



Citizens Advisory Committee

Of the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary
Program Committee

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December 15, 2020

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting Recording: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g08nfSuCkler5-qewVnIMvtX5qoPfHzT/view?usp=sharing>

Attendees: Rob Pirani, HEP; Isabelle Stinnette, HEP; Rosana DaSilva, HEP; Elizabeth Balladares, HEP; Meredith Comi, NYNJ Baykeeper; Carrie Roble; Hudson River Park Trust; Shino Tanikawa, NYCSWCD; Margaret Flanagan, WA; Karen Argenti, BCEQ; Sara Powell, UWFP; Clay Sherman, NJDEP; Bill Schultz, RRK; Hugh Carola, Hackensack River Keeper; Michelle McBean, FutureCity; Robert Buchanan, BOP; Tatiana Castro, BOP; Elisa Caref, Center for the Urban River; Lisa Bloodgood, NCA; Chris Girgenti, RIPA; Emma Gildesgame, NEIWPC, Michelle Luebke; Clay Hiles, HRF, Brigitte Walsh; Clarkson Beacon Institute; Alexandra; Littoral Society, Bart Chezar, Pamela Pettyjohn; CIB, Siddhartha Hayes; HRPT, Amanda Levy; Karen.L.Baumert; USACE, Peter Weppler; USACE, Mark.F.Lulka; USACE

Agenda Item: Welcome, Introductions & Approval of Minutes

- CAC NY co-chair, Carrie Roble, welcomed everyone, introduced the CAC leadership, reviewed the day's agenda and reviewed minutes from previous minutes. Minutes from the September 10th CAC meeting were approved.

Agenda Item: [Harbor Deepening Channel Improvements Navigation Study](#)

- The USACE and PANYNJ have released the [New York & New Jersey Harbor Deepening and Channel Improvements Draft Feasibility Study](#). The public review period is open until January 19th, a 75-comment day period. HEP has been working with USACE and other partners to facilitate community engagement, discuss environmental impacts, and identify opportunities for beneficial use of any dredged material and other related restoration opportunities. Karen Baumert from USACE presented the current study along with Pete Weppler. Initial report found that Port is being called upon by larger vessels much sooner than originally planned for. There are a number of internal and external reviews to bring together all the comments to determine the best plan forward. The goal is to have a Chief's Report by May 2022 in preparation for Congressional approval, then followed by a pre-construction engineering and design effort. The effort

is to improve existing configuration of the channel to reduce the inefficiencies (i.e., need of more tugs and pilots, slow moving) due to the depth and width of the channels. End result is looking at deepening by up to 5 feet at the Port Authority Marine Terminal and Port Jersey to create a 55-foot channel.

- Peter Wepler detailed the tentatively selected plan's potential impact to shallow water and other habitat. USACE takes a value to value, not acre to acre approach. The habitat assessment model is being reviewed by USACE National Ecosystem Planning Center of Expertise. USACE will create/enhance/restore an equal or greater quantity and quality of habitat to the region. The CRP will be the strategy used as a talking point for potential sites. Potential for blasting is a point of concern, particularly in Staten Island and Bayonne. USACE is looking to improve blasting to reduce impacts based on more modern methods. Construction tentatively to begin October 2024-2038.
- Lisa Bloodgood took questions from CAC members starting with whether the project took into consideration the effects that sounds may have on the harbor both on humans and on aquatic life. Peter answered that there was a study done on the impacts of blasting on fish within the area and recommendations were made on where blasting should take place. That study can be found [here](#). Peter also clarified that blasting activity will not be done every hour of the day but only during daylight hours. Lisa asked a follow up question related to whether the dredging process would also be acoustic disturbing. Peter said although engines will definitely be heard in his opinion the noise disturbance will not be as much as the blasting. Peter also mentioned an environmental impact statement will not be made because based on the prior analysis on the first project which went up to 50 feet, a lot of that information already exists, especially for post construction. Any impact related to new areas such as shallow marine habitat is being evaluated.
- Due to lack of time, additional questions were not able to be answered, Lisa closed off the Q&A by asking whether there are any sites or projects already being considered for the repurposing of dredging materials. Peter answered that those discussions are currently taking place now and there are some sites being considered near Bayonne. The goal is to find sites, their final report will likely include a list of recommended sites in an appendix. Peter also mentioned in a previous conversation with the state of NJ, it's been mentioned that they would like to see Sand being sent to Raritan Bay. Peter ended with mentioning for now they will be concentrating on highlighting sites and projects eligible for these uses.
- **Next Steps:** The CAC has a list of questions from members that were sent in via email prior to the presentation on December 15th that will be compiled with the questions members asked the day of. The leadership will regroup and discuss the best way to send in questions and comments in time by the comment deadline, Jan 19th.

