

RESTORATION WORK GROUP

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

www.hudsonriver.org/estuary-program

Meeting, July 18, 2019

Hudson River Foundation
17 Battery Place, NY 10004
10:00 – 2:00

I. Welcome/introductions

Attendance is at the end of this document.

II. Minutes

Approved minutes from the last meeting in April 2019.

III. Presentation and discussion on the role of *phragmites* in wetland restoration

Judy Weis presented her synthesis entitled: Rethinking *Phragmites* in the Anthropocene. She reviewed the literature comparing the relative value of *phragmites* to *spartina*, concerning habitat (nekton, benthos, and behavior), food for detritivores, contaminant issues (ongoing and legacy) and coastal protection. Her summary is that “*Phragmites* provides valuable ecosystem services, especially in light of anthropogenic stressors and climate change” and that management actions need to be site-specific considering likelihood of success.

Key points from the group discussion included:

- For habitat value, it is important that the *phragmites* does not lead to a monoculture.
- Many of these studies show mixed results because *phragmites* works in many different ways; patterns are different depending upon site-specific variables such as topography, salinity, sediment quality, etc.
- There is a need for more experimentation with these variables in *phragmites* marshes. Can we modify these marshes to get the ecosystem services we value?
- Spraying for removal generally is not working; mowing is better. There are some more creative techniques being studied such as peludiculture (periodic flooding) and fungi studies.
- Allopathy seems to be a problem in some areas but not others.
- Until we come up with more reliable removal or alteration techniques, *phragmites* marshes can wait and provide the services they do.

IV. **Motus tracking network**

Katlyn Parkins presented to the group about Motus radio telemetry. The Motus network uses nanotags and towers to track migrating birds. The tags can be used on very small birds and currently NYC Audubon is placing them on sandpipers and terns. Harbor Herons are large enough to use GPS tags. Motus.com is a multi-faceted but easy to use website that tracks for all of the Motus towers in the country. All the migration data is public. Anyone can put a tower up and Katlyn is advocating for more towers in the NY-NJ Harbor area. They cost ~ 5K but need an engineer to install and need to be sited up high so the signal is not blocked. With more towers pointed in different directions, you have a better chance at catching the signal of the migrating birds. Please contact Katlyn if you are interested in more information.

V. **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan follow up**

The RWG participated in a workshop: given different typologies found around NYC, what would our ideal new shorelines look like? Brendan Pillar and Cory Mann from NYC Department of City Planning joined us. Results of this workshop were summarized in a separate informal memo and distributed to the group and NYC Planning.

VI. **Updates**

USACE

- The Hudson River Habitat Restoration Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment is out for review and the comment period closes August 25, 2019. They are also looking for letters of support.
- The Vertical Team (HQ and North Atlantic Division) agreed with the Tentatively Selected Plan for restoration of Flushing Creek. Final designs and costs are currently being developed to be included in the Final Feasibility Report.
- The Spring Creek North Restoration project is in design and baseline field surveys will begin in October 2019.
- The 10th Annual Partner Harbor Inspection is September 25th.

NYCDEP

- The Jamaica Bay long term control plan is still in review with the NYSDEC. It includes marsh restoration and ribbed mussel restoration for pathogen removal. They are working with researchers from Stony Brook and Cornell Universities for the ribbed mussels research.
- They have implemented a wetland project this past year in Ally Creek, Queens, for pathogen removal. They are monitoring the results of that project for two years.

STAC

- Judith Weis's article in the *Conversation* on the role of phragmites in resiliency received a lot of attention. Available [here](#).
- She attended a salt marsh meeting on Long Island where Nichole Maher succinctly described the four criteria salt marsh need:
 - > Available sediment supply
 - > Clean water
 - > Full tidal exchange (non restricted)
 - > Room to move

NJSEA

- They are in field season, tagging turtles, surveying birds, and mapping shorelines.
- Additionally they are starting a NJ Tidal Wetland monitoring network have put how SETs to measure sediment accretion.
- They are starting an in lieu fee program for the Meadowlands.
- Trying new designs with their osprey platforms to accommodate the marsh conditions.
- Restoration is starting on Teaneck Creek using regenerative stormwater techniques.

NJDEP

John King provided an update on Liberty State Park Restoration project: The USACE has awarded a 2nd Task Order to conduct baseline geotechnical, biological surveys, and hydrologic modeling to inform the completion of 30% engineering designs Results from all field work are expected by the end of the year.

NYC Parks

- Sunset Cove restoration (Jamaica Bay) is complete.
- NYC parks received \$4 Million to restore upland forests.
- Starting a project monitoring road crossings for connectivity in Staten Island. This project is funded by the Hudson River Foundation.

NYSDEC

Ken Scarlatelli reports that they are starting a three-year study on Atlantic Coast Leopard Frogs on Staten Island.

USEPA

- The EPA is working on a revision to the proposal to redefinition of the waters of the United States. This proposal would likely still diminish the extent of protected waterways under federal protection. It should come out sometime this calendar year and will have a comment period.
- Tatyana Gram, an intern is monitoring water quality at Coney Island to assess impacts of oysters

NYC Audubon

The 2019 Harbor Herons surveys have been completed.

USFWS

- They are coming up with mitigation for the Port Authority expansion of the Teterboro airport.
- Investigating using NRD funds to remove further dams on the Raritan River.

Hudsonia

- Erik Kiviat noted that he is working on revising a book on restoration in the Meadowlands from a multi-taxa point of view.
- They have an ongoing turtle monitoring program.

NY-NJ HEP

- HEP's annual conference is coming up this November 1st. The theme this year is restoration.
- It is time for HEP to report to EPA about restoration and leveraging so keep an eye out for emails from Isabelle soliciting help in this process.

VII. Citizen Science Volunteer Platform

Elizabeth Balladares, HEP's Outreach Coordinator and Passaic River Urban Waters Ambassador presented on HEP's new citizen science volunteer platform. HEP's Tagboard, [available here](#), aggregates opportunities to get involved with stewardship organizations that need citizen scientists. It also gives our partners an opportunity to highlight the hands-on projects that they are bringing to their communities. HEP encourages the RWG to utilize this tool by incorporating the hashtags #NYNJCitizenScience or #NYNJCommunityScience into their social media posts when making requests for volunteers.

Attendance:

Lisa Baron, (chair) USACE
Marit Larson, (chair) NYC Parks
Elizabeth Balladares, NY-NJ HEP
Lucy Christiana, HRF
Terry Doss, NJSEA
Marco Finocchiaro, USEPA
Tatyana Graham, USEPA (guest)
John King, NJDEP (phone)
Erik Kiviat, Hudsonia (guest)
Jim Lodge, HRF
James MacDonald, NYSDEC
Cory Mann, NYC DCP (guest)
Susan Maresca, NYSDEC
Steve Mars, USFWS (phone)
John McLaughlin, NYCDEP
Daniel Montella, USEPA
Melody Njoku, USACE (guest)
Kaitlyn Parkins, NYC Audubon
Brendan Pillar, NYC DCP (guest)
Robert Pirani, NY-NJ HEP
Ken Scarlatelli, NYSDEC
Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ HEP
Judith Weis, STAC