

Public Access Work Group Meeting Minutes (DRAFT May 12) Via Zoom April 5, 2020

You can find all of the zoom chat messages [here](#).

1. **Welcome and Agenda Review**
2. **Waterfront Public Access During and After COVID 19**

Maggie Flanagan from Waterfront Alliance led a discussion on what is appropriate/working under the circumstances, including how are people addressing current needs and preparing for the summer season, especially how to adjust without working directly with their usual targeted audience/public or specific stewardship spot? For example, Waterfront Alliance has developed an online learning platform.

- Chris Girgenti from RIPA is developing online content, report worksheets, did a survey for users as to what they need. Focusing content on Randall's Island but are willing to adjust content to things that can be done by simply looking out the window
- Hugh Carola from Hackensack Riverkeeper has developed protocols for how to clean boats for now, in case we can open adult solo kayaking programs. Also focused on illegal dumping in Bergen County and Hudson County. Eco-cruises have now been postponed.
- Roland Lewis from Waterfront Alliance encouraged people to look into the payroll protection act as it is up and running. Allows for low- interest loans and possible loan forgiveness.
- Melissa Cohen from DEC has put together a piece for anglers
- Lisa Bloodgood from Newtown Creek - One possibility we've discussed is putting out a short video that talks about our plants (a video that can touch on something like identifying weeds to safely encourage folks to protect themselves and do some weeding of their own.
- Teri Carta from Brooklyn Greenway Initiative – they are closing Naval Cemetery and figuring out how to maintain with volunteers / staff only days. Invasive plants as a key issue.

- Maggie Greenfield from Bronx River Alliance - Crews are out doing field work / vehicle transport is a key constraint. Have gone to extended work days. There is no monitoring at fishway / going out once a week
- Lisa Robson from NY4P – Seeking funding for park maintenance through play fair campaign. Asked for \$ 200 million – prioritizing on front line work for keeping park safe. Invite folks to join on. Focused on how to ensure that parks are able to invest in maintenance now so things are ready for crowds during peak season.
- Sarah Neilson from Dept of Park noted that parks are open; marina and kayak launches are closed (n.b. launches for individual kayaking are now open).
- Maggie noted an important issue will be how to control for crowds as we go forward during the summer and people are moving towards being outside. Rob Buchanan noted issues with narrow waterfront walkways.
- Lynn Dwyer from NFWF asked how NGOs are migrating programs to online platforms: Diana Gruberg from Gowanus Canal Conservancy noted that they gotten the ok from DEC grantors to move the physical component of our education programs to online versions. City discretionary funding is a little more difficult and we're still trying to figure out whether we'll be able to do that. Lucy Robson noted the question of how to categorize essential park activity – what is included and what is not? How will this impact us going forward?
- Courtney Worrell from NPCA noted that they have developed a set of recommendations for GNRA and is working on list of recommendations for all waterfront parks.
- Rosana Da Silva mentioned that the HEP educators webinar is coming up April 7. They are working on a catalog of online resources educational resources (now available at <https://www.hudsonriver.org/article/educational-resource-guide>).
- Two possible action Items for the work group to consider going forward. Staff will review with PAWG members to see what is needed:
 - Facilitating information sharing on best practices during COVID for local waterfront programs.
 - Serve a clearinghouse/amplifier for how best elevate grant support available for local non profits.

3. Status of NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan

10:00-10:15 AM

Allan Zaretsky from New York City Planning provided a brief update on the plan and status, focusing on potential public access elements.

