

NY-NJ HEP Water Quality Workgroup Meeting Notes

Date: 10/18/2016

Time: 10:30 am –2:30 pm

Attendees: Phil DeGaetano (NYSDEC), Greg Alber (PVSC/NJHDG), Keith Mahoney (NYCDEP), Rick Winfield (EPA), Rosella O'Connor (EPA), Brent Gaylord (EPA), Jeff Myers (NYSDEC), Mick DeGraeve (GLEC/NJHDG), Dennis Suszkowski (HRF), Evelyn Powers (IEC), Robin Jazxhi (IEC), Rob Pirani (HEP), Andrea Leshak (NY/NJ Baykeeper), Dan Van Abs (Rutgers), Judith Weis (Rutgers), Sean Dixon (Riverkeeper), Rob Buchanan (NYCWTA), Marco Al-Ebus (NJDEP), Pilar Patterson (NJDEP), Roop Guha (NJDEP), Francisco Artigas (NJ Meadowlands Commission), Brett Branco (Brooklyn College), Sandra Baptista (CIESIN), Sri Vinay (CIESIN).

1. Welcome, Introductions and Overview of the Agenda and Draft Priorities List

- Dennis Suszkowski is continuing to act as chair of the group.
- Comments and questions from the Workgroup pertaining to HEP's draft priorities include:
 - a) What progress has been made on the 2011-2015 Action Plan?
 - b) Have nitrogen and/or nutrients have been raised as a priority? Are there regions in the Harbor besides Western LIS and Jamaica Bay where nitrogen is affecting attainment of DO standards? At a minimum, HEP should mention the fact that nitrogen and carbon are causes of DO problems in our action item priority. But the emphasis should be to collect more (and appropriate) data in order to better understand the system as the models are now 30 years old and outdated.
 - c) What is the residence time in the Estuary? It's variable but the Arthur Kill isn't well flushed.
- Follow-up items for the group include:
 - a) Reviewing the draft priorities list and letting HEP know if anything is missing from the list within a week's time.
 - b) If the group feels that HEP should be encouraging a specific research project or action related to nutrients, this should be included in the comments on the priorities list.

2. Monitoring opportunities and priorities

- Existing and planned data, networks and projects include:
 - a) Routine comprehensive monitoring through NJHDG, NYCDEP and the Meadowlands (among others).

- b) The 1996 Environmental Monitoring Plan and first Health of the Harbor evaluated data and indicators.
 - c) Site-specific information on toxics will be available through CARP II.
 - d) Data display for NJDEP 303(d) listings is ongoing.
- Questions and issues raised by the workgroup:
 - a) Where does citizen monitoring fit it? Which parameters would this group be interested in having citizen scientists collect? Could a citizen group help fill in gaps in nearshore areas?
 - b) Who are the users of the data and what are the objectives?
 - c) Should DOH be part of the monitoring discussion? If the workgroup is interested in swimming areas then they need to be involved.
 - d) How can HEP and the workgroup build a bridge between the agencies and citizen groups?
 - Opportunities for HEP and the workgroup:
 - a) A “HEP approved” monitoring program.
 - b) Create an inventory of what data is currently available, both spatially and temporally and make this available to the public. HEP should synthesize current agency/organization monitoring (EPA, MERI, HRECOS, etc.).
 - c) Many organizations that conduct monitoring do not have the time and resources to do the data synthesis and analysis and could therefore use assistance.
 - d) Additional continuous and bottom DO monitoring is needed.
 - e) Tie efforts together with Riverkeeper and NYCWTA association.
 - f) Bridging the gap with agencies in order to ensure the data collected is used.
 - g) Create a template for sampling which would include where/what/how/when to sample.
 - h) Monitoring where there are users and public health concerns but data gaps.

3. Jamaica Bay Water Quality Data Visualization Tool

- Presentation by Brett Branco:
 - a) The effort to develop this tool began with conversations with Beau Ranheim (NYCDEP) and Mark Ringenary (NPS) who were sampling in the same locations but were not aware of it.
 - b) Funding became available following Sandy through the Science Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay (SRI). A partnership developed between Cornell University, Brooklyn College, NPS, SRI, NYCDEP and the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN). The total budget was \$238K with the majority going to technical staff support.
 - c) The data tool will include data from the Harbor Surveys (NYCDEP) from 1909 onwards and from the NPS from 1972. Additional datasets could eventually be incorporated.

- d) A large amount of time was spent compiling and standardizing data, including editing and QC. The ultimate goal is to have this database available online to make the data easily accessible for everyone.
 - e) A workshop was held to get input on how people wanted to use the data. Attendees included the research community including Rutgers, the SRI consortium as well as the American Littoral Society and educators.
 - f) The database itself can handle millions of records but the visualization tool might encounter problems with a very large dataset.
- Questions and thoughts from the Workgroup:
 - a) Is all of the data in the database QAPP'd? Have there been any QA issues?
 - b) Could this effort be expanded both spatially and temporally?

4. Communication and Data

- Opportunities for HEP:
 - a) Should HEP focus on promoting databases? There are currently places to find good data and trying to centralize everything it doesn't work. One option would be to have links to the water quality data on our new website as a starting point for a variety of different audiences. For example, the Rutgers website has continuous monitoring data.
 - b) HEP should re-initiate the joint harbor water quality reports, as both paper and online PDF reports.
 - c) HEP should reach out to the states and EPA in order to prep for the State of the Estuary report in order to find out what exactly has been accomplished since the 2004 and 2012 reports on land with STPs and CSO discharges.
 - d) HEP could develop a visual interface of the Harbor with stations that the public can click on that would provide a link to the organization(s) that samples there.

5. Next steps, topics for future meetings and items for the group to think about: *Please forward any thoughts or ideas on these topics to Ariane*

- a) At the next workgroup meeting, the group needs a timeline for the NYC LTCPs, especially the city-wide LTCP. How will these LTCPs affect our shared waters? An understanding of what vehicles we're using to get to our ultimate goals is needed. Can we come to a group decision on our shared waters?
- b) The workgroup also needs information on the current uses as well as highest attainable uses (NY has said that the goal is primary contact recreation in all waters unless you can demonstrate that is not attainable with a UAA).
- c) Presentation on the NJDEP data visualization tool and storymap for the general public.