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RESTORATION WORK GROUP

Co-Chairs: Lisa Baron (Army Corps of Engineers),

 Marit Larson (NYC Parks)

*www.hudsonriver.org/estuary-program*

**Meeting, May 18, 2020**

**9:30 – 12:00**

1. **Welcome/Attendance**

Attendance is at the end of this document.

1. **Minutes**

Approved minutes from the last meeting in February 2020.

1. **Sherman Creek Living Shoreline**

Jason Smith, Director of Northern Manhattan parks for the New York Restoration Project (NYRP) updated the group on their shoreline and wetland restoration project on the Harlem River at Sherman Creek. This is a high energy shoreline site that was experiencing a high degree of wetland erosion and peat loss as well as upland erosion and undercutting. Collapsed structures that were stabilizing the shoreline are finally degrading. The NYRP has been stewarding this site through an adaptive management technique. Last year they piloted stabilization of the site using coir logs, oyster-shell bags and marsh plantings. The intervention initially saw positive results as sediment rapidly began to accumulate behind the sill. However, the coir logs failed due to the waves/boat wakes and the marsh was not robust enough to stabilize on its own and deteriorated. This year they hope to try again using oyster-castles, informed by a reference project in Stratford, Ct., that has had success in a high energy environment using reef balls. They also hope to seed the sill with mussels, and are partnering with Chester Zarnoch on research including denitrification and carbon sequestration. They are using a monitoring strategy developed by NYC Parks and are adapting it to acknowledge the importance of erosion control at this site. They are having trouble sourcing mussels if anyone has any leads.

1. **RWG Member Updates**

Group members were asked to respond to the following questions at this meeting for their updates:

* Provide 1-2 important lessons learned that you would want to share with the group that will help with other projects.
* What is your near-term outlook of priorities/sites that you will be working on in the next 3-5 years?

NJDEP

John King provided an update on the Liberty State Park restoration project:

* The LOI application for this site has been completed but is waiting on DEP approval.
* 30% design plans are complete as well as a Value Engineering Study.
* Working towards 60% design in the fall.

NYC Parks

* Learning lessons about effect of grouping *spartina alterniflora* plantings at Sunset Cove Park: Constructed and planted 2019. 5 years of year monitoring planned
* Pugsley Creek salt marsh mitigation in progress – complete by June 2020
* Ferry Point salt marsh mitigation in progress – complete by August 2020
* Forest restoration planting intended with the one-shot Play Fair funding for NYC forests has been severely impacted by COVID, but some planting was possible.
* Updated salt marsh monitoring protocols with the EPA wetland grant with a focus on extent of wetlands, sedimentation and erosion.

NYC DEC

Working on their sustainable cemeteries initiative to use these landscapes to provide more diverse habitat given they are throughout 20% of NYC. This was the last meeting for Ken Scarlatelli at DEC.

USACE

* Chief’s Report briefing to LTG Semonite occurred on April 29, 2020 and is awaiting signature (update: signed May 26, 2020). Next step is to have the project authorized in WRDA 2020 for construction. The District hopes to have a few of the HRE projects in the 2022 budget to initiate PED as well as a new Feasibility Study at Spring Creek South.
* Hudson River Habitat Restoration Feasibility Study is being finalized with an expected submittal to HQ/NAD in August 2020. A major lesson learned for this study is to get your landowner support as early in the project as possible.
* Lisa suggests that we share monitoring and adaptive management plans or any long term monitoring plans with each other in the group.

NJSEA

* They are taking the time to conduct field work including osprey nesting and terrapins. They are managing social distancing pretty well including using separate cars and staying 6 ft apart.
* Kane Mitigation Bank– The site has a much lower grade mud flats than planned for, especially with SLR. They are seeing horn pond weed and mud flat instead of marsh.
* Going to do a seepage wetland mitigation

USEPA

* Working with the USACE regarding a stream qualification tool mitigation criteria for first time.
* Jacklyn Woollard new to EPA Region 2, wetland restoration expert joined the call.

NYC DEP

* Setting up lab experiments with Stony Brook and Cornell on bacterial uptake by mussels and DO. Found that feeding drops when salinity drops.
* Asking facilities to retool to grow ribbed mussels because they are not commercially available. Found low recruitment at Fresh Creek pilot. So, would need to pre-seed at hatchery.
* Each spawn gives 100Ks larvae not millions like oysters.

HRF (oysters)

* Soundview – Billion Oyster Program (BOP), DEC funded, construction slated for this summer. 700CY oyster shell to; 2x 4 ft and 500lb weight, spread across 5 acres; gabion cages filled with oyster shells and set oyster.
* Tappan Zee – 6 acre mitigation; report is complete and on the HRF website. Final monitoring this fall 2020.

