



New York - New Jersey  
Harbor & Estuary Program  
[www.harborestuary.org](http://www.harborestuary.org)

# 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 29, 2017

17 Battery Place

Suite 915

10:00 – 1:30

### Meeting Minutes

- I. **Introduction and minutes from last meeting:** minutes from last meeting were unavailable due to HEP staffing change. See list below for attendance.
  
- II. **Action Agenda = RWG To Do List:** Isabelle Stinnette outlined the primary Action Agenda items in which the Restoration Work Group will be a key partner in accomplishing. They are as follows including group comments:
  1. Share restoration lessons learned, best practices, guidance.
    - i. Lisa Baron (USACE) asked how we were going to track or record this and we decided that HEP would track this info as part of tracking progress towards our action agenda. Lisa also stressed we outline the specific outputs/documentation the RWG needs to prepare for all Action Agenda items. See table below for tracking document.
  2. Assess measures to increase restoration funding.
  3. Clarify our restoration goals / research needs for the Shorelines and Shallows TEC.
    - i. Isabelle brought up the possibility of doing a Shorelines and Shallows workshop to try to prioritize the research needs regarding this habitat. The group agreed that there are a number of data gaps including: conditions analysis (especially for mudflats), the synergies between mudflats vs. wetlands and the impact of the (Sea Level Rise [SLR] driven) conversion from wetland to mudflat.
  4. Aid in the development of the State of the Estuary and Restoration Progress reports.
  5. Support the development of common metrics for monitoring (including Natural and Nature Based Features [NNBFs]).
  6. Assess ways to synthesize previous restoration monitoring data.
  7. Address how sea-level rise fits into restoration practices.
  8. Determine status, assess needs of buyout properties.
    - i. Grace Jacobs (NJDEP) suggested that this discussion should be saved for a time in the future when more decisions have been made about what the states plans are for the buyout properties. Isabelle will check the pulse on this issue again in the Fall.
    - ii. Ironbound and Regional Plan Association may also be good sources to bring in for this discussion.

9. Give input on what we would like to see from a restoration prioritization tool.
  - i. Lisa suggested scheduling a working meeting of RWG members who are interested for the development of a prioritization tool and building upon and utilizing existing tools (e.g., NYC Parks).
10. Encourage cost sharing.
11. Create a hub for recruiting volunteers/citizen science or create a partnership with existing volunteer organization.
  - i. The RWG will need to determine the needs of the groups that call for volunteers and work with other larger organizations so that we don't overlap with their existing stewardship efforts.
12. Develop a path to understanding the concern of recontamination of restored sites
  - i. Lisa noted that the USFWS has provided a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report for the HRE Feasibility Study regarding the recontamination issue of the 33 priority sites (see HRE Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment, Appendix G).
  - ii. Debbie Mans (NY/NJ Baykeeper) and others inquired about the level of data that exists related to the recontamination issues, synergistic affects between contaminants and what the impact will be to monitoring efforts for restoration efforts in the HRE region.
  - iii. A one day meeting was suggested to discuss state of the science, available data and policy issues.
13. Participate in development of the biannual RWG restoration conference.

#### Action Items

- HEP will start planning a Shorelines and Shallows Workshop for the fall.
- HEP will start planning a meeting to discuss the restoration prioritization tool.
- May 23, 2017: State of the Estuary Conference hosted by NY/NJ HEP and the Hudson River Estuary Program.

- III. Hudson-Raritan Estuary Feasibility Report Update and Potential new starts for HRE Spin-off Feasibility Study:** Lisa Baron reviewed the recently released HRE Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (FR/EA) which recommends 33 priority restoration projects around the harbor for construction authorization.
- The comment period will be extended to May 1st.
  - The non-federal sponsors were asked of the 33 restoration projects, which were their near-term priorities to inform USACE budgeting requests for Preconstruction Engineering Design (PED). Priorities were identified as the Jamaica Bay Marsh Islands (NYSDEC), Brant Point, Bronx Zoo Dam, Bayswater State Park and Soundview Oysters (NYC Parks) and Naval Weapons Station Earle Oyster restoration (NY/NJ Baykeeper).
  - Lisa requested that the RWG reach out to their leadership for letters of support for the FR/EA in time for the next USACE Agency Decision Milestone Meeting.

