



## Management Committee Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2020 (DRAFT)

Hudson River Foundation – Remote Meeting

### Participants

**Management Committee:** Rick Balla (EPA), Lisa Baron (USACE, RWG), Dan Birkett (EPA), Lisa Bloodgood (Newtown Creek Alliance, CAC), Brett Branco (CUNY, WQWG), Liz Butler (EPA), Chris Daggett (Policy Committee Chair), Fran Dunwell (NYSDEC), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Margaret Flanagan (Waterfront Alliance, PAWG), Ann Fraioli (BOP, NY-Educator), Marit Larson (NYC Parks, RWG), Tom Lausten (NJHDG), Jim Lodge (HRF, STAC co-chair), Lingard Knutson (EPA), Jessie Murray (NOAA), Rob Pirani (HEP), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Sara Powell (UWFP), Patti Rafferty (NPS), Clay Sherman (NJDEP), Melissa Sinisgalli (NJHDG/PVSC), Shino Tanikawa (NYC SWIM, CAC), Judith Weis (Rutgers, STAC), Cathy Yugas (NJ Educator)

**HRF/HEP Office Staff:** Helena Andreyko, Elizabeth Balladares, Rosana Da Silva, Clay Hiles, Isabelle Stinnette

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome and agenda review

Rob Pirani reviewed the agenda.

#### 2. New Members

Rob Pirani introduced Tom Lausten, PVSC's new chief operating officer, who will be filling in for the recently retired Bridget McKenna.

#### 3. Review and approval of minutes of March 2020 Meeting

Rob Pirani reviewed the March minutes.

**Action:** March 2020 minutes were approved, motioned by Jason Fagel and seconded by Clay Sherman.

#### 4. FY 2021 Workplan Update

Rob Pirani shared that the FY 2021 Workplan was approved by the Policy Committee on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Since then, EPA has secured an addition \$140,000 to support the two Urban Waters Federal Partnership Ambassadors for the Bronx/Harlem and the Lower Passaic Rivers. In addition, \$36,160 has been received from EPA's Urban Waters Partnership Region's Choice to advance nature-based shoreline projects in the Bronx and Harlem Rivers that Isabelle will discuss later. This brings the total budget to \$838,660. We are still waiting to hear about three other outstanding grant proposals – NYSP21 for a project on trash free waters in the Bronx River, North Face Foundation for a community stewardship project on the Passaic River, and Battery Park City Authority to develop a restoration plan in the Battery.

Rick Balla shared economic analysis-related work that EPA will be shortly kicking off with HEP, NEIWPC, and USACE. \$200,000 of S106 funds will be used to support this effort. NEIWPC will release more information shortly, but we are still working out the project and potential uses. Maggie Flanagan and Brett Branco asked if the economic impact study will be about the value of natural features, or the commercial port, or both? Rick and Rob noted that with funding being limited, this has not yet been defined but it is that we cover both sets of issues. But it is clear that the study will be about the economic activity associated with the estuary, not ecosystem services per se. Rob Pirani noted that the Management Committee and the CAC will be the first order audience for this project and we plan to query HEP partners as to what data would be most useful.

Rob Pirani informed the committee that Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) and EPA have issued an RFP for the NEP Coastal Watersheds Grant Program. The \$1.5 million will be distributed in \$75-200,000 grants to achieve CCMP/AA (and other state and local coastal watershed plan) goals. An inquiry letter is due August 3<sup>rd</sup>. HEP is charged with preparing an acknowledgement letter for all proposals in our watershed and we are working on a standard template. Applicants are allowed to submit or partner in up to 3 projects. We have been discussing topics with partners for projects that address Action Agenda priorities and RFP requirements.

Rob Pirani updated the committee on the proposed WRDA 2020 bills. The draft House bill is likely to contain language authorizing the HRE Feasibility Study, recently approved by the USACE's Chief, which will help us move forward much needed restoration work in the region. The draft Senate bill reauthorizes the National Estuary Program, which in future years would provide additional funds to HEP and sister estuary programs through annual appropriations as well as the competitive grant program administered by RAE.

Action: Please consider opportunities available through the NEP Coastal Watersheds Grant Program.

#### **5. HEP and Partner Response to COVID-19**

Rosana Da Silva announced the Harbor Educators' resource catalog that enables parents and teachers with the ability to search and sort through partner's virtual, sustainably focused, place-based programs. This catalog, available at <https://www.hudsonriver.org/article/educational-resource-guide>, also includes a web map that links to organizations and their education website regardless of their resources included in the catalog. The WQWG has been working on collecting and resources that provide the best available science and guidance on SARS-CoV-2 and potential impacts in surface waters. This includes looking at resources being used by agencies in their development/modifications of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for water quality monitoring and best science available on the potential risks, if any, of the virus in surface waters.

Jim Lodge shared that the Hudson River Foundation has been speaking to researchers and looking in how we could best help advance understanding of the virus and its viability in surface waters. HRF will be providing a small grant to Queens College to run their positive RT-qPCR samples through assay to see if the virus is viral. These samples were taken near Flushing Bay's CSO. In addition, we will be funding Queens College to take additional samples in the mixing zones.

#### **6. Monitoring Natural and Nature Based Resiliency Features**

Isabelle Stinnette provided an overview of *Measuring Success - Monitoring Natural and Nature-based Shoreline Features in New York State*. This two-year initiative was managed by the Science & Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay and sponsored by the NYS Department of State (DOS), with funds from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and NYS Energy Research and Development Authority. The final monitoring framework is available at [www.dos.ny.gov/opd/monitoring.html](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/monitoring.html). HEP was part of the project's steering committee, organized regional workshops, and worked to collect data to test the framework in the field. An academic paper is currently in production. NYSDOS is committed to the project (post meeting note – DOS recently announced support for monitoring using the framework in Long Island and the Great Lakes). We are encouraging partners to use the framework to collect the data needed for shoreline assessments. As one example, HEP was successful in receiving ~\$36K in EPA grant funding to monitor sites in the Bronx/Harlem Rivers starting summer 21 and 22.

