



New York - New Jersey
Harbor & Estuary Program
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RESTORATION WORK GROUP

of the New York – New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program

Chair: Lisa Baron (Army Corps of Engineers)

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Meeting March 23, 2015

17 Battery Place, Suite 915

1:00-3:20

- I. **Introduction and minutes from last meeting:** minutes will be approved, pending any changes, in three weeks from the meeting date.

- II. **Presentation on EPA Wetland Program Development Grant evaluating restoration projects and developing updated protocols** - Marit Larson, Chris Haight, and Rebecca Swadek of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Natural Resources Group presented their planned approach to assess restored wetlands city-wide, update protocols, and inform future restoration design. **Objectives include:** quantifying the ecological conditions and functions in restored marshes of varying types (and possibly ages) to: 1) Compare restored marshes to one another and to naturally occurring salt marshes; 2) Develop salt marsh restoration design guidelines that take into account sea level rise and climate change; and 3) Review and refine monitoring guidelines for restoration projects. Presentation available on the [Restoration Work Group page](#).
 - Monitoring will be conducted in the **summer of 2015**.
 - These monitoring protocols will be **added as an appendix to update NYC salt marsh restoration design guidelines**.
 - Marit Larson highlighted that NYC DPR is **trying to narrow down a few key questions** to be addressed in this study (e.g. are there design choices in salt marsh restoration projects that affect the outcome such as elevation position).
 - In response to a question as to whether Army Corps or other protocols were referenced during the development of this protocol, Marit Larson explained that existing metrics are usually set up to meet permit requirements and success/failure in a particular way, but NYC DPR is trying to answer additional questions such as **1) are there design choices in salt marsh restoration projects that affect the end outcome (e.g. substrate, elevation position, etc.); 2) how do our restored salt marshes function compare to existing baseline conditions; and 3) are our monitoring guidelines sufficient or can they be improved upon?**
 - NYCDPR intends to study intensively a **small number of sites** out of the 30 potential for comparison.
 - The Army Corps of Engineers is currently reviewing lessons-learned for all the marsh island restoration, as well as a summary of 5 years of monitoring data for the Elders

Point East mitigation restoration, which could help inform NYC DPR's effort (Lisa Baron).

- Carl Alderson suggested that **interviews with former project managers could be informative** to help inform experimental design/questions such as why the design failed or succeeded.

Action items

- Elders Point East Final Monitoring Data Analysis Report (to be completed by December 2015) and the lessons learned summary for the marsh islands currently being prepared for the HRE Feasibility Study will be provided to NYCDPR by ACE/Lisa Baron.
- NYCDPR to share results and questions as they move forward.

III. **NYC Department of Parks and Recreation / Natural Areas Conservancy Restoration Opportunities Inventory** - Jamie Ong presented on the process that they have developed to assess NYCDPR properties city-wide and use to inform planning and implementation priorities. Design advancement of select sites will proceed, based on this analysis and the inventory will assist the agency in better preparing and advocating for funding opportunities. Presentation available on the [Restoration Work Group page](#).

- Final inventory and shape files targeted to be completed **late spring 2015**. Set of designs finished in **fall 2015**.
- The opportunities inventory also was useful in **evaluating overall opportunities**, such as roughly 450 acres of potential restoration opportunity at an approximate cost of \$340 million.
- Lisa Baron suggested that it was important to **incorporate the concept of ecological lift** in the prioritization tool/method and commented that the flexibility to adjust parameters to meet an organization's needs (i.e., stress parameters geared towards agency's funding justifications and process) would be very useful.
- NAC / NYCDPR was able to split into an even distribution of four quartiles, and **focus on the top 25% as potential near-term opportunities**.
- Andy Peck suggested that it was important to also incorporate a **high-level feasibility score** if possible. Andy (and Corps agreed) also suggested that the TECs and the TEC goals should be incorporated into the prioritization tool.
- Kate Boicourt and Jamie suggested that HEP, NYCDPR, and ACE will work together to propose ways in which the final resulting conceptual designs might be **incorporated into the CRP**.

Action items

- Review follow-up questions sent by NAC and respond with comments (all RWG and NAC).
- NAC to share final results with ACE and HEP and work together to propose how designs may be incorporated into/relate to the CRP.
- NYC DPR and Corps to initially meet to discuss prioritization tool to integrate concepts from the previous development of the Comparative Restoration Ratio

(CRR). Subsequently, this tool would be further developed in coordination with the RWG to address partner agencies needs.

IV. Update on the CRP and Army Corps of Engineers/partner projects – Lisa Baron reviewed the status of multiple aspects of the CRP feasibility study, authorization, and timeline.

- A. **Status of HRE Feasibility Study Completion (Final Scopes of Work):** Draft scopes of work had been provided to the RWG at the October 2014 meeting. Final scopes of work to finalize the HRE Feasibility Study were provided via email and contracts have been awarded for Planning and Engineering tasks. Negotiations were under way on the third SOW which includes finalizing the CRP, as well as identification of Natural/Nature Based Features (among the CRP opportunities) and data entry into the OASIS database The Draft Interim Feasibility Report is expected to be **completed early 2016**.

