



Management Committee Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2017

Participants

Management Committee: Rob Pirani (HEP), Doug Adamo (NPS), Peter Weppeler (USACE), Lisa Baron (USACE), Karen Greene (NOAA), Clay Sherman (NJDEP), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Dana Mecomber (PANYNJ), Meredith Comi (CAC), Shino Tanikawa (CAC), Sean Dixon (CAC), Dennis Suszkowski (HRF/STAC), Phil DeGaetano (WQWG, phone), Rick Balla (USEPA), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Karen Greene (NOAA, phone), Pinar Balci (NYCDEP), Ann Fraoli (NY Harbor School)

Others in attendance: Rick Winfield (EPA), Chris Zeppie (HEP Consultant), Nellie Tsipoura (CAC), Lisa Oberreiter (NJHDG), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC/HREP)

HRF/HEP Office Staff: Isabelle Stinnette, Sarah Lerman-Sinkoff, Ariane Giudicelli, Jim Lodge

1. The minutes from the March 15th meeting were tentatively approved, pending any final comments from the committee.

Action Item: Please send in any comments on the minutes to Rob by June 21st.

2. **Review of the proposed 2017-2018 Workplan and Budget:** The total budget is \$730K, of which approximately \$400K is allocated for support of the three full time and two part time staff. The allocation of the match from HRF is calculated differently, and now includes the contribution by HRF of its uncompensated indirect costs in addition to grants allocated by the Hudson River Fund in support of scientific research in the estuary. \$20K has been allocated to producing a joint water quality report. The budget includes funding for support of the Urban Waters Ambassadors in the Passaic and Bronx/Harlem Rivers. Non-EPA sources include NOAA and NYSERDA in support of workshops for metrics and monitoring of natural and nature based features. This effort involves a number of partners. HRF is contracting with Resources for the Future to look at valuation of ecosystem services in restoration decisions. A workshop is being held later this summer.

Action Item: Rob is looking for final comments from the MC by June 21st. The workplan will then be submitted to the PC for official approval.

3. **Action Agenda Update:** The final draft was released at the sold-out conference on May 23rd and will be available for public comment until July 14. Comments to date include a recommendation to review and identify common ground with the priorities identified by the Hudson River Estuary Program and the NYS Ocean Action plan. Proposed revisions will be drafted by September for

review at the September MC meeting and a final version will be presented to the Policy Committee for approval in November 2018.

Action Items:

- *Please send HEP staff any final comments by July 14.*
- *A PC meeting will be scheduled for November; The Policy Committee will not meet in July.*

4. Funding Report

This white paper identifies potential sources of funds to enable progress on the priorities identified in the Action Agenda. Rob and consultant Chris Zeppie examined various sources and came up with a total of 28 potential funding options. Some of the options had more administrative and political feasibility than others. These options were scored with the help of an expert committee convened by Chuck Warren from the PC and the top 11 were identified and presented to the MC.

Compared to other Estuary Programs, HEP is underfunded, especially when looking at the population that we serve in this area. There was a need to consider the broadest base possible for funding. Some options identified include (see handout for the complete list):

- A stormwater user fee based on impervious surface/discharge (this has the potential for making dramatic improvements to water quality);
- Tax assessment districts (San Francisco Bay proposed a tax by referendum which gives them the ability to fund major capital projects);
- Environmental benefit agreements for public infrastructure projects, such as the proposed gateway tunnel;
- Coordinated private philanthropy;
- PANYNJ Hudson Raritan Estuary Resources Program;
- NYS Environmental Protection Fund and NJ Green and Blue Acres Programs.

Additional potential sources highlighted by the MC include pushing for additional federal resources through the National estuary program or otherwise, the possibility of using local real estate transfer taxes, and examining and cross referencing Chapter 5 of the CRP for a list of funding strategies for restoration. Sources of funding for specific action agenda priorities will be referenced in the revised action agenda.

Action Item: Please prioritize the funding options and send us any additional comments by June 28. The report will be finalized and submitted to the program for consideration.

- 5. Environmental Monitoring Plan and State of the Estuary:** Following preparation of the draft Action Agenda, HEP has been focused on creation of these two documents and how they relate

to each other. We are in the process of determining what formats these reports should be in and the intended audiences, as well as what level of detail they should go into.

A monitoring plan was last created in 1996. As part of this updated plan, we will review the original environmental indicators and determine which ones are still applicable and useful. Potential new indicators will also be reviewed and will include those for which there are data available and those that we ideally would like to collect data for moving forward. This plan will include a complete compilation and review of what's available in the region – the metadata – which will require input from partners including IEC and the Shared Waterways Monitoring Workgroup, as well as the STAC and others. The plan will also look into data management strategies, opportunities for partners to help meet monitoring needs and funding requirements for any new/expanded future monitoring.

Two State of the Estuary reports have been produced since the original CCMP – the Health of the Harbor report in 2004 and the last State of the Estuary in 2012. The new report will present trends analyses using data for a subset of indicators identified in the Environmental Monitoring Plan and will look at case studies. It will include a scorecard function for presenting information in an attractive, straightforward way for the public.

To provide some general initial guidance, the MC ranked old and new habitat indicators using Mentimeter and suggested additional indicators.

Ariane and Isabelle will be examining data availability and beginning to assemble the metadata common to both reports this summer. A draft outline will be presented to the Management Committee in September for review.

6. Independent Evaluation of the PCB dredging program

Dennis and Jim presented the report of an expert panel convened by HRF to evaluate the benefits of the Upper Hudson dredging by GE. Most dredging was completed in River Section 1, upstream of Thompson Island Dam. All of the data being presented is preliminary, but results show that water column PCB concentrations were lower post-dredging compared to pre-dredging and during dredging. Results for fish are more mixed. When looking at flows, PCBs are well below pre-dredging values (factor of 2) below 13,000 cfs, however high-flow post-dredging results are unclear. There were few high-flow events in 2016 ; additional monitoring would improve understanding of what is happening under high-flow conditions. The method that GE has been using for PCB analysis has high variability between samples) and should be reviewed, but the preferred method is more expensive.

- 7. PANYNJ Port Master Plan:** Dana provided an update on this work. The plan is still in the early stages, with ongoing stakeholder engagement. A planning summit was held in May along with briefings with elected officials. Community briefings will be held over the next month. A draft plan will be produced for early 2018.

Action Item: Please let Dana know if you want to participate in one of the briefings.

8. **CAC Update:** The CAC has created a new citizen science work group to help advance citizen science efforts in the Estuary. Michelle Luebke (Bronx River Alliance) and Meredith Comi will be the leads. The CAC is considering producing a report next year and perhaps holding a conference.

9. **Announcements:**
 - The annual Harbor Inspection will be on September 20th.
 - The next MC meeting is September 13th and will be in NJ.