- The FR/EA also recommends the remaining restoration opportunities outlined in the HRE Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP) for future feasibility Study. The local non-federal sponsors were also asked for their top priorities amongst the new sites (or a grouping of sites) for possible future “New Start” Feasibility Studies.
- Judith Weis (Rutgers University) suggested that the benefits of the presence of invasive species such as *Phragmites* including sequestration of contamination, stabilization of the shoreline (contributing to Coastal Storm Risk Management [CSRM] benefits), and some degree of habitat. Not all cases of restoration should consider removal of invasive species with a replacement of native plantings for estuarine low and high marsh (such as *Spartina alterniflora* and *patens*). Carl Alderson (NOAA) indicated that this should be considered on a case by case basis and the presence of *Phragmites* is usually a symptom of other problems contributing to degraded habitat.

#### Action items

- RWG members to get back to Lisa with support letters and try to attend upcoming meetings.
- RWG members to review the HRE FR/EA and provide comments- (<http://www.nan.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/HRE-Ecosystem-Restoration/HRE-Hudson-Raritan-Estuary/>).
- Public Information meetings scheduled for April 6 (Custom House), April 19 (Hackensack Meadowlands) and April 25 (Ryan Center in Jamaica Bay).

**IV. Native Plant Procurement for restoration:** Ed Toth (NYC Parks, Greenbelt Native Plant Center) spoke to the group about the Greenbelt Native Plant Center and the appropriate timing for a successful project. The Center provides the benefits of obtaining proper genetic makeup of a variety of plant species in the region. The greatest challenge the Center faces is adequate lead time to provide plants to support the many projects conducted by the restoration partners. The Center needs approximately 5 years to obtain seed within the region, time to grow the plants and supply the plants for the specific projects. The primary challenge comes down to the timing of available funds and the point in time to initiate the collection of seeds and growing plants for a project. The time the money comes though for a restoration project, it is too late to secure the plant materials needed. Some suggestions made by the group were:

- Using the list of restoration opportunities outlined in the CRP to identify timing of restoration in the future.
- Given the USACE’s Civil Works process, projects require Congressional authorization which is followed by appropriations to initiate the PED phase. Work cannot be initiated until funds are provided- by law and plant acquisition would unlikely be able to be started until Construction funds were received. Specifically the 33 projects recommended in the FR/EA (which would be sequenced over time) require approval of a Chief’s Report, authorization, appropriations for PED, Project Partnership Agreements with Sponsors. Work cannot be initiated on any of these projects (including advancement of acquisition of plants) until Construction would be approved.
- It was suggested that possibly a Federal or state organizations that obtain funds from Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Settlements or the Superfund program could utilize funds to initiate the planning of plant materials in the earlier stages for

restoration projects. In addition, an NGO (such as the Rockefeller Foundation) could be the entity to improve plant procurement and the plant material process.

- A suggestion was made to utilize funds from an In Lieu Fee (ILF) program to initiate the planning process for plant material for upcoming restoration projects. The RWG had discussed involvement in an ILF program established by NYSDEC.

#### Action Items

- Ed would love feedback on who in our organizations he needs to reach out to with his message in order to affect change so that the GBNPC can be used to its full potential (Edward.Toth@parks.nyc.gov).
- Next RWG meeting should discuss what follow up actions may be taken as a group to aid in this effort.

#### **V. Restoration Updates and News:** Insufficient time was available for RWG members to share project updates; however, updates were provided by email below.

##### NOAA: Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Case Update for NY/NJ

- American Cyanamid, Bridgewater NJ.
  - NOAA will remove the Weston Mill Dam on the Millstone River, Manville NJ August 2017.
- Alternatives Analysis and Assessment underway for the Island Farm Weir Fish Ladder in Bridgewater NJ.
- Cornell Dubilier Electronics, South Plainfield NJ
  - Third major case settlement with Insurance Companies in December 2016. Trustees Council is beginning the restoration phase of the case.
  - Will be soliciting restoration ideas for the Raritan River Watershed from the public in 2017.

