



RESTORATION WORK GROUP

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

www.hudsonriver.org/estuary-program

Meeting, February 17, 2022
10:00 – 12:30 pm

I. Welcome and Attendance

Attendance is at the end of this document.

II. Minutes

Approved minutes from the last meeting in October, 2022.

III. Membership

George Jackman from Hudson Riverkeeper has requested to join this workgroup. Jim Lodge made a motion to add Riverkeeper as an organization to the group which was seconded by Judith Weis. The group voted and approved the inclusion of Riverkeeper going forward.

IV. RWG Member Updates

NYC Parks

Finished their first thin-layer sediment application at Hook Creek in the JB watershed. The project area was 1.25 ac and the sediment was 6-12 inches thick. They will be planting the site in the spring and are happy to present more details on the project at a later meeting.

STAC

Judith announced the success of her proposal to have the NY-NJ Harbor accepted as a Mission Blue "Hope Spot." There will be a public announcement in April, and she is encouraging others to help spread the word.

NJSEA

- They are about to kick off their fourth fish survey of the meadowlands to continue a 40-year long monitoring effort. This will also include monitoring for American Eels, with support from HEP, EDNA and acoustic monitoring.
- They flew a new Lidar last year and are analyzing the results for marsh accretion/erosion.
- Working on waterfront public access in disadvantaged communities including in the Kane marsh and Keegan Landfill.
- Designing a pollinator habitat that will be in tandem with a vertical farm.

Hudson River Foundation and HEP

- They are going to use some of the funding from the BIL to work on two years of longer-term monitoring on the Tappan Zee oyster restoration project (installed in 2018). They will look for potential areas for expansion of this site.
- Developing a Request for Proposals for habitat restoration that is nearly ready to be announced. Projects could be towards any stage of restoration but should be located in a disadvantaged community.
- Wrapping up the large assessment of road stream crossings in the Lower Raritan for aquatic connectivity and hydrologic capacity. The final presentation, on March 14th, will also feature the release of a toolkit for prioritizing culvert restoration developed by Princeton Hydro. Contact Isabelle for more information.

Billion Oyster Project

- Finalizing their project pipeline through 2035
- Focusing on the Tappan Zee area as well as Western Long Island Sound.
- Working on the NYS Shellfish Restoration Plan with many partners which should be released in 2024.
- Looking to scale up their growing facilities on Governor's Island in order to reach oyster deployment goals.

NYC Audubon

- Working on pre-restoration monitoring (bird surveys) at Big Rock Beach in Queens.
- Going to work with the Bronx River Alliance on monitoring foraging sites for Harbor Herons in the Bronx.

USEPA

EPA recently announced a new Waters of the US rule that turns over the Trump-era definitions that severely curtailed what waterbodies were protected. The new definitions are similar though not exactly the same as the 2015 rules. Marco can do a presentation with more details at a later meeting.

NOAA (update via email)

They are nearing the completion of a Draft Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment for the American Cyanamid Superfund Site in Bridgewater NJ. When the draft is finalized (soon) the Trustees Council will release it to the public for a 30-day review.

V. Resetting TEC Goals Discussion and Decision

Now that 2020 has passed the group has discussed the need to revise the CRP 2050 goals and potentially establish an interim goal. Discussion highlights include:

- Group consensus was that setting a set of interim goals for 2035 would be a valuable activity. We need to check in with Lisa and USACE to make sure that aligns with their plans for enacting the feasibility study.
- For many of the TECs, this process will redefine how progress is being tracked, e.g. changing the unit from number of pilot projects to acres of restoration.
- We should think about how we use the CRP to encourage and track projects that contain multiple TECs.

- We could go through the TECs and categorize them into levels of effort to address.
 - We can utilize our subcommittees for help as well as other partners.
 - We need to outline how technical we want to make this effort, to better determine the process.
- The Chairs, Jim Lodge and Isabelle Stinnette have volunteered to scope the process for the next meeting.

VI. 2023 RWG meetings Discussion

Isabelle suggested a group of issues that we could discuss at future meetings this year.

1. Firstly, there are two items from HEP's Action Agenda where we haven't made much progress.

H-B-3 RECONTAMINATION:

- Terry Doss said that this remains an issue that they're dealing with regularly.
- Monitoring from the Saw Mill mitigation bank is only in year 2 of 5 and not in a position to be analyzed yet.

H-D-2 BUYOUT RESTORATION

- Rob Pirani raised the question, are there areas in the estuary where local resiliency plans are imagining that buyouts are part of the solution and is there an opportunity to advance restoration planning in those areas?
- Marit raised that we should also look at buyout opportunities within the framing of the HATS study and where buyouts could be important or superfluous.

2. Isabelle shared the results of the poll taken at the last HEP restoration conference regarding progress and needs in restoration efforts.
 - Danielle Bisset noted that HEP could have a communications work group that works across some of the other workgroups.
3. Betsy Blair has volunteered to HEP staff to help plan a focused wetland migration meeting of stakeholders. We could hold this as an expanded RWG or on its own. The group seemed to welcome the idea of this meeting but suggested that we wait to hold it until after the annual Retreat Conference at Columbia in June.
4. The group is interested in field trips but rather than top-down decision making, we will let group members suggest a field trip when they have a project that they think others may be interested in learning about.

VII. Update on Regulatory Challenges of NNBF Projects

Marit's team brought together a group of stakeholders to meet with the USACE Engineering with Nature group to discuss the regulatory barriers to permitting NNBFs. The participants came up with a list of actions that we could take to move the conversation along. For example, reviewing the regulatory tools and guidance for

opportunities for flexibility, reviewing literature and reference sites that could provide guidance. Next steps include applying for grants to support research on one aspect of this challenge and looking closely at case studies and scientific literature.

- Marit will send out the results of this meeting to the RWG.

VIII. Attendance

Marit Larson (chair), NYC Parks
Danielle Bissett, BOP
Meredith Comi, NY-NJ Baykeeper
Terry Doss, NJSEA
Marco Finocchiaro, EPA
Lingard Knudsen, EPA
Jim Lodge, HRF
Susan Maresca, NYCDEC
Jessie Murray, NOAA
Dustin Partridge, NYC Audubon
Robert Pirani, NY-NJ HEP
Bill Shadel, TNC
Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ HEP
Judith Weis, STAC