



RESTORATION WORK GROUP

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

www.hudsonriver.org/estuary-program

Meeting, December 22, 2020
1:00 – 3:30

I. Welcome/Attendance

Attendance is at the end of this document.

II. Minutes

Approved minutes from the last meeting in August 2020.

III. HEP Conference Debrief And Next Steps

Isabelle Stinnette debriefed the group on the November Conference, Reflecting our Community, that was centered on community engagement and HEP's new diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental justice goals. One way that our group can address these goals is to partner with (or continue to work with) smaller community groups who want to engage in restoration.

- BOP plans to create best management practices on working with community groups that they would be willing to share.

IV. CRP Restoration Activity Map Update

Isabelle updated the group on the progress to create a new version of the restoration activity map that is easier to update and keep current. HEP has not budgeted funds to create a new map but will assess if funding can be found over the next year. Several members of the group volunteered to check the CRP site database for errors or updates.

V. Beneficial Use Of Dredged Material Resulting from Future Harbor Deepening Discussion

Lisa Baron and Jim Lodge presented the opportunity to beneficially use dredged material from the potential future implementation of the USACE's NY/NJ Harbor Deepening Channel Improvements Navigation Feasibility Study (non-federal sponsor – Port Authority). The Tentatively Selected Plan is deepening the pathways to Elizabeth -Port Authority Marine Terminal and Port Jersey -Port Authority Marine Terminal by up to 5 feet, to a maintained depth of -55 feet MLLW. The project proposes dredging up to 33,238,000 CY of various materials (sand, sediment, rock and till including Non-HARS suitable material) for beneficial use. The study used the least cost dredged material placement/disposal option to evaluate and compare alternatives. Potential placement/disposal options will be discussed in the final integrated report (planned for Feb 2022), coordination with the Regional Dredging Team and final options determined during the Pre-Construction and Design (PED) phase of the project. The draft Feasibility Report and EA was released for public review on October 30, 2020.

Discussion points included:

- USEPA and NJDEP have written a lessons learned document with regards to beneficial reuse projects (thin layer marsh placement), that occurred over the past few years in south NJ. This document is in review and will be shared with the group upon release.
 - The group could consider what we would like to see for a potential environmental benefits package, as was undertaken during the last deepening project resulting in the development of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan as part of the HRE Feasibility Study.
 - The group expressed an interest in seeing the material used as close as possible to the site of impact for both environmental justice and cost savings reasons.
 - Some members of the group assume that the HARS will run out of capacity utilizing a 1-meter cap and the “least cost” or federal standard would be higher than the cost of HARS. Several suggested that the incremental cost of the beneficial use should be paid for by the Corps as part of the project’s mitigation of impacts for the dredging actions. However, USACE policy currently requires a non-federal sponsor to pay the increased cost of the placement above the federal standard.
 - Jim presented CRP sites that were within 5 miles of the dredging activities and discussed the use of rock for substrate for oyster restoration projects including Sunset Park, Soundview, 3 HRE sites (Naval station Earle, Bush Terminal, head of Jamaica Bay) and other locations throughout the HRE.
 - For the next meeting, we could have restoration professionals who have worked on beneficial reuse projects present.
- As a next step in this discussion, Jim Lodge, in consultation with the workgroup Chairs, will put together a spreadsheet for potential beneficial reuse projects (including type of material and volume needed). These sites could also be considered potential mitigation sites if needed. This spreadsheet will then be shared with the RWG for project suggestions.

VI. Staten Island Wetland Development

Judith Weis and Carl Alderson presented their concerns about the development of wetlands in the Graniteville Swamp site on Staten Island. NY City and State have both already approved this development but community groups are still in vehement opposition. Not only is this area undeveloped habitat, it is a receiving basin for stormwater that is going to be raised, changing the ratio of water shedding vs. receiving area and increasing the vulnerability of low-lying neighborhoods that were already badly hit by Hurricane Sandy. Kaitlyn Parkins notes that NYC Audubon is researching and advocating against this development project and Judith believes there is at least one lawsuit in progress.

- HEP Staff will write a letter to the NYSDEC and Department of City Planning alerting them to the Graniteville Swamps status as a restoration opportunity on the CRP list.

VII. Blue Carbon Debrief

Rob Pirani updated the group on HEP’s efforts, with Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve (HRNERR) and other partners, to understand the potential of Blue Carbon (carbon capture in wetlands) in our area. We cohosted a workshop in October to share the utility of two new tools, the Climate Alliance’s Coastal Blue Carbon model and Natureserve Vista tool. We also started the discussion on where to do a blue carbon pilot demonstration restoration

project in our area, with funding through NYS. Please contact Riobart.Breen@dec.ny.gov if you would like to suggest a project.

VIII. NJ Nature Conservancy Catch Up

Bill Shadel, Coastal Projects Manager, from the Nature Conservancy NJ chapter, joins the RWG as our newest member. They currently are working on a particular focus area of restoration of coastal wetlands using sediment, usually thin-layer placement techniques. They would like to see marsh “replenishment” become a business-as-usual management practice in order to retain the marshes we currently have with regards to sea level rise. They have mostly focused on south Jersey so far.

IX. RWG Member Updates

USEPA

EPA region 2 expects to post a call for proposals for their wetland program development grant in early spring 2021. There is also currently an active request for applications for a national wetland program development grant that is open until January 12th.

USACE

The HRE Feasibility Study (\$421,435,000- 20 projects) and Hudson River Habitat Restoration (HRHR) Feasibility Study (\$44,638,000- 3 projects) were authorized for construction in the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 signed in law on 27 December 2020. The projects now compete Nationally for appropriations. Final Feasibility Report documents are found on USACE website (<https://www.nan.usace.army.mil/>) linked under “Postings”. Proposed sequencing of these 23 projects can be found in the Cost Engineering Appendix for each study.

HEP

HEP did not get the chance at this meeting to share the results of this years’ restoration and leveraging activity. Please look for a brief NEPORT summary document sent to the group by email.

NYC Parks

They have received authorization to go ahead with a living shoreline restoration at Alley Creek. Because of funding constraints they will be doing a lot of the labor in house and encourage anyone in the RWG to come by and chip in on the building in the end of January or early February.

Attendance (all virtual via webinar):

Lisa Baron, (chair), USACE
Marit Larson, (chair) NYC Parks
Carl Alderson, NOAA
Liz Balladares, HEP
Bart Chezar, (Guest)
Terry Doss, NJSEA
Marco Finocchiaro, USEPA
Lingard Knutson, USEPA
Jim Lodge, HRF

Susan Maresca, NYSDEC
John McLaughlin, NYCDEP
Katie Mosher, BOP
Jessie Murray, NOAA (Guest)
Kaitlyn Parkins, NYC Audubon
Robert Pirani, NY-NJ HEP
Bill Shadel, TNC NJ
Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ HEP
Judith Weis, Rutgers and STAC
Jaclyn Woollard, USEPA