There were suggestions that a WRDA bill may be proposed in 2016, and sponsors are aiming to have language include that suggests that “pending approval of the Feasibility Report (Chief’s Report)”, the HRE feasibility recommendations should be authorized for construction.

- B. **Summary of Sites Designed for construction recommendation (Table) and Alternative Examples:** Of the current 287 restoration opportunities, currently 35 sites are being evaluated and designed in greater detail in order to recommend the site for construction authorization. The table includes restoration measures to be evaluated and proposed at each site. The general process for the evaluation of each site was presented (see presentation) and includes conducting baseline conditions with a functional assessment protocol (Evaluation of Planned Wetlands [EPW]), development of 3 alternatives, EPW assessment of each alternative, preliminary designs and cost estimates, and Cost Effectiveness and Incremental Cost Analysis (CE/ICA) to determine what will be the Tentatively Selected Plan at each site which will be proposed in the Draft Feasibility Report.
- C. **Potential Projects for Future Feasibility Study (Table):** The remaining CRP sites that will not be recommended for construction, will be recommended for future “spin-off” feasibility studies. The USACE FY17 Budget was recently initiated and the Corps has requested the partners identify the sites they would be interested in pursuing as local sponsor.. In particular, local sponsors responsibilities would include:
- Agency/Organization would be the local sponsor for a HRE “Spin-off” Feasibility Study to be initiated in FY17;
 - The Study could be one specific site or a group of sites (Arlington/Mariners Marshes and even other sites on the Arthur Kill or a group of Raritan River sites).
 - The total cost of the study would be \$3 million (\$1.5M Fed and \$1.5M non-fed).
 - The study will take place in 3 years (the study timing requirements are extremely rigid under Civil Works Transformation). If funded, recent guidance has indicated the study would be funded \$300,000 (FY17), \$700,000 (FY18) and \$500,000 (FY19) over the three years.

Action items

- Review scopes of work - If RWG members have any additional information for any of the sites that would inform the Corps' feasibility process (feasibility, 30% design), send as soon as possible. If any partner has a site (in addition to the 35 sites identified) that has ~30% feasibility level designs and followed similar process, such sites may be able to be included in the HRE Feasibility Study for recommendation for construction. (all applicable RWG).
- Respond to Lisa Baron if your agency is interested in being the local sponsor for a "spin-off" feasibility study. USACE Justification sheets for "spin-off studies" are due April 13(all applicable RWG).

V. [Restoring the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Results debrief](#) was tabled for the next meeting

Action items

- Will be discussed at a future meeting.

VI. Other Updates

- **Raritan Conference June 12th** – Save the date! Registration to be announced soon.
- **HEP website and communications upgrade** will begin this spring and may include both HEP and HRF websites and social media. Some input into the Waters We Share interface may also occur. Input may be requested.
- **Public Access Assessment 2015:** the NY-NJ HEP and USFS have partnered to assess the quality and quantity of publicly-accessible waterfront spaces in the estuary and expect to be finished in summer 2015. Results will inform tracking for the CRP, including a snapshot of the total accessibility of the waterfront (i.e. demonstrating progress toward 2050 goals). Updates to public access points should be provided to HDR/USACE to be included in the final revised CRP.
- **Urban Shorelines Assessment Protocol:** draft final report was completed on March 31st. Final version will be shared with the RWG.
- **NYC Clean Soil Bank:** Kate Boicourt shared a summary of the NYC Clean Soil Bank activities and opportunities with the group. Fact sheets are available [here](#). Available particularly in NYC (though parts of NJ may be feasible), there are periodically large amounts of clean sand available (via excavation for construction projects) that could be used for habitat restoration.
- **The Hudson We Share** (upper Hudson River Restoration Plan) will be hosting county-level workshops after April 16th.

Action items

- Registration for the Raritan Conference will be sent out soon (HEP/Rutgers)
- Update on website as input is needed (HEP to send)
- Fill out the stewardship survey by May 9th to help us out! (all applicable RWG) <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/STEW-MAP>
- Check out the NYC [Clean soil bank website](#) and enter an enrollment form if you have a project expected to come online requiring clean soil. Additionally, the Soil Bank is looking for letters of support for the program (sent via email) if your organization is able to support (all applicable RWG).

- Andy Peck will send details on Hudson We Share workshops.

Attendees:

Hanem Abouelezz, National Parks Service

Carl Alderson, NOAA

Lisa Baron (Chair), US Army Corps of Engineers

Kate Boicourt, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program

Sarah Charlop-Powers, Natural Areas Conservancy

Jennifer Curran, HDR

Ross Diamond, Hazen and Sawyer

Chris Haight, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation / Natural Areas Conservancy

Marit Larson, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Jim Lodge, Hudson River Foundation

Grace Jacob, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Debbie Mans, New York / New Jersey Baykeeper

Susan Maresca, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Jamie Ong, Natural Areas Conservancy

Andy Peck, The Nature Conservancy

Robert Pirani, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program

Rosalie Siegel, The Port Authority of NY & NJ

Rebecca Swadek, Natural Areas Conservancy

Ben Weiland, The Trust for Public Land