NY-NJ Baykeeper

* Kicking off a shoreline monitoring project at Earle but finding it difficult to do fieldwork while social distancing. Interested in how others are doing fieldwork.
* Jamaica Bay pump out boat is not running.

NYC Audubon

* All fieldwork that involves more than one person has been canceled. At most only black crown night herons will be surveyed.
* Volunteer use much limited and no restoration projects are planned.

Billion Oyster Project

The BOP restoration team is focused on the production of gabions and securing larvae for the 5 acres of reef habitat at Soundview. We are building a new outdoor setting facility out of shipping containers in Red Hook and plan to start operating it in June. We are also still hoping to do a smaller on-bottom installation at Bayswater Point State Park and several small new floating installations at Brooklyn Bridge Park and Flushing Bay. All dependent on getting larvae from commercial suppliers. The work we normally do with volunteers is going to be done by staff and contracted welding shops.

HEP

* Working with Battery Park and AECOM on their resiliency project at Wagner Park. HEP is advising on how to add ecological uplift while restoring the shoreline. The report is in review and will be available in a few weeks.
* Water quality work group is working on the Harbor-wide Water Quality Report. If anyone wants to comment on the first draft please reach out to Rosana at Rosana@hudsonriver.org.
* HEP is looking for new places and partnerships in New Jersey for the Aquatic Connectivity through Climate-Ready Infrastructure project.
* HEP is working with the Hudson River Estuary Program on the State of the Hudson Report which is due to be completed next month (update: completion likely September 2020).

NOAA

* World migratory fish day moved to October. It includes many dam removal examples in Europe. This organization is good to gather worldwide information on migration.
* Other canceled events include: Sustainable Raritan River event, Hudson River estuary society meeting, and Fish Count Day cancelled.
* Working on 10 superfund sites including Newtown Creek, Gowanus Canal and Cornell Dublier ($28 million settlement). Working on a restoration plan for the settlement funds including several tiers of priority projects.
1. **The Future of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan Database**

The chairs moderated a group discussion surrounding the tracking of restoration opportunities and completed projects going forward. The CRP Restoration Activities map, has all the opportunities from the 2016 USACE report with some having more details than others. The available information included in project summary sheets (on the District website) were used to populate the map. The completed projects icons are largely placeholders with little information. Several partner organizations maintain their own separate opportunities lists. Therefore, the group is trying to determine the need for a comprehensive list of opportunities and understand the best utility of the map, given the expense of updating/upkeep.

 Notable participant comments include:

* Carl – Thinks CRP very useful because he looks for mitigation sites or where work has already happened; Volunteered to help update. Thinks that columns are not lining up anymore from the database and has found inaccuracies.
* Organizations that operate parallel lists: NYC Parks, USACE, NJDEP (generating now), NJSEA (Eco-atlas developed by NYCDEP does not likely have additional sites not included in the CRP).
* HEP has the database used to populate the map but cannot currently update the webmap that CUNY made (CUNY has not found a technical fix).
* Marit – are there some intermediate areas to prioritize updating? For example correct contact information.
* Lisa – Needs to be an easy way to update/nominate in order to incorporate other agencies sites. The RWG developed a labor intensive vetting process; however, there may be another way to more easily incorporate the other sites without being so onerous. (NOTE: Sites that are included in the CRP database, can be advanced as a new Feasibility Study within the HRE Restoration Program.)
* Marit – Can RWG members put time into updating the site that they feel responsible for?
* Isabelle – there is a lot of information in the database that is not on the website.
* Rob – Part of the incentive to this being a more seriously vetted list is that these sites were available for Port Authority/NYSDEC funding. It is more of a concern when there was potential money behind it.
* Marit – Do we need a second category of sites for the new opportunities to at least get them on the map?

Next step is that HEP will send out a survey to the group to get input on:

* + How we use CRP map
	+ Whether we should allow more sites to be listed without official CRP nomination process
	+ Whether organizations willing to put some time into updating
	+ How organizations prioritize CRP sites and if there is an approach

**Attendance (all virtual via webinar):**

Lisa Baron, (chair), USACE

Marit Larson, (chair) NYC Parks

Carl Alderson, NOAA

Rosana Da Silva, NY-NJ HEP

Terry Doss, NJSEA

Susan Elbin, NYC Audubon

Marco Finocchiaro, USEPA

John King, NJDEP

Lingard Knudson, USEPA

Jim Lodge, HRF

Susan Maresca, NYSDEC

John McLaughlin, NYCDEP

Kaitlyn Parkins, NYC Audubon

Robert Pirani, NY-NJ HEP

Ken Scarlatelli, NYSDEC

Jason Smith, (guest) NYRP

Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ HEP

Jaclyn Woollard, (guest) USEPA