters Federal Partnerships: Liz Balladares shared that the [Lower Passaic celebrated its 10th year anniversary](#). In addition to a press release, they partnered with Wilderness Inquiry to bring students onto the Passaic through canoes. Rob Pirani shared that HEP is on the second round of interviews for the Bronx-Harlem River Ambassador and hope to have the position filled in July.
- Public Access Work Group: Rob Pirani shared that the group will be meeting next week to receive updates from Pratt on their online mapping tool of public access sites and the status of +Pool's application.
- Citizen Advisory Committee: Allison Fitzgerald shared the CAC heard from two NJ Bayshore groups focused on horseshoe crab and microplastic monitoring. This was highly engaging. SeaScouts also shared their program to the CAC. They are looking to create an ecological center on the Rahway River with a goal to increase community engagement. We also have polled the CAC to understand their engagement and interest.
- Harbor Educators Work Group: Rosana Da Silva shared that the work group will be meeting later this month to discuss evaluations, metrics, and what collective impacts could look like for the work group.
- Science and Technical Advisory Committee: Rob Pirani shared the committee is meeting on Friday and an update will be provided by either of the two chairs, Jon Kramer or Judith Weis.