

**March 13th 2020**

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

**WEBEX LINK:** <https://tinyurl.com/uwngf37>

**EVENT NUMBER/ACCESS CODE:** 668 841 009

**PASSWORD:** HEPCAC

**CONFERENCE PHONE NUMBER:** +1-855-797-9485

**DRAFT AGENDA**

**Attendees:** Rob Pirani, HEP; Isabelle Stinnette, HEP; Rosana DaSilva, HEP; Lindsey Strehlau, HEP; Elizabeth Balladares, HEP; Meredith Comi, NYNJ Baykeeper; Joe Reynolds, MCP; Jessica Bonamusa, IEC; Carrie Roble; Hudson River Park Trust; Shino Tanikawa, NYCSWCD; Margaret Flanagan, WA; Karen Argenti, BCEQ; Butler Elizabeth, EPA; Anne Rosenblatt, EPA; Richard Corman, TRP; Michele Langa, NYNJ Baykeeper; Nancy Brous; Sara Powell, UWFP; Bob McIntosh; Melissa Rex, TRP; Clay Sherman, NJDEP; Bill Schultz, RRK; Chrissy Remein, RiverKeeper; Michelle Tracy, FutureCity; Robert Buchanan, BOP, Michelle Doran Mcbean, FutureCity

**Agenda Item:** [Legislative Update](#)

- HEP program director Rob Pirani provided an update on draft bipartisan bill to protect and restore water quality and ecological integrity and among other provisions, would increase funding for the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program.
- Scenic Hudson and other partners have been working with Representative Tonko's office on crafting this new legislation that would establish a new "Hudson-Raritan-Mohawk Estuary and Watershed Restoration Program" under the auspices of the USFWS.

The proposed legislation, still in draft form, would authorize up to \$ 50 million a year in grants for implementation of a variety of existing and new management plans in the estuary, including HEP's Action Agenda.

**Agenda Item:** [How Are Communities Using Their Local Waterfront?](#)

- Elizabeth Balladares & Lidsey Strehlau, HEP presented findings from *Connecting Passaic to the River: Dundee Island Waterfront Park and Community Engagement Profile*
- The study consisted of a social assessment & profile of Dundee Island Park (the city's only waterfront park) in the City of Passaic, NJ. It was conducted in collaboration with HEP, the Lower Passaic River Urban Waters Federal Partnership and the US Forest NYC Urban Field Station.
- The main goal of the study & HEP's involvement was to increase community stewardship and try to advance it in the City of Passaic and also understand how it works. Specially because sections of the Passaic River are considered one of the 12 higher need areas as identified by HEP's previous Public Access Report.
- The study sought to explore three major questions:
  - What **uses, values, and meanings** are associated with Dundee Island Park and the Passaic River waterfront?
  - How do users **perceive social and ecological conditions** of Dundee Island Park and the Passaic River?
  - To what extent do local users **engage in stewardship** activities associated with Dundee Island Park and the Passaic River? How can greater stewardship and engagement be cultivated?
- Methods were adapted & similar to similar social assessments conducted in Jamaica Bay & Coney Island Creek.
- Major findings obtained from the study included:
  - Passaic is a community proud of their city and diverse cultures.
  - Youth representation is frequently seen and highly valued in Passaic.
  - Fear and uncertainty surround the Passaic River due to history.
  - Concern and criticisms are not hidden within the community.
  - Sports, recreation, and culture meld together in the parks.
  - Park program participants are fueled by willingness, excitement, and curiosity.
  - The Passaic area would benefit from waterfront programming and building community stewardship, amplifying their values of care, beauty, and kinship.
- **Next Steps:** The Dundee Island Park research team will hold a webinar meeting to showcase findings from the study and will continue conversations with interested CAC members to provide partners in other higher need locations of the estuary with the tools necessary to replicate similar studies at their local waterfronts.

**Agenda Item: [Overview of CAC's 2020 Workplan Focus](#)**

- The CAC leadership came up with a list of potential planned activities as part of the CAC's 2020 workplan, including the need to be trained on how to incorporate justice, equity and diversity training into CAC goals.
- **Next Steps:** Have partners provide feedback on additional potential activities/initiatives that the CAC might want to focus on for the year & provide feedback/comments/votes on the already produced list of potential items of focus.

**Agenda Item: [Seal Monitoring in Sandy Hook Bay](#)**

- Joe Reynolds, President of Save Coastal Wildlife & CAC NJ Co-Chair, provided an update SCW's seal monitoring activities in Sandy Hook Bay.
- There are only three (3) identified seal haul sites in New York Harbor & down the Jersey Shore.
  - Swinburne Island & Hoffman Island (near Staten Island & south of the Verrazano Bridge)
  - Skeleton Hill Island in Sandy Hook Bay
  - Great Bay Estuary, near Tuckerton, NJ
- Volunteers with then the Bayshore Watershed Council, now Save Coastal Wildlife nonprofit, go out several times throughout the winter to identify & count seals, and look for threats.
- Results:
  - Over 90 percent of our seal population is made up of Harbor or Common Seals  
Scientific name: *Phoca vitulina*
  - About 7 percent is made of Gray Seals. Scientific name: *Halichoerus grypus*
  - About 3 percent are Harp Seals. Scientific name: *Pagophilus groenlandicus*
- **Next Steps:** continue to support Save Coastal Wildlife partners in bringing awareness of the threats to seal populations including marine debris such as derelict nets, ropes, line, hooks, or other fishing gear, packing bands, rubber bands, balloon string, six- pack rings, and plastic bags.