- City Planning was planning to hold a workshop in each borough with opportunities to give feedback on specific stretches of waterfront. Right now we're transitioning and focusing on online engagement. Focused on creating as many of those online engagement opportunities as much as we can given the resources available, especially on engaging youth and schools on the plan and doing this virtually. They are also using this opportunity to do additional research and analysis. We're at a point where we have had some more time to actually go through the feedback received from the City and compare to other research and analysis. They are still working towards ensuring that the framework for the plan is available this fall.
- In response to a question from Rob Buchanan, Michael Marella stated that there are no major shifts in policy that have happened. From the start the process has focused on three major concepts: resiliency, equity, health. Allan noted that the focus for public access will continue to remain on the improvement and expansion and access to the waterfront and improving in-water access – in particular where neither of those two things exist.
- Shino Tanikawa noted that it was good to know equity is one of the three focus areas. But we need to be very thoughtful about public engagement in the area of equity. There is a significant digital and language divide in this city, that has been illuminated too painfully during this crisis. Owen Foote stated that one policy shift would be that NYC would be required to consider including on water access when public shoreline is improved - that hits all three goals. Graeme stated that water access has both a qualitative and quantitative component. It is a city of eight million people designing access points for just a few users is the same as not providing access. Back in the 1930s Robert Moses built parks like Orchard Beach that could handle lots of people. Modern access points to the water often have much less capacity. Louis Kleinman noted that participatory budgeting has the problem of being subject to the desires of a coordinated block of people. Example: Improvements to schools will always outweigh waterfront improvements in the vote. One suggestion would be to have a percentage of approved projects reserved for items that doesn't have a vested constituency.

4. Community Stewardship Workshop

10:15-10:30 AM

More than 50 people gathered in January to discuss how to improve community stewardship along the waterfront. The summary is available here: <https://www.hudsonriver.org/article/public-access-work-group>. Rob reviewed the key concepts that emerged from discussions on Funding and Other Capacity-Building Issues; Cooperation Challenges with public and private partners; Safety/Liability Issues; and Physical Challenges including Water Accessibility and Necessary Utilities.

5. Discussion/Prioritization of Issues for Work Group

10:30-11:00 AM

Ten issues have emerged as being potential focal points for the Work Group. These were drawn from the HEP Action Agenda, Waterfront Alliance Public Access Task Force, Comprehensive Waterfront Plan workshop on Public Access and In-Water Access, and the Community Stewardship workshop (see attached for list). These were discussed and ranked via a survey.

Three issues were identified, with # 3 being the clear priority of the group (see survey results attached):

3. Facilitate communication on governance process for both waterfront design and permitting; particularly regarding agency goals, permits and rezoning; procurement and capital planning processes; and support for waterfront and underserved communities
4. Provide technical assistance to help community organizations identify and advance waterfront stewardship projects and help coordinate agency participation
10. Serve as forum for amplifying public access voice in advocacy efforts, including proposed NYS Bond Act and funding for public access in underserved areas

The group discussed the reasons why # 3 was important and how the Work Group might take this on:

- Important to help agencies do the right thing to bring community groups to the table.
- There is a need for technical guidance e.g. work that TPL provides in the Lower Passaic and elsewhere
- Helping communities get involved in waterfront certification process (e.g. Gowanus Canal Conservancy)
- Great to provide collective support for navigating process for folks who want to get involved, including wetland permitting and resiliency projects.
- Could be useful to start an online document for best efforts for virtual and online engagement.
- Particular issues include advancing design that elevates consideration of accessibility of the entire experience, from parking (point of entry to site), to an accessible pathway to the point of entry, and associated facilities, i.e. ADA



restrooms, shelter, etc. A focus could be on considerations for people with disabilities.

6. HEP Paddling Guide

11:00- 11:15 AM

HEP is planning to update its 2008 Harbor Paddling Guide: www.hudsonriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WaterTrailGuide0710.pdf. Rob discussed goals and possible formats for this communication tool and encouraged people to let him know if they were interested in working on this document after Oct 1.

