



## Policy Committee Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)

March 31, 2017

Hudson River Foundation

### Participants

**Policy Committee:** Chris Daggett (HRF, Chair), Col. David Caldwell (ACE), Angela Licata (NYC DEP), Dan Kennedy (NJ DEP-alt, phone), Bernice Malione (PANYNJ), Phyllis Reich (NJ Local Government- alt, phone), Charles Warren (CAC), Dennis Suszkowski (STAC), Rick Balla (representing EPA), Jason Fagel (representing NYSDEC),

**Management Committee:** Clay Sherman (NJ DEP), Shino Tanikawa (CAC), Judith Weis (STAC), Rob Pirani (HEP), Lisa Baron (ACE), Peter Wepler (ACE),

**Others in attendance:** Peter Brandt (EPA), Rick Winfield (EPA), Nesmarie Negron (EPA), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC), Joe Seebode (ACE), Greg Alber (NJHDG)

**HRF/HEP Office Staff:** Ariane Giudicelli, Isabelle Stinnette, Sarah Lerman-Sinkoff, Sara Powell

- 1. Introductions and agenda review:** Chris Daggett chaired the meeting. Introductions were made and the agenda was reviewed.
- 2. Approval of November 30 Meeting Minutes:** The committee reviewed the minutes from the November 30 Policy Committee Meeting.

*Action: The Committee approved the minutes from the November 30 PC Meeting.*

### **3. Action Agenda & CCMP revision**

- a.** The CCMP revision process has been slowed down in order to facilitate releasing all documents as one complete package. The final draft Action Agenda has been narrowed down to a total of 35 actions and will be released this spring at the May 23<sup>rd</sup> conference. It will then be available for public review and comment. All CCMP documents will be finalized in 2018. Specific comments provided by the PC and MC will be incorporated into the May 23<sup>rd</sup> draft.

Discussion on the draft Action Agenda included the following points:

- i.** Water quality
  - 1.** The number of water quality actions has been consolidated following comments from the MC and PC. Two actions that could begin this year

include creating joint harbor water quality reports (WQ-D-1) and designing an intensive pathogen monitoring plan in select near-shore areas (WQ-C-1).

2. Following discussions with EPA and the two states, HEP revised the wording of Action WQ-A-2 – now Supporting the States and EPA in the their development of consistent standards. Going forward, EPA and the states must develop their own timeline first, after which HEP can assist in meeting the goals associated with this action.
3. Regarding the joint Harbor Water Quality Report, the committee expressed the need for data interpretation and that HEP should focus their efforts. Also could help showcase where and when emerging contaminant data is collected and by which agencies/organizations. Addressing data gaps should also be a key focus and question for this document and the upcoming State of the Estuary Report as well as the Environmental Monitoring Plan.
4. Involving public health agencies and ensuring state agencies are actively involved in any work carried out under action WQ-C-1 is key.

ii. Habitat

1. Two actions that may move forward this year include H-A-1: Evaluate ways to reduce costs of restoration and H-B-2: Assess and interpret shoreline and shallow-water habitat condition/value. H-A-1 would use the power of citizens by creating an estuary-wide hub for contributing project information, while H-B-2 would focus on how to create more valuable habitat by narrowing down research priorities with HEP's Restoration Work Group.
2. The committee felt that strengthen links between water quality improvements and habitat enhancements could be a means of addressing H-A-1 – increasing investment in restoration. EPA could be a partner in this effort.
3. HEP is also working with the Science and Resilience Institute to develop a metrics and monitoring protocol, which will help inform H-B-2. In addition, HEP is looking into the valuation of ecosystem services and is planning to schedule a June workshop on this topic.
4. The USACE Engineering Research Development Center is a valuable resource that may be useful for addressing H-B-2 and H-C-1.
5. Helping identify and rank future opportunities is key in order to get more interest and impact in restoration. . Creating a prioritization tool (H-A-4) would help focus on future opportunities by the PANYNJ and others.

iii. Public Access

1. The two actions HEP will focus on in the near-term include advancing opportunities for increasing public access in high need areas (PA-A-1) and supporting stewardship and programming through small grants (PA-B-2).

iv. Port and Maritime

1. The HRF is undertaking action M-A-1: Map current sediment quality conditions in the estuary and identify changes over the last 15 years during his CARP II presentation.

HEP requested the approval of the PC to finalize the Action Agenda document. A graphic designer will work on the document prior to the conference.

