



RESTORATION WORK GROUP

Co-Chairs: *Lisa Baron (Army Corps of Engineers),
Marit Larson (NYC Parks)*

www.hudsonriver.org/estuary-program

Meeting, April 5, 2019

Hudson River Foundation
17 Battery Place, NY 10004

10:00 – 1:30

I. Welcome/introductions

Attendance is at the end of this document.

II. Minutes

Approved minutes from the last meeting in January 2019.

III. Wetland migration opportunities and discussion of next steps for HEP

Isabelle briefed the group on the results of the next steps prioritization exercise conducted at the January meeting. Going forward, HEP will try to raise awareness about wetland migration pathways and generally educate folks about the challenges and opportunities that they present. Isabelle will also explore the pathways spatially comparing them to parcel data, land use data, known HEP acquisition sites and other data sets suggested by the group. This will result in recommendations for acquisition and protection. Specific audiences of stakeholders for this information will be targeted and shared at the next meeting.

IV. Report out from Oysters Subcommittee meeting

Co-chair of HEP's Oysters Sub-committee, Jim Lodge summarized the major points from the committing meeting held on March 27, 2019. This meeting consisted largely of updates from the various oyster restoration projects and they hope to hold another this fall. Minutes from this meeting can be found on the HEP website [here](#).

Comments and questions from the group included:

- Clarification that the Living Breakwaters project is proceeding now with separate permit applications for the rock structures and the oysters' part of the project.
- Note that the Head of Bay oyster project did find increased habitat value and oyster larvae in the water column, but no recruitment was observed.
- The oyster drills that have proved to be problematic for the Naval Station Earle project are a non-native species and can only be addressed through manual removal.

V. Updates

USACE

- HRE Final Feasibility Report/Environmental Assessment expected in September 2019
- New York District requested the first 3 HRE restoration sites for new phase initiation for Preconstruction and Design for FY2021 budget including 1) Stony Creek - first Jamaica Bay Marsh Island (w/ NYCDEP and NYSDEC), 2) Bronx Zoo & Dam and Stone Mill Dam fish passage (w/ NYC Parks), and 3) Oyster restoration at US Naval Station Earle (w/ NY/NJ Baykeeper).

NYCDEP

The Jamaica Bay long term control plan has been submitted to the NYSDEC. It includes marsh restoration and ribbed mussel restoration for water quality benefits. They are working with researchers from Stony Brook and Cornell Universities for the ribbed mussels.

STAC

Judith Weis recently published an article on the role of phragmites in resiliency. Available [here](#).

NJSEA

- NJSEA has just finished the latest fish survey in the Meadowlands and hopes to have the report available on their website shortly. They also have finished recent benthic invertebrate and terrapin surveys.
- Terry Doss, as part of the Society of Ecological Restoration, is leading a workshop on methods to measure restoration success. She is willing to do something similar for the RWG if there is interest.

NJDEP

John King provided an update on Liberty State Park Restoration project: They submitted the final report for their NFWF grant (\$250,000 grant for design) on April 1, 2019. NJDEP and USACE are currently conducting field surveys (topo/bathy, tide gauges, utility surveys, wetland delineation) and advancing 30% integrated designs for freshwater and tidal wetlands (~57 acres), upland communities (~123 acres) and newer proposed amenities for the park. The 30% integrated designs will be completed by the end of 2019.

NYC Parks

Staten Island:

- Saw Mill Creek (SMC) Mitigation project credit issuing continuing. Invasive plant management is on-going in high marsh and adjacent forest.
- Property next to SMC long on HEP acquisition now up for sale. City strategizing on feasibility of acquiring to provide protection to adjacent wetlands and allow marsh migration.

Jamaica Bay

- Sunset Cove fill removal complete, final grading and sand placement for plants complete. Planting to be complete by July.
- Idlewild site design for sand placement is in progress.
- Coney Island Beach Grass volunteer planting conducted in March.
- Bayswater salt marsh to be planted in June.

Long Island Sound

- Alley Creek Living Shoreline - Phase 1 breakwater in permitting/ Phase 2 sand placement to build out eroded shoreline in design.
- Pugsley Creek PA mitigation - out to bid. Design adjustments being made to reduce rock toe. Community outreach up-coming.

