



New York - New Jersey
Harbor & Estuary Program
www.harborestuary.org

RESTORATION WORK GROUP

of the New York – New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program
*Co-Chairs: Lisa Baron (Army Corps of Engineers),
Marit Larson (NYC Parks)*

www.HarborEstuary.org

Meeting, October 30, 2017

17 Battery Place

Suite 915

11:00 – 2:00

- I. **Welcome and minutes from last meeting:** minutes from last meeting were approved and can be found on the HEP website. Marit Larson was introduced as our new co-chair of the group and we welcomed two new organizations to the group: the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Steve Mars) and the NJ Sports and Exposition Authority (Ross Feltes).

- II. **Introductions and Updates (attendance at the end of this document):**

USACE

- Spring Creek North Integrated Feasibility Report/Environmental Assessment was released to the public in September 2017 and is currently being finalized. Final report approval expected by USACE North Atlantic Division in January followed by execution of the Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) for Design and Construction with NYC Parks.
- Spring Creek South – The schematic (30%) engineering design package were provided to the agencies in October and FAA and Port Authority provided input on the planting palette.
- HRE Feasibility Study – The District is preparing for the Agency Decision Milestone (ADM) scheduled for March 2018 to verify the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) recommended in the draft report and agree on tasks to finalize the report. The team is refining (potentially deleting) sites based on cost effectiveness requirements.

NJDEP

- Weston Mill Dam: Initial breaching 8/14/17, Removal Complete 8/22
- Monitoring :
Water Temperature - Twice a month- March-October
Dissolved Oxygen - Twice a month - March-October
Conductivity - Twice a month - March-October
Turbidity - Twice a month - March-October
Benthic Macroinvertebrates - Twice a year (2017-2018) once each in spring and fall

Audubon

- Harbor Herons conference is scheduled for December 5-6

- They are working on turning their Harbor Herons conservation plan into an action plan. The Action Plan is due by the end of August 2018.

USFWS

- Steve Mars provided an introduction to the USFWS. They have offices in South Jersey and Long Island.
- USFWS is particularly interested in the issues of contaminants and recontamination of restoration projects within the estuary. In addition, they are also focused on advocating for monitoring and maintenance of projects.

SRIJB

- The Science and Resiliency Institute at Jamaica Bay, who attended this meeting as a guest, noted that they were working with HEP and other partners on a grant to determine a protocol for monitoring natural and nature-based features.

NJSEA

- Ross Feltes introduced the organization to the group. They have the management rights to 25,000 acres in the Meadowlands. NJSEA conducts acquisitions, restorations and biological monitoring. A recent phragmites fire has led to increased interest in marsh restoration.
- They often partner with Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute (MERI) as well as an affiliated conservation trust.

NYC Parks

- They are wrapping up some larger upland plantings in Staten Island and the Bronx, largely accomplished with volunteers, including sites at Conference House Park, Riverdale Park, and Pelham Bay Park.
- Preparing a final report on the condition of salt marsh restoration projects in NYC, and guidelines for salt marsh restoration design and monitoring.
- Saw mill creek Mitigation Bank led by EDC is going into construction this December.
- Expecting new opportunities for land acquisition in the future
- Working with the Natural Areas Conservancy on several initiatives, including:
 - A Forest Management Framework for NYC Parks
 - The formulation of Nature Goals for NYC. The Nature goals should be complimentary to and supportive of CRP goals.
 - Modifying planting palettes including climate resiliency together with the Natural Areas Conservancy. This project funded by Wildlife Conservation Society.

USEPA

- EPA Region 2 has a new Regional Administrator, Peter Lopez. Prior to his appointment, Peter served as a member of the New York State Assembly since 2007, representing a seven county region including Mid-Hudson, Northern Catskills, Southern Tier, and Capital District. <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-announces-appointment-pete-lopez-region-2-administrator>
- EPA is investigating nearshore water quality in the Harlem River. Is there a difference between surface or subsurface discharge in its effect on DO?

NOAA

- Weston Mill Dam has been recently removed.
- Alternatives analysis due next year for the Island Farm Weir fish passage project.
- Restoration scoping in the Raritan watershed is ongoing.
- Work has started on the Gowanus superfund site.

iii. Monitoring with Drones

Stephanie Dohner from the University of Delaware gave a presentation to the group on the opportunities and practicalities of doing environmental monitoring using drones and other robotics. Some of the interesting points:

- Price points on both drones and software have come down a lot recently and high resolution environmental monitoring can be accomplished on inexpensive commercial drones.
- Can use for biological and physical monitoring and robotics are a good way to get nearshore bathymetry in shallow waters that larger boats can't get to.
- There are some limitations in flying drones within 5 miles of an airport as well as on some properties such as NPS lands.

iv. NYC Salt Marsh Restoration Over 20 Years: Assessment Findings and Updates to Salt Marsh Restoration Design and Monitoring Guidelines

Chris Haight from NYC Parks gave a presentation on their recent monitoring study on salt marsh restorations.