*Action: The PC approved the current Draft Action Agenda unanimously.*

*Action: HEP will circulate the final Draft Action Agenda to the MC and PC for one last review prior to the May conference.*

*Action: EPA and the states will confer report back on their timeline for Action WQ-A-2 – supporting development of consistent standards - at the next PC meeting in July.*

**4. Contaminated Sediment Reduction Project Phase II (CARP II): presentation by Dennis Suzkowski**

NY has the third largest port in the nation. The serious contamination issues first came to light when changes in regulatory standards took place roughly 20 years ago. These resulted in a greater than 90% contamination rate for PCBs and Dioxin in the Harbor. Because of this contamination, the costs associated with the re-use of sediments are extremely high. The true costs were somewhat masked by the capital funding provided by the harbor deepening project; the maintenance dredging budget has not increased proportionally.

The original CARP program put together a plan for field sampling and modeling future contamination scenarios to estimate contaminant sources and sinks. Contaminants are widespread but concentrations in the sediments are generally higher than those from any ongoing sources. Dominant sources of PCBs include the upper Hudson and estuary sediments. Without any remediation activities, contaminant levels will still continue to decline over time, but some areas will continue to experience high levels of sediment contamination.

CARP II will look at whether the predictions of the CARP program were correct and will seek to answer questions for a shorter time horizon (5-10 years). HRF is signing a \$4M agreement with NJDOT and is partnering with Monmouth University, Rutgers University, HDR, University of

Rhode Island and Manhattan College. As with CARP I, a management committee is being established. HEP will serve to ensure that the results are shared with partners.

**5. Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment for the Hudson Raritan Estuary – Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study:** presentation by Lisa Baron

The report was released last month and public meetings are being held next week. The report was a culmination of a number of studies, some of which began in the 90s and 2000s. A total of 33 sites are being recommended within the report, with over 250 sites for future feasibility studies. Identifying the next sites as well as sponsors is crucial to maintain progress on restoration activities. There are a large number of wetland-based recommendations in the report. The final draft report will be released in 2018 following which funding will be authorized for future budget cycles.

The restoration work group has been focused on advancing the CRP. The 2014-2016 restoration report was just finalized which provides an update on TEC progress. Some of the 2020 goals have already been achieved while others are going to be more challenging to meet. Additional research is needed on eelgrass beds for example.

*Action: HEP will work with US ACE to publicize the public meetings and the report with the public and decision makers.*

**6. Bronx & Harlem Urban Waters Federal Partnership/Harlem River Watershed Plan:** presentation by Sara Powell

The partnership connects resources with communities in the Bronx and Harlem watersheds in order to advance restoration opportunities. A significant amount of work has been ongoing in the Bronx so the focus for the following year will be in the Harlem.

NYC Parks is developing a watershed plan to address stormwater management issues. Key outcomes will include identifying implementation areas and funding sources. Some areas have already been identified and figuring out where the community wants to focus efforts is a priority. The plan is scheduled to be complete by spring 2019.

Two immediate priorities have been identified, including looking at shoreline hardening and restoration opportunities as well as daylighting Tibbetts Brook, which is currently piped underground into the sewer system.

**7. May 23<sup>rd</sup> Thirty Year Celebration Conference**

HEP and HREP will be holding a collaborative conference at the NYU Law Campus. The morning will start off with panel discussions on water quality, habitat restoration and public access,

followed by a panel of leadership from EPA and the two states. The afternoon will focus on a celebration of partners and achievements.

*Action: HEP will circulate the draft agenda and our call for awards to the MC and PC committees*

## **8. Workplan and budget update**

The budget for the 2017 workplan is uncertain at this point and will be until early May. As a result, the draft workplan will be circulated in May for approval. In addition to meeting office costs, we are hopeful that the budget may allow for some expenditures towards the priorities identified in the Action Agenda discussion.

HEP has been working with ANEP and the CAC to let Congress know about the estuary programs and what they do. An Estuary Caucus of congressional members was formed to support the programs. Rob Pirani and Chris Daggett will be going to DC in May to meet with the Caucus and brief members.

## **9. Other Business**

Agency collaboration is very important and sharing information across programs is necessary for successful outcomes. Col. Caldwell's in-person attendance at the meetings has been greatly appreciated by all of the committee. This is his last HEP PC meeting.

In the current political climate, there is uncertainty as to what direction habitat restoration will go in. Restoration needs to be framed in terms of infrastructure improvement in order to be valued.

HRES is holding a conference on May 3<sup>rd</sup> on the future of energy and the role of the Hudson as an energy transmission corridor.