

**Minutes**

Public Access Work Group  
New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program  
January 27 2021 10:30 – 12:00 PM

1. **Minutes from Sept 2020 Meeting** were approved following a motion by Hugh Carola.
2. Rob Pirani review progress towards creating a **revised Paddling Guide this coming season**. This is a key deliverable towards Action Agenda Priority PA-C-2: Public Participation: Encourage and support public participation in water-based activities. The results of the survey conducted with the Work Group in September were reviewed by a subcommittee on Jan 8 and a scope of work discussed. Conclusion was to move forward with a hard copy brochure for this season and an accessible online version as well. Pratt Institute has been retained to prepare digital and hard copy materials. The focus will be creation of a hard copy brochure by this season. The geographic scope will include all of Staten Island as well as Raritan Bay.

With help from committee members listed below, HEP staff are compiling inventories of paddling site and preparing a single database of available information. The next committee meeting will be at the end of February and new members were invited to join in the effort by emailing Rob Pirani.

Current committee members include Hugh Carola, Rob Buchanan, Graeme Birchall, Nate Grove, Owen Foote, Willes Elkins, and Margaret Flanagan [since the meeting several additional members have stepped forward to help including representatives from NJ DEP, NYS DEC, Downtown Boathouse, JBRPC, and NPS].

A draft of the guide will be presented to the Work Group at our next meeting in March.

3. Rosana Da Silva previewed the **upcoming HEP Water Quality Report and lead a discussion on possible next steps for communicating issues with the public, including addressing CSO notifications**.

HEP is seeking to identify projects to address Action Agenda Priority PA-C-1: SAFETY Increase understanding of the safety and risks associated with direct contact with

the water as part of the 2021 Workplan. With water quality report complete, the work could pivot towards focusing on communications related to real time water quality conditions and swimming.

Part of this work could relate to the use of HRECOS and Rosana shared a link to an online survey of utility of that dashboard.

Work group members discussed how the WQ report will be useful for presenting information to their constituents. Rob B asked whether citizen science data was included; Rosana noted that while CS data is referenced, it could not be included in the analysis given lack of QAPP. Rob also noted report limitation that the 10 waterbodies that are designated are not a complete list; some smaller waterbodies are overlooked because they're 'folded in' to a larger waterbody.

In terms of possible next steps, the following issues/possibilities were raised:

- Owen Foote: Need to acknowledge that proximity to CSOs does not necessarily drive water quality; no data to support this. Water flows / tides play an important role.
- Graeme Birchall: If distance to CSO is going to be a factor, then there will never be public access to the harbor. What is important is when is the CSO open.
- Rob Buchanan: The city should do a better job of modeling and notification of CSO discharges and impacts
- Tim Dillingham and others asked about utility of HRECOS network: Chris Bowser and others noted that the HRECOS dashboard does not include direct bacteria counts and is limited to the "main stem" of the Hudson. This is in addition to not capturing pathogen data.
- Several members offered examples of on line dashboard and notification systems:
- Graeme Birchall: Los Angeles River Water Quality website:  
[https://www.lacitysan.org/san/faces/home/portal/s-lsh-wwd/s-lsh-wwd-wp/s-lsh-wwd-wp-ewmp/s-lsh-wwd-wp-ewmp-wq/s-lsh-wwd-wp-ewmp-wq-larq;jsessionid=ooouE-jL1Ockuykqj1I7V4IOQFnkczhEdh8l63ab5It8vZJUbtZ!1913762801!-2128337332?\\_afLoop=11366039292400982&\\_afWindowMode=0&\\_afWindowId=null&\\_adf.ctrl-state=ovsbyuued\\_1#!%40%40%3F\\_afWindowId%3Dnull%26\\_afLoop%3D11366039292400982%26\\_afWindowMode%3D0%26\\_adf.ctrl-state%3Dovsbyuued\\_5](https://www.lacitysan.org/san/faces/home/portal/s-lsh-wwd/s-lsh-wwd-wp/s-lsh-wwd-wp-ewmp/s-lsh-wwd-wp-ewmp-wq/s-lsh-wwd-wp-ewmp-wq-larq;jsessionid=ooouE-jL1Ockuykqj1I7V4IOQFnkczhEdh8l63ab5It8vZJUbtZ!1913762801!-2128337332?_afLoop=11366039292400982&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=null&_adf.ctrl-state=ovsbyuued_1#!%40%40%3F_afWindowId%3Dnull%26_afLoop%3D11366039292400982%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3Dovsbyuued_5)
- Graeme Birchall: <http://neworesund.badevand.dk/#badevands-app>
- Noelle Thurlow: <http://www.nhudsonsa.com/thrive/waterbody.html>

- Graeme Birchall: Sydney harbor water quality website: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/beachapp/SydneyBulletin.aspx?NoMobile>
  - Rosana Da Silva: <https://healthebay.org/riverreportcard/>
  - Tim Dillingham: <https://www.phillyrivercast.org/>
  - Hugh Carola: We tried to get a CSO notification bill for a user-friendly system/app through the NJ legislature but the dischargers were (not surprisingly) dead set against it. Here's the wonky thing we DO have: <https://njcso.hdrgateway.com/>
  - Graeme Birchall: water quality map: <https://chicago.github.io/clear-water/>
4. Maggie Flanagan reviewed progress on the **Waterfront Alliance Staten Island Maritime Activation and Resilience** project and engaged the Work Group in feedback to inform the community workshop later in the week, and to inform overall access recommendations. Maggie and other Waterfront Alliance staff reviewed the methods they selected for public engagement given remote format and the key questions they will be asking community members.

During the discussion, WG members discussed the geographic scope of the project (from north of Bayswater Landing to Fort Wadsworth); the need to reinforce continuity of public access for bicyclists and pedestrians (building on earlier NPS and NPCA work); ensuring paddling access at some of the sites; and concerns about private property limiting access in certain locations.

Maggie will report back to the group after the community meeting. As those discussion move forward the possibility of working with city agencies on a model public access/programming policy will become clearer.

5. **Partner Updates:** BCEQ will be hosting their Bronx Parks Speak Up on the last Feb in Saturday and all are invited. Allan Zaretsky noted that NYC DCP have completed their geographic based outreach for the revised Comp Waterfront Plan. They anticipate releasing the final plan later this year.
6. **The next meeting of the PAWG is Wednesday March 31.** In response to a member request we will move that meeting to 4-6 PM and future meetings will alternate with meetings during the day and during lunchtime hours to accommodate members with other work requirements.