NYSDEC

- James MacDonald is building SET tables to measure marsh accretion with time and installing them in marshes in Staten Island.
- Caitlin Frame is continuing monitoring water quality in the Jamaica Bay borrow pits this upcoming field season and they currently have an announcement out for internships for this project.

USEPA

Daniel Montella announced the upcoming release of the Wetland Program Development Grant and encouraged RWG members to apply. He also alerted us to dates of the comment period for the EPA proposal to revise the definition of the “waters of the United States.” This proposal would diminish the extent of protected waterways under federal protection.

NOAA

Over recent years, NOAA’s activities have been minimized due to reductions in funding. However, that recent paradigm may change given the recent settlement of \$28 million from the Cornell Dubilier Superfund site. This funding should lead to the support of several restoration projects in the Raritan watershed in the upcoming years.

VI. NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan

Michael Marrella from NYC’s Department of City Planning joined us to discuss the new Comprehensive Waterfront Plan that is under development. The last plan was released in 2011 and this new version is slated to be complete by December 2020. While these plans are not law-binding documents, they do tend to lead to major changes in city operation such as the establishment of waterfront zoning and resiliency measures. The main goals of this plan are Resilience, Equity and Health. Michael is reaching out to many stakeholder groups such as ours and getting feedback on what works and what does not, what tools can they use and how can we do a better job of getting science to inform waterfront policy. Michael will return to the RWG to discuss more focused topics in the future.

Comments from the Group included:

- Noting that this effort overlaps with the RWG's effort to understand shorelines and shallow water habitat.
- The shoreline is not going to be changed overnight. We need to move development back from the shoreline in successive increments. Other places in the world who have started practicing this managed realignment have seen increased resiliency.
- We may have to change the way we talk about shoreline restoration; for example, a regulatory word like "fill" is often used when we may be better served using a word like "nourishment."
- We can use the concept of dam removal as metaphor that extends to shorelines. Similar to how a dam blocks flow of water, species, and sediment in a river, a bulkhead too can be seen as a dam that blocks a similar flow from the water to the land.
- Can a general permit expedite the softening of shorelines?
- How defensible is 10 feet (or X feet) of soft shoreline? We do not know what is enough useful habitat to be valuable.

VII. Tracking the Enclosed and Confined Waters TEC and Restoration Report Update

Isabelle Stinnette presented to the group on the status of the discussion of redefining the tracking method for the Enclosed and Confined Waters TEC. The group decided to settle on a list of what waterbodies we will be tracking and then review each site for a number of metrics of effort towards improving the water quality in those areas. Example metrics include, inclusion in a long term control plan, and efforts to improve flushing or green infrastructure. Isabelle will be looking for participation in this analysis by email.

The 2017-2018 Restoration Report will hold until the completion of the analysis for this TEC.

VIII. Discussion on the role of phragmites in wetland restoration

Discussion rescheduled due to lack of time.

IX. Discussion on having a workshop on recontamination.

The group discussed different approaches to dealing with this action agenda item. Many members believe that a workshop is appropriate. Topics could include:

- A presentation of the data available
- Is it possible to establish a baseline (urban clean)?
- Establish guidance/best practices to avoid recontamination
- Share examples of contamination issues that have delayed restoration
- Establish what data we wish we had (research needs)

Other members, however, worry that a workshop like this may further delay restoration progress by more formally establishing the lack of data (i.e. by suggesting that because the potential risks of recontamination are not known, we should not continue conducting some kinds of restoration projects in urban areas).

HEP would like to form a sub-committee to discuss this issue before the next RWG meeting. Please contact Isabelle if you are willing to participate.

Attendance:

Lisa Baron, (chair) USACE

Marit Larson, (chair) NYC Parks

Terry Doss, NJSEA

Susan Elbin, NY Audubon (phone)

Marco Finocchiaro, USEPA (guest)

Caitlin Frame, NYSDEC

Jim Lodge, HRF

James MacDonald, NYSDEC

Susan Maresca, NYSDEC

Michael Marrella, NYCDCEP (guest)

Emily Maxwell, TNC (phone)

John McLaughlin, NYCDEP

Daniel Montella, USEPA

Ryan O'Leary, USACE (guest)

Robert Pirani, NY-NJ HEP

Ken Scarlatelli, NYSDEC (phone)

Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ HEP

Judith Weis, STAC