Maggie Flanagan asked if Isabelle sees this as part of Citizen Science or education and what is its complexity? Isabelle indicated that although the training is a bit rigorous, there are aspects that can be led by citizen scientists. Brett Branco expanded that when choosing indicators and protocols, we did not want it to be highly specialized and the intent is for a civic accessibility. Brett did note that a class in CUNY did implement the protocols. Clay Sherman asked if anyone at NJDEP has gotten back to HEP about this and other coastal resilience issues proposed for consideration as part of the State's resiliency planning? Rob Pirani noted he did receive an acknowledgement letter but would be great to follow up.

#### **7. Passaic Shoreline Project**

Liz Balladares, through the Lower Passaic River Urban Waters Federal Partnership, has been working with the Passaic River CAG and EPA to advance goals of dredging and capping of the Lower Passaic and its relationship to shoreline improvements. The conditions along the shoreline in the Lower Passaic are in poor condition. Addressing these issues now will improve the effectiveness of the dredging while modifying shorelines will be more challenging post-remediation. The Partnership discussed ways to connect with landowners to identify funding sources or other methods to incentivize improving the shoreline, restoring habitat, and increasing public access. Liz noted that the Partnership has been assessing model sites and distributing information for landowners. One particular point of partnership could be shoreline improvements associated with addressing the 54 CSO in the lower 8.3 miles of the shoreline.

Rob Pirani noted that incentivizing landowners to act now would be helpful and we are actively looking for funding to support this effort.

**8. Update on Harbor Water Quality Report**

Rosana Da Silva provided an updated on the Harbor-wide Water Quality Report. She highlighted several maps and graphs that will be used in the upcoming draft for the Management Committee to review. The report will include several maps, one that show cases the publicly owned treatment works' (POTWs) service area and their outfalls, to help connect the land to our waters, and point sources and their proximity to primary or secondary recreational activities. Tom Lausten made suggestions to the POTW map and offered to check on the PVSC service area. Rick Balla will share this with his team for comments, but noted that the maps look great. Maggie Flanagan and Rob Pirani provided additional comments on coloring and details to the map. Clay Sherman suggested speaking further for additional data NJDEP may have. The draft report will be sent to MC for review and approval later this summer/fall following WQWG review.

Action: Please be on the lookout for the draft report.

**9. Overcoming Biases and Improving Community Engagement at HEP**

Elizabeth Balladares updated the committee on the conversation and discussions being held within the CAC. The CAC held a large meeting with over 75 participants to talk about how we can overcome biases in our work and tools for including diversity into the conversations regarding community and the environment. Maria Lopez Nunez from Iron Bound Community Corporation was one of the speakers. The CAC will be working towards the tasks outlined by Maria for us to consider. Creation of this roadmap will include specific goals and tasks that HEP and partners can commit to for meaningful and authentic engagement and overcoming bias in collective efforts. Rob Pirani noted that last fall, HEP committed to focus our annual conference on community engagement and will commit conference funds toward supporting these discussions. The conference will be convening online and look to advance a series of these discussions. Maggie Flanagan echoed support for small separate workshops that are really nice and supportive of smaller convening.

Action: Please be on the look out for draft conference agenda and other materials for feedback.

**10. Updates from Work Groups and Committee Chairs**

- Water Quality Work Group: Brett Branco stated that at our last meeting NJDEP provided an overview of their beach monitoring program. The WQWG is supportive of NJDEP's efforts to expand the program to include sites in the Lower Bay region as well as the USGS's efforts in furthering our understanding of near-shore pathogen along the Harlem River through microbial source tracking. The Continuous Subcommittee met back in May

to learn more about the LIS study and [developed a map](#) outlining locations and equipment used. As per our bylaws, we are seeking a new chair to begin in 2021.

- Restoration Work Group: Lisa Baron shared that RWG's last meeting focused on a group update on all restoration efforts in the region in addition of the [Chief's Report authorization](#) of the HRE. There are a number of projects happening with a lot of partners. The RWG is examining how best to update the CRP sites and database. The database has been managed by HEP and CUNY. We are working on a survey to better understand how we are using the CRP and how we can update information on the webpage as necessary. A key issues is how best to integrate other agency lists.
- Public Access Work Group: Maggie Flanagan noted that HEP and partners Waterfront Alliance, NYC Planning and NYC Parks held a great workshop in January to advance and help build capacity for community stewardship of public access areas. The summary is available on the HEP website. The workshop addresses a priority of the Action Agenda and as well as issues identified in the Alliance's Public Access Task Force report on '[Waterfront Access for All](#)'. HEP co-chaired the Task Force. The Work Group met In April to discuss follow up, including the updated guide for boating.
- Citizen Advisory Committee/Urban Waters Federal Partnerships: Liz Balladares shared that City of Water Day has been postponed to September 12<sup>th</sup>. As with last year, we are partnering with the Waterfront Alliance and focusing on celebrating resiliency efforts. HEP will be providing funding ( about 15 ~\$1,000 grants) to community groups to participate in City of Water Day.

#### 11. Partner Updates

- Fran Dunwell shared that the Hudson River Estuary Program has been working with HEP on a joint State of the Judson. We are hoping to release the report this fall.