

Public Access Work Group
New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program
November 10 2021 4:00- 6:00 PM

Minutes – March 3

1. Welcome and Agenda Review 4:00 - 4:05 PM

Rob Pirani noted a shift in agenda. The DCP will preview the forthcoming Comprehensive Waterfront Plan’s Waterfront Public Access goals and strategies and present an update on the Waterfront Public Access Implementation Study at a time to be determined in December

2. Approval of Minutes from June 30 2021 Meeting 4:05 - 4:10 PM

The minutes were adopted by the Work Group.

3. Announcements 4:10 – 4:25 PM

Grey Elam Director of New York City Programs, Institute for Urban Parks | Central Park Conservancy mentioned that applications for the 2022 Partnerships Lab Cohort open on November 19th. Reach out to Grey for any questions about the opportunity that is being offered

Sara Eichner from PRATT SAVI let the group know that they had received a grant from the Hudson River Estuary Program to update and create an accessible database for public access information. Several questions were raised about QAPP requirements limiting use of some water quality data and how to address informal access. One suggestion was to create a green, yellow, red map indicating access. A suggestion was made to put access agreements for private landowners on line.

4. Safe Space Commitment 4:25- 4:40 PM

Goal: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Foster community understanding and involvement in decisions about the Harbor.

Building on an initiative of the Billion Oyster Project, the DEIJ subcommittee of the CAC and Hudson-Harbor Educators Work Group are advancing a Safe Space Commitment effort designed to help organizations and agencies actively address racism and prejudice in the workplace. Hugh Carola reviewed the goals and Safe Space Commitment and invite attendees to join November 16 launch event at annual HEP conference.

5. Staten Island Maritime Activation and Resilience Plan

4:40 - 5:05 PM

Priority PA-A-2: CONTACT RECREATION Assess prospects and refine goals for increasing direct access for boating, swimming, and wading, incorporating associated water quality considerations.

Karen Imas and Maggie Flanagan from Waterfront Alliance presented the final report and discuss possible next steps in Staten Island and policy implications/initiative that might apply elsewhere. The report and powerpoint Staten Island Maritime Access and Resilience study are here: https://waterfrontalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/REDC-Report-2021_Updated.pdf

6. Managing Swimming in the Hudson and Harbor

5:05 – 5:25 PM

Priority PA-A-2: CONTACT RECREATION Assess prospects and refine goals for increasing direct access for boating, swimming, and wading, incorporating associated water quality considerations.

Priority PA-C-1: SAFETY Increase understanding of the safety and risks associated with direct contact with the water.

*A panel at HEP's annual conference will help surface the challenges and opportunities of advancing the use of the Hudson and Harbor for swimming. **Rob Pirani and Rob Buchanan** will preview the panel and start the process of setting goals for the Work Group to address these issues going forward. PAWG members are encouraged to attend the session on November 16 at 4 PM < <https://www.hudsonriver.org/article/hep-2021-N>>.*

A subcommittee of Work Group members will be created and members and encouraged to join. Work Group members were surveyed as to their interest and focus for the coming year. The groups discussed the following issues

1. *Communications on benefits/risks of open water swimming re Water Quality*
2. *Communications on benefits/risks of open water swimming re other issues (such as water safety, equitable access, park management/infrastructure)*
 - a. *Key is getting all kids into the water. Need to incorporate equity lens and ensure there are opportunities for all? Making waves; Swimstrong as examples of existing programs.*
 - b. *Legislation has been introduced in NYS: Senate Bill 2207 and Assembly Bill 728An Action Alert from Shawn Slevin at Swimstrong: bit.ly/watersafetyNY*
3. *Understanding/documenting demand for open water swimming*
4. *Clarifying / elevating initiatives for designation of new bathing beaches*
 - a. *What would that take – what would it take to elevate this conversation. For example, could downtown boathouse offer swimming at their site on Pier 26*

5. *Other Issues: Soft shorelines are both access and habitat opportunities. How might we avoid conflict between those benefits? Need for more certified lifeguards; Swimming with a pfd on can be pretty great (and easy way to get more people safely in the water)*
6. *The group was asked to rank these issues and identify others as well as their interest in joining PAWG subcommittee*

Clarifying process / elevating initiatives for new bathing beaches	7
Communications on open water swimming re water quality	5
Communications on open water swimming re other issues	3
Understanding/documenting demand for open water swimming	3

7. *Members were asked about places where people swim now: Most bathhouses have informal swimming; The cliff diving at the Columbia C at Spuyten Duyvil is remarkable; Bklyn Bridge Park & Valentino Pier; Hallet's Cove; Brooklyn Bridge Park beach; Bushwick Inlet; Kaiser Park on Coney Island Creek; off of vessels; Swimming with a pfd on can be pretty great (and easy way to get more people safely in the water); Beach 8th street end, rockaways*
8. *“Open Water Swimming” sounds less inclusive. Like you have to be a hardcore athlete to partake. Most people at the beach just wade and float around. Some alternatives: Harbor swimming? Local swimming; Neighborhood swimming; Community swimming*

7. Next Meetings 5:25-5:30 PM

Next meetings in Mar; June; Sept; Dec

8. Partner Updates 5:30 - PM