April 2020 Public Access Work Group Participants

Alex Zablocki	Jamaica Bay - Rockaway Parks Conservancy
Allan Zaretsky	New York City Department of City Planning
Chrissy Ward	Partnership for Parks/City Parks Foundation
Christopher Girgenti	Randalls Island Park Alliance
Christopher Wassif	New York City Department of City Planning
Cory Mann	New York City Department of City Planning
Cortney Worrell	NPCA
Diane Gruberg	Gowanus Canal Conservancy
Elizabeth Balladares	NYNJ Harbor & Estuary Program
Graeme Birchall	Downtown Boat Club
Helena Andreyko	Hudson River Foundation
Jason Smith	New York Restoration Project
Karen Argenti	BCEQ
Lisa Bloodgood	Newtown Creek Alliance
Lisa Scheppke	Guardians of Jamaica Bay
Louis Kleinman	Waterfront Alliance
Lucy Robson	New Yorkers for Parks
Lynn Dwyer	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Maggie Greenfield	Bronx River Alliance
Margaret Flanagan	Waterfront Alliance
Maura Lout	Central Park Conservancy
Melissa Cohen	NYS DEC
Michael Marrella	New York City Department of City Planning
Michelle Lubke	Bronx River Alliance
Nancy Brous	NYC Water Trail
Nancy W Beard	NYS Hudson River Estuary Program
Natasia Sidarta	Gowanus Canal Conservancy
Owen Foote	Gowanus Dredgers
Pamela Pettyjohn	Coney Island Beautification
Rob Buchanan	Billion Oyster Project
Rob Pirani	NYNJ Harbor & Estuary Program
Robert William Balder	Cornell University
Roland Lewis	Waterfront Alliance
Rosana Da Silva	NYNJ Harbor & Estuary Program
Sara Powell	Bronx/Harlem River Urban Waters Partnership
Sarah Murphy	EDC
Sarah Neilson	New York City Parks and Recreation
Scott Dvorak	The Trust for Public Land
Shino Tanikawa	NYC Soil and Water Conservation District
Terri Carta	Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
Tim Dillingham	ALS
Willis Elkins	Newtown Creek Alliance
Zoe Piccolo	New York City Parks

Potential Issues for Public Access Work Group

Key Criteria for Consideration

- Identified Priority in recent Public Forums and Workshops
- Unique Role of HEP Public Access Work Group vs Other Forums/Coalitions
- Requires Sharing of Professional Expertise to Accomplish
- Timeliness of Issue

Issues

- Advance clear and flexible design guidelines on entrance and egress from the water that support human powered boating. This could include opportunities for improving safe exits, and ensuring access to emergency landings.
- Advance design and maintenance standards and potential funding for unpaved trails/access points on beaches and other “soft” shorelines.
- Facilitate communication on governance process for both waterfront design and permitting; particularly regarding agency goals, permits and rezoning; procurement and capital planning processes; and support for waterfront and underserved communities.
- Provide technical assistance to help community organizations identify and advance waterfront stewardship projects and help coordinate agency participation
- Facilitate process for establishing community stewardship partnerships and help support these efforts to bring more resources to the table.
- Collaborate on common issues and solutions for indemnification questions
- Create / advance pilots for resolving utility issues including composting toilets and other “off the grid” solutions;
- Provide support for NGO grant writing and administration. In particular help provide technology and support for any required evaluative metrics;
- Provide central/universally-accepted source for water quality, water use, and related safety information (e.g. Update the paddling access guide).
- Serve as forum for amplifying public access voice in advocacy efforts, including proposed NYS Bond Act and funding for public access in underserved areas.

NY/NJ HARBOR & ESTUARY PROGRAM

Polls

Sharing Poll Results

Attendees are now viewing the poll results

1. Potential Issues for Public Access Work Group - please select your top 3. (Multiple choice)

- 1. design guidelines on entrance and egress from the water that support human powered boating (10/41) 24%
- 2. Advance unpaired trails/access points on beaches and other "soft" shorelines (11/41) 27%
- 3. governance process for both waterfront design and permitting and support for underserved communities (26/41) 63%
- 4. technical assistance to help community organizations identify and advance waterfront stewardship projects (15/41) 37%
- 5. Facilitate process for establishing community stewardship partnerships and help support these efforts (14/41) 34%
- 6. Collaborate on common issues and solutions for indemnification questions (11/41) 27%
- 7. pilots for resolving utility issues including composting toilets and other "off the grid" solutions (8/41) 20%
- 8. support for NGO grant writing and administration, in particular technology and support for evaluative metrics (9/41) 22%
- 9. (eg. Paddling Access Guide) source for water quality, water use, and related safety information (11/41) 27%
- 10. amplifying public access voice in advocacy efforts, including proposed NYS Bond Act and funding for public access in underserved areas (15/41) 37%

Stop Share Results

Re-launch Polling

Type here to search



8:38 AM
4/9/2020