



▼ Challenges In Our Urban Estuary System

Water And Sediment Quality

Historical **toxic contaminants in harbor sediments** create economic, human health and environmental problems. The presence of these toxins accumulate in the food web of estuarine wildlife, restrict consumption of locally-caught fish and complicate port dredging operations.

Disease-causing pathogens enter the estuary through aging sewer systems and stormwater infrastructure, making swimming and the consumption of shellfish unhealthy in some areas.

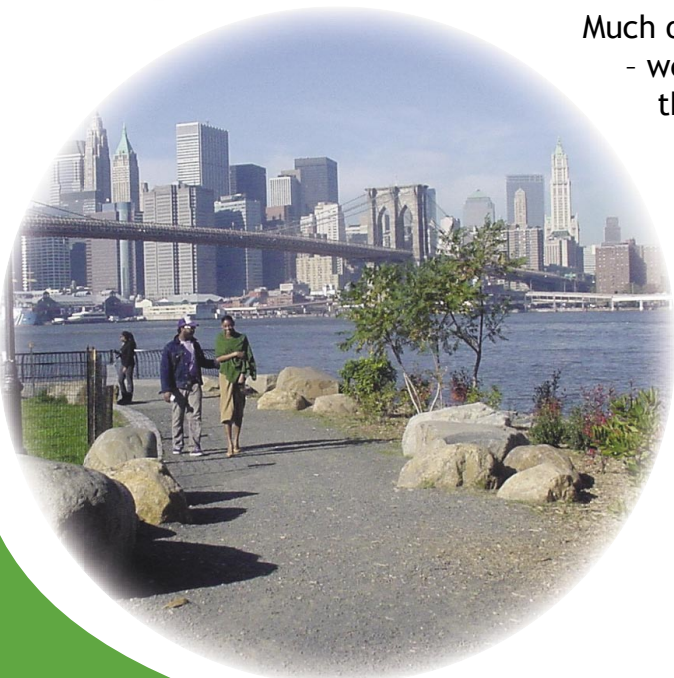
Excess nutrients and organic material from waste water treatment plants and other sources can reduce dissolved oxygen levels in portions of the estuary, causing problems for fish and other aquatic organisms.

Habitat And Public Access

Much of the Harbor Estuary's historical wildlife habitat - wetlands, forests and other open spaces - was lost as the region developed into an urban metropolis. **Habitat areas that remain are fragmented and degraded.**

To increase habitat quality and quantity in the region, properties must be protected through acquisition and/or improved through restoration. High real estate prices and highly degraded ecosystems make this a challenging task.

Many waterfront areas in the metropolitan region have traditionally gone to industrial uses that excluded the public. Opportunities exist for **increasing public access** to the water through public and private waterfront redevelopment projects.



▼ Past Successes, Future Possibilities

Water Quality

Surveys of water quality show that dissolved oxygen and pathogen levels in the open waters of the estuary are improving, but there are still major problems primarily in the tributaries & basins. The major contributors, treatment plants and combined sewer systems, will require large capital expenditures to complete long-lasting upgrades and infrastructure improvements. HEP is leading the way in developing cost-effective and equitable solutions to improve water quality through a program to develop and implement pollutant loading reductions. **HEP partners have contributed over \$10 million to this planning effort.** Still, implementation of these plans may require very large capital investments.

Toxics & Regional Sediment Management

The Contaminant Assessment and Reduction Project (CARP) has undertaken a world class data collection effort and created a modeling tool that will now allow managers to assess the best ways to reduce toxic contamination. **HEP partners have provided nearly \$30 million for the CARP effort so far.** In addition, a Regional Sediment Management Work Group has brought together disparate groups to develop a sediment management plan for the harbor that, if fully realized, will enhance both the port and the environment.

Habitat Protection & Restoration

HEP acts as the central coordinating body for potential habitat restoration and acquisitions sites in the bi-state Harbor Estuary region. **Program partners successfully acquired and restored over 1,860 acres over the past 5 years at a cost of \$96.5 million.** HEP has now embraced an effort being lead by the Corps of Engineers to develop a Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP) for the harbor that will promote accelerated habitat protection and restoration.





The enthusiasm, ability and energy of our partners in stewardship are infinite - support for their work is essential if we are to see significant improvements in the estuary's health

▼ Public Access and Citizen Stewardship

Public access to the waterfront is a highly desirable attribute in any urban area. HEP has spearheaded the inventory and mapping of existing access sites throughout the estuary and will work to create more sites in the neighborhoods that need them most. Hundreds of community groups, not-for-profits and educational institutions are working to raise awareness and promote citizen stewardship of the estuary. HEP has provided technical and financial assistance to about 12 of these groups each year since 2002. In 2006, HEP hosted Estuary Live, a live webcast that reached an estimated 15,000 students and teachers.

▼ Programmatic Information:

Organization

HEP has an eight Member Policy Committee representing USEPA, Army Corps, NYSDEC, NJDEP, NYCDEP, NJ local government, Port Authority of NY & NJ, and the Citizens and Science & Technical Advisory Committees. Management, technological and advisory committees represent dozens of additional partners including USDOJ, NOAA, NYSDOS, IEC, NJHDG, citizens groups and non-profits.

Funding

Annual Funding from CWA Section 320 has been approximately \$500,000 for past three years. Most implementation resources to date have come from partners as leveraged funds.

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Photos courtesy of NYSG, NYCDEP, ALS and IEC



New York - New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program

2007 Update

The New York - New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program (HEP) is one of 28 National Estuary Programs authorized by the Clean Water Act. Since it was signed in 1997, HEP has been implementing its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the estuary. This 2007 Overview summarizes the region's main environmental issues, highlights the important roles of HEP and discusses the significant work that still must be accomplished.

Vision: To establish and maintain a healthy and productive Harbor/Bight ecosystem with full beneficial uses

Important Roles Of HEP

1 Regional Cooperation

HEP is the bi-state forum for environmental planning and the collaborative stewardship of the estuary. In a densely populated, highly urbanized region like the NY-NJ metropolitan area, it is essential that public agencies, scientists, NGOs and citizens work together to coordinate actions and achieve common goals.

2 Environmental & Economic Balance

The Estuary supports important fish and wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities for its residents and is one of the busiest shipping ports in the world. HEP works to find common ground among these important benefits.

3 Cost-effective & Equitable Solutions

Protecting water quality, natural habitat, and port commerce can be challenging and expensive. HEP partners are developing cost-effective and equitable programs that will have strong and lasting effects.



Celebrating 10th Anniversary of CCMP Signing