- NYC Parks assessed the condition of restored marshes to natural occurring marshes and found that the restored marshes did not differ in terms of habitat metrics; but did seem to be slightly worse in terms of structural stability, based largely on soil organic content, plant belowground biomass, and total plant biomass (lower in restored sites versus naturally occurring sites).
- NYC Parks determined the impact of different design approaches on condition of restored sites and found:
 - Drainage is critical; ponding is a problem for wrack and algae accumulation;
 - Herbivory prevention design and maintenance is critical;
 - Berms and riprap barriers can trap organic wrack and algae, Scour occurred at openings and the benefit of openings for fish is unknown; and
 - Coir logs support vegetation in low energy environments.
- NYC Parks is updating salt marsh monitoring guidelines with the results of this study.
- Lisa Baron noted that it would be good to have a way to prove that the marsh restorations are accomplishing original goals set out in design in order to use as justification for new projects. Specifically, determining the actual ecological benefits of a constructed project that is predicted using Evaluation of Planned Wetlands methods.

v. Addressing HEP Action Agenda comments

Isabelle Stinnette informed the work group that there were a few public comments on HEP's Action Agenda regarding the lack of a plan for wildlife, key species or biodiversity. HEP will address this concern by working to support habitat quality and conditions monitoring in addition to just the monitoring of restoration projects. The action agenda item on restoration monitoring (H-C-1) will be expanded and language added about biodiversity and wildlife.

vi. Discuss upcoming workshops

- A draft scope of work was provided to the Work Group regarding the Shorelines and Shallows Workshop. The group should contact Isabelle or the group chairs with any comments or additions ASAP especially with regards to invitees or presenters.
- The Shorelines and Shallows workshop may be pushed out to early January to encourage maximum participation by stakeholders.
- The group then discussed the potential workshop on the issue of recontamination related to restoration projects. The following suggestions were made:
 - USFWS is currently revising their 2013 whitepaper on the issue with new data. They are willing to present at the workshop.
 - The group should look into the contamination report by Peter Brussock (ELM) regarding Berry's Creek Superfund site.
 - Potential theme – What do we have to do to move restoration forward?

vii. NEPORT Results

Isabelle presented the NEPORT results for this past year. Acquisition was the most important type of “restoration” that occurred this year – as it has been in most years. Invasives removal and planting were also an important part of this year’s restoration. The most important leveraging of HEP funds this year was from in-kind work from our federal and local partners. RWG members please make an effort to participate next year so we can record the excellent work that we accomplish with our partners.

Attendees:

Lisa Baron (Chair), USACE
Marit Larson, (Chair) NYC Parks
Carl Alderson, NOAA (by phone)
Ross Feltes, NJSEA
Ariane Giudicelli, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
Susan Elbin, NYC Audubon (Co-Chair of Harbor Herons Sub-Committee)
John King, NJDEP
Kristen King, NYC Parks
Grace Jacob, NJDEP
Jim Lodge, Hudson River Foundation
Susan Maresca, NYSDEC (by phone)
Steve Mars, USFWS
John McLaughlin, NYCDEP
Daniel Montella, USEPA
Robert Pirani, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
Dennis Suszkowski, Hudson River Foundation
Judith Weis, Rutgers University
Rick Winfield, USEPA (by phone)
Chris Haight, NYC Parks – guest speaker
Jessica Fain, SRIJB – guest
Kaitlyn Parkins, NYC Audubon
Stephanie Dohner, University of Delaware- guest speaker
Rebecca Swadek, NYC Parks

ACTION AGENDA TRACKING REPORT

Action ID	Action	Start Date	Complete, In-process, Planned	Responsible party
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 – HEP CAC is proceeding towards this project	RWG + CAC
H-A-3	Document value of ecosystem services delivered through restoration for decision makers.	04/03/17		
			HEP and the Hudson River Foundation hosted a small workshop (7/27/17) with environmental economists from Resources for the Future to discuss Ecosystem service evaluation in the NY-NJ Harbor region	HEP + HRF
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
			State of the Estuary Conference 5/23/17	ILS
			Update CRP tracking website	ILS
			Restoration Work Group meeting 7/26/17	RWG
			RWG assisted HEP with gathering restoration, acquisition and leveraging data for NEPORT (EPA reporting)	RWG
			Restoration Work Group meeting 10/30/17	RWG
			HEP CAC is planning to have a citizen science conference early 2018	

Action ID	Action	Start Date	Complete, In-process, Planned	Responsible party
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		
			Going to start planning a workshop to discuss this issue	RWG
			Invited US Fish and Wildlife Service to be a member of the RWG	RWG
H-C-1	Increase support for monitoring and consistency among metrics.	04/03/17		
			HEP is participating in a project led by the SRIJB to discuss monitoring of NNBFs	
H-C-2	Synthesize existing monitoring data to better understand and communicate trends.	01/01/18		
			HEP is collecting monitoring data as part of the State of the Estuary Report research	ILS
H-D-1	Incorporate sea level rise into restoration and management practices.	12/30/17		
			HEP is working on a climate vulnerability report	
			Analysis planned for CRP sites recommended in the Draft HRE Feasibility Report	USACE
H-D-2	Advance conservation and restoration planning for properties eligible or already acquired through flood plain/buyout programs.	10/03/17		
			Have States come into RWG meeting to discuss plans/status	RWG