Agenda Item: [Request for Proposals - Economic Analysis of the New York - New Jersey Harbor Estuary](#)

- With funding from EPA, NEIWPC is assessing the economic value of water-dependent and water enhanced sectors of the estuary. Emma Gildesgame from NEIWPC joined us

at our September meeting to review the study's purpose, intended audience, and scope. She also asked CAC members to help prioritize indicators (9) of clean water (and related uses) for consideration as the work was launched.

- Emma joined us on December 15th to discuss the results of the poll, how they were used to inform their [Request for Proposals](#), and what'd next as part of this work.
- It's anticipated that a contract will be selected in mid-February, the contractor will look at the top chosen indicators and show how these relate to public access and habitat.
- **Next Steps:** NEIWPC will continue to keep the CAC informed on the progress of the study and HEP CAC will provide additional input where necessary.

Agenda Item: Water Quality Report Update

- Rosana Da Silva joined us and informed us she is reviewing final comments on the Harbor-wide Water Quality Report. It's anticipated that it will be ready by January 2021 for digital release. A poll was completed during the meeting to inform HEP on a printing, with 56% of attendees suggest printing just the waterbody summaries, 28% the full report, and 17% for both the full report and individual summaries.
- **Next Steps:**

Agenda Item: [Reflecting Our Community Conference Recap and Moving Forward](#)

- Liz Balladares framed the conversation reflecting on prior DEI work that the CAC had been working on since 2019. Through a survey and CAC focused discussion, a DEI roadmap was developed. The roadmap includes making changes from within HEP/HRF as well as working externally with our partners through trainings/workshops.
- Liz also provided an overview of how our previously coordinated survey was used to shape the annual conference. Our conference sought to directly address survey results, specifically three sessions: Everyone is Invited, Setting BIPOC Students for Success in Environmental Careers, and Fostering an Inclusive Climate within the Workplace.
- HEP attracted 553 registrants, 88 speakers, and over half of our speakers were BIPOC representatives. There were a total of 1,200 views of the agenda webpage and HEP received a support video from Senator Cory Booker. Spanish translations were provided for a majority of the sessions and allowed HEP to provide Spanish recordings for the sessions. Only 55 participants responded to HEP's conference evaluation survey. The responses found the conference a good use of their time and 34% of respondents were new to HEP.
- NY Co-chairs, Carrie Roble and Lisa Bloodgood then facilitated an open discussion with the group. Carrie and Lisa spoke about our objectives for moving forward and how to collaboratively work and advance the following: 1. DEI issues within the HEP collaborative; 2. How to help partners incorporate and address BIPOC issues by offering trainings or tools; 3. Shining a spotlight on our current community partnerships and build bridges to new ones; 4. How to attract BIPOC and student participants. These objectives will be the focus of HEP and CAC efforts going forward.

Agenda Item: *Stewardship Highlight: Working Towards our DEI Goals*

- Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA) Natural Areas Manager, Chris Girgenti, shared with the CAC the efforts that RIPA is taking to internally work on their DEIJ goals. Moving forward the CAC leadership will continue to use these stewardship highlights to share how our partners are moving forward in their DEIJ goals.