##### USACE: Restoration Activities (in addition to HRE)

- Spring Creek North Feasibility Study: the Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment was completed in October 2016 and provided to North Atlantic Division (NAD) for review. The District received significant comments and are currently addressing them due to delay in funding provided in February. The draft report is planned for public release in August 2017 for public review.
- Hudson River Habitat Restoration Feasibility Study (Study Area – 125 miles north of Tappan Zee Bridge to Troy Lock and Dam): Alternatives Milestone will likely occurred on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 identifying restoration goals, objectives, actions, and site screening for the restoration opportunities that would advance for feasibility level activities. NYSDEC, study sponsor, is providing significant amounts of work in kind related to the TEC development, ecological assessment, ID of opportunities and screening of these opportunities.

##### NYSDEC: Natural Resource Damage Assessment

- Using Natural resources damages funds to design a living shoreline in Newtown Creek. The construction phase may wait until after superfund cleanup.

## EPA: Grant Program

Funding Opportunity Title: FY17 and FY18 Region 2 Wetland Program Development Grants  
Announcement Type: Request for Proposals (RFP)  
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 66.461  
Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-REG2-WPDG-17-18

The link to the Request for Proposals appears on EPA's web pages at:

<https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/region-2-wetland-program-development-grant-request-proposals> and on Grants.gov at: **TBA**

- The **closing date** for receipt of proposals is **May 10, 2017**. Proposals must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (with limited exception as noted in the RFP (p. 17)).
- Grants.gov submission has a number of pre-requisites, described in the RFP (p. 18). Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this opportunity through grants.gov. Please review these requirements and plan accordingly.
- The RFP notes ten **threshold eligibility criteria** (pp. 14-15). You are required to comply with all ten criteria, otherwise your submission will be ineligible and it will not receive review and evaluation.
- The FY17-18 RFP is a 2-year announcement. We are soliciting response to the request for proposals up until May 10, 2017. Region 2 EPA will not be issuing a request for proposals in 2018.

### NYCDEP:

- Pending USACE permits – NYCDEP will be installing Phase II of the Newtown Creek wetland projects. The first is an expansion of the 2015 wetland installed in Dutch Kills and the second is a new installation at the Hunters Point Bridge in Dutch Kills.
- NYCDEP is also preparing final plans and specifications for a 1-acre wetland restoration project at Alley Creek.

### NJDEP:

- Recent Grant program awarded funding for restoration projects resulting from a Natural Resource Damage Assessment settlement in Lower Passaic River and Newark Bay. See press release: [\\dep-tcshared\shared\shr\onrr\PASSAIC\\_RIVER\Press Release for Grant Projects.htm](\\dep-tcshared\shared\shr\onrr\PASSAIC_RIVER\Press Release for Grant Projects.htm)

### NY/NJ Baykeeper:

- Expanding the Living Shoreline at Naval Weapon Station Earle (Raritan Bay/Middletown) with oyster castles set with oyster spat.
- Continued monitoring of Earle oyster reef and Living Shoreline (biodiversity, fouling study, sedimentation, oyster survivorship and growth)
- Eco Volunteer program at the Bronx River site (biodiversity, fouling study, oyster survivorship and growth)
- Begin Eco Volunteer program in Keyport, NJ (gather baseline data on marsh and mudflat)
- Continuing to help with monitoring the Living Breakwaters Rebuild by Design project.

Port Authority:

- Construction at the Westchester Creek site (near the YMCA in Castle Hill) will begin soon and continue through spring/summer 2018.
- Planning for mitigation at the Pugsley Creek site, across the creek from Castle Hill Park, is ongoing.

