



# New York - New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program

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## Management Committee Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2016

EPA, New York, NY

### Participants

**Management Committee:** Clay Sherman (NJ DEP), Shino Tanikawa (CAC), Judith Weis (STAC), Rob Pirani (HEP), Lisa Baron (ACE), Pete Weppler (ACE), Rick Balla (EPA), Karen Greene (NOAA, phone), Dennis Suszkowski (STAC), Doug Adamo (DOI, phone), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Bernice Malione (PANYNJ)

**Others in attendance:** Rick Winfield (EPA), Nesmarie Negron (EPA), Jason Fagel (NYSDEC), Dana Mecomber (PANYNJ)

**HRF/HEP Office Staff:** Ariane Giudicelli, Isabelle Stinnette

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** The meeting was held at the EPA offices at 290 Broadway in Manhattan. Rob Pirani chaired the meeting. HEP's new restoration program manager, Isabelle Stinnette, was introduced to the committee. Isabelle will be starting in January and comes from NYSDEC where she worked as a habitat restoration biologist.

EPA's new Director of the Clean Water Division, Javier Laureano, welcomed the committee. Javier began his new position in September following 11 years as the director of the San Juan Bay National Estuary Program.

2. **Agenda review:** The main focus of the meeting was to discuss specific objectives and actions in the draft Action Agenda following comments from the Policy Committee with the main goals of ratifying objectives and consolidating and/or eliminating actions.
3. **Approval of September 14 Meeting Minutes:** The committee reviewed the minutes from the September 14 Management Committee Meeting.
4. **Action Agenda & CCMP revision**
  - a. Rob reviewed the structure of the Action Agenda (refer to presentation materials for more information). The timeframe for the actions within the Action Agenda is 5 years but HEP needs to be somewhat flexible on these actions due to budget constraints and other considerations. Outputs of the actions could change over time.

*Action: Rob will develop a Gantt chart for internal use to keep track of actions in 6 month increments and included language and/or simpler graphic to indicate timing of actions for the final document.*

- b. Rob reviewed the ranking of the Action Agenda priorities and content. As expected, different stakeholders and agencies ranked priorities differently. There are different ways of ranking the priorities but these priorities should be what HEP can specifically accomplish within the next 5 years. A low ranking however does not necessarily mean that HEP is going to remove the objective or action – for example the climate change objective under the water quality and habitat goals ranked the lowest but this is still an important issue that needs to be addressed. In the introduction section of the document HEP can also discuss other efforts and projects that are ongoing in the Estuary and how our actions may tie in with them. The final document can also reflect differences between on-going coordination and research or monitoring projects and priority actions that have a definite deadline.

As far as resources for accomplishing specific actions, HEP can commit to those items that require only staff and leveraging but would need to devote time to securing funding and/or partnerships for priorities designated as funded by grants or other sources.

*Action: Rob will redraft Agenda to account for committee comments and suggestions:*

The draft should include a frank statement as to why the Action Agenda is relevant and important and the role of HEP vs the role of its partner members.

- i. There may be differences between the NY and NJ side on what is being accomplished and where. HEP may be able to tackle an issue that isn't being addressed in NJ for example but is NYC. Re-phrasing action items to reflect this may make sense.
- ii. There is a delicate balance to be maintained between safety and wanting the public to use the water. The public must understand the risks and HEP needs to be aware of that in the phrasing of the public access objectives.
- iii. Accounting for climate change is an underlying issue for most objectives; we need to be clear as why we are calling it out as a specific objective or action.
- iv. The overall number of action items needs to be condensed. There are opportunities for combining action items together.
- v. The microplastics action item under the water quality goal should be re-worded to address marine life instead of human health.
- vi. The action item “Assess the region’s stormwater and wastewater infrastructure/utility vulnerabilities in the face of increased frequency and duration of flooding” under the water quality goal is not right for HEP.
- vii. The focus for action D-3 under water quality should be more on the communication of this information as these materials already exist.
- viii. For action C-6 under water quality, the focus should be on effects rather than fate & transport. Another option would be to consolidate actions C-4 through C-6 as emerging

- pollutants and encourage research projects on these topics as well as workshops and seminars.
- ix. Proposed action A-4 under habitat should help create a list of valuable projects similar to the wetlands mitigation list.
  - x. Under the public access goal, actions C-2 and C-3 will be removed while C-1 and D-1 will be combined into a single action.

*Action: Rob will account for actions that are to be edited from the list (see highlighted actions in handout for other adopted changes) in the text or other means.*

5. **Overall Timeline for the Action Agenda:** HEP will sit down with EPA in January to make sure we are aligned with NEP guidance. Based on that discussion, HEP will revise its timeline for sending a public-ready version of the document to the Policy Committee for review with 30 days before release. . An email will be sent in January.
6. **Budget for 2017-2018:** HEP's 2017-2018 budget has been approved through April 2018; the balance is expected to be approved by April 2017. The amount of funding is likely to be in the \$500K-\$600K range. The total amount will depend on cuts with the new administration. We may have roughly \$100K-\$200K in discretionary funds but we will know more in March.
7. **Update on Feasibility Study:** Lisa Baron reviewed the progress thus far. The study has been completed and will be released in February 2017. ACOE will be requesting support letters and following public review the final report will be released in 2018.

33 sites have been recommended for construction. Most of the construction sponsors for these sites are in NY - the only sponsors in NJ are the DEP and the Meadowlands Commission (NJ Sports and Exposition Authority). The sites in the Lower Passaic were driven by what can be implemented now. A large chunk of the recommended restoration is in Jamaica Bay (12 sites of 33). There are 9 recommended sites in the Bronx. The Final Report and Chief's report is planned for end of 2018 with authorization for construction to follow

The total price tag for all restoration projects is estimated at \$651M. These are "first level" costs – once the design work has been completed the cost estimates will be updated. Cost estimates do not take O&M into account. The Bush Terminal oyster reef recommendation is very large area-wise and is thus very costly.

8. **Program Updates:** HEP will be holding a workshop on metrics and monitoring for natural and nature-based features with NYS DEC, the Science and Resiliency Institute in@ Jamaica Bay January 31st.

HEP is organizing a congressional briefing with the CAC and other partners. This is anticipated in the Spring.

The second round of interviews for the Harlem/Bronx Urban Waters Ambassador has been completed.

Ariane Giudicelli will be presenting at HEP's Harbor Herons conference on Staten Island and will be helping to transform the Harbor Herons Conservation Plan into an Action Plan in cooperation with the Harbor Herons Subcommittee co-chairs NYC and NJ Audubon.

9. **Future meetings:** the MC will meet on the following dates in 2017: March 15, June 14, September 13 and TBD in December.