NYC Department of Parks and Recreation:

- Doing watershed and habitat restoration for Harlem River in Bronx
- Doing watershed and ecological restoration planning for North Shore Staten Island and Snug Harbor
- Funded to pilot thin sediment layer application in Idlewild Park, Jamaica Bay (NY state water front revitalization grant)
- Funded to pilot eroded marsh shoreline wetland restoration project at Alley Creek / Little Neck Bay (DEC Climate smart city and NFWF grant)
- Small salt marsh wetland restoration at Bayswater Park, Jamaica Bay
- Ongoing stream and freshwater wetland mapping updates and condition assessment (EPA)
- Ongoing salt marsh restoration and monitoring evaluation study completion (EPA)
- Completed salt marsh assessment study to be disseminated shortly (EPA)
- Major marine debris removal at Four Sparrow marsh, Jamaica Bay
- Going out to bid with Sunset Cove marsh restoration, Jamaica Bay
- Local match of \$6M secured for Spring Creek wetland and coastal grassland restoration
- Ongoing forest restoration across city
- Coordination and advising on Tottenville shoreline and breakwater design
- Arlington marsh to be transferred to NYC Parks!
- Restoration planning for shoreline restoration at Bridge Park (DEC grant) and freshwater wetland restoration at Tibbetts Brook wetland (NFWF) in the Bronx
- Stocking fish upstream of the 182nd street dam in the Bronx River to restore river herring populations
- Developing designs to add instream structures and restore an oxbow wetland in the Bronx River

**Attendees:**

Carl Alderson, NOAA

Lisa Baron (Chair), US Army Corps of Engineers

Grace Jacob, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Marit Larson, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Debbie Mans, New York / New Jersey Baykeeper

Susan Maresca, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Dana Mecomber, Port Authority of NY and NJ

Daniel Montella, EPA

Andrew Peck, TNC (by phone)

Robert Pirani, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program

Isabelle Stinnette, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Ed Toth, Greenbelt Native Plant Center, NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation

Judith Weis, Rutgers

Rick Winfield, EPA

| Action ID | Action   | Start Date | Complete, In-process, Planned   | RWG or ILS |
|-----------|--|------------|---|------------|
| H-A-1     | Increase investment in conservation and restoration projects.  | 01/01/18   |   |            |
| H-A-2     | Evaluate ways to reduce costs of restoration.  | 10/01/17   |   |            |
|           |  |            | Create a hub for recruiting restoration volunteers/citizen scientists                 | RWG        |
| H-A-3     | Document value of ecosystem services delivered through restoration for decision makers.  | 04/03/17   |   |            |
| H-A-4     | Create a decision making tool for prioritization of restoration opportunities.   | 07/05/17   |   |            |
|           |  |            | Have a discussion with the RWG on what we would like to see for a prioritization tool | RWG        |
| H-B-1     | Share research and best practices among partners.  | 04/03/17   |   |            |
|           |  |            | Restoration Work Group meeting 3/29/17  | RWG        |
|           |  |            | 2016 Restoration Progress Report  | ILS        |
|           |  |            | Create State of the Estuary Report  | ILS        |
|           |  |            | Hold State of the Estuary Conference  | ILS        |
|           |  |            | Update CRP tracking website   | ILS        |
|           |  |            |   |            |
| H-B-2     | Assess and interpret shoreline and shallow-water habitat condition and value.  | 04/03/17   |   |            |
|           |  |            | Plan a shorelines and shallows TEC workshop   | RWG        |
| H-B-3     | Understand the risks of recontamination of restored sites.   | 06/01/18   |   |            |
|           |  |            | Have a discussion with the RWG on next steps for this issue.                          | RWG        |
| H-C-1     | Increase support for monitoring and consistency among metrics.   | 04/03/17   |   |            |
| H-C-2     | Synthesize existing monitoring data to better understand and communicate trends.   | 01/01/18   |   |            |
| H-D-1     | Incorporate sea level rise into restoration and management practices.  | 12/30/17   |   |            |
|           |  |            | Look at HRE Feas. Study assessment of CRP sites                                       | ILS        |
| H-D-2     | Advance conservation and restoration planning for properties eligible or already acquired through flood plain/buyout programs. | 10/03/17   |   |            |

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|  |  |  | Have States come into RWG meeting to discuss plans/status | RWG |
|--|--|--|---|-----|