

December 23, 2022

December 16, 2022 Meeting

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Recording:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12tJEX0oQdXxGYcgCd7paMZRL9VctM6yG/view?usp=share_link

Attendees: Rob Pirani, HEP; Isabelle Stinnette, HEP; Elizabeth Balladares, HEP; Rosana Da Silva, HEP; Christina Carrero, HEP; Meredith Comi, NY/NJ Baykeeper; Allison Fitzgerald, NJCU; Carrie Roble, Hudson River Park Trust; Shino Tanikawa, NYCSWCD; Dan Shapley, Riverkeeper; Alison Cucco, Greener JC; Noelle Thurlow, Resilience Adventures, John King, NJDEP, Lingard Knutson, EPA; Bart Chezar, Bill Schultz, Raritam Riverkeeper; Makalé Faber Cullen; Greg Remaud, NY/NJ Baykeeper; Aldrin Ador; Karen Argenti, BCEQ; David Schwartzberg, RRWA; Margaret Flanagan; Future City Inc, Michele Langa, NY/NJ Baykeeper, Dan Mundy; Louis K; Chris Girgenti, RUPA; Phone numbers not identified: 908 578 4095; 609 598 5013;

1:00 PM – 1:05 PM – Welcome, Introductions & Approval of Minutes

- CAC NY co-Chairs, Meredith Comi and Alison Fitzgerald welcomed everyone in attendance. The NJ co-chairs asked members to introduce themselves by name and affiliation on the chat, encouraged new members to introduce themselves. Minutes were approved after request to make a correction to the attendees list from the last meeting.
- The co-chairs shared the news that Judy Weiss' application for the NY NJ Harbor Estuary to be added as a [Mission Blue Hope Spot](#) was accepted.

1:05 PM – 1:20 PM – Stewardship Highlight

- Allison Cucco with [Greener JC](#) began sharing on the group's latest efforts around Caven Point in Liberty State Park (LSP), one of the last undisturbed natural estuaries in the tri-state area.
- Lots of student led research has been taking place at Caven point. It's located south of LSP, its size is about 22 acres. NJDEP remediated the site in 2004.
- It is a varied habitat consisting of upland meadow, salwater marsh, maritime fores, tidal pools, tidal mudflats and the longest natural beach in upper NY harbor and the Hudson River
- It's one of the last undisturbed natural estuaries in the NYC area.

- Because of its importance as nesting bird habitat, Caven Point is closed to the public from March 1st to September 30th.
- Students led research projects have allowed access to the site during this critical nesting period
- This past year was the first time Greener JC worked with college students. Students from NJCU documented shorebirds at Caven Point and conducted preliminary investigations on the link between sediment micro plastics and shorebird food webs.
- Greener JC is in the process of securing \$10k to support the continuation of the program
- Greener JC does a lot of work with plastic reduction initiatives and have micro grants for local businesses to give out reusable items
- Carrie Roble asked if Allison Cucco was familiar with City of Water Day and mentioned her group would be a wonderful addition to the initiative which take place every year. Liz Balladares provided a short overview of the goals behind City of Water Day and mentioned she would follow up with Allison to provide more information.
- Next steps: the CAC will continue to offer the space and time during future meetings to highlight and elevate the outreach and community engagement efforts around Caven Point and Liberty State Park.

1:20 PM – 1:30 PM – HEP’s 2022 Restoration Conference Overview

- Meredith Comi introduced Isabelle Stinnette, HEP Restoration Manager, who began providing an overview of HEP’s annual conference “Our Urban Shores” which took place from Nov 29 – December
- The conference took place over 3 days : 2 virtual and 1 in-person
- Total of 267 attendees and 48 speakers
- Some of the content included panels focusing on centering the community in habitat enhancement projects, shallow water enhancement, lessons learned around long term restoration and more.
- In general, attendees and speakers agree that participating in the conference was a well use of their time and appreciated the opportunity to participate in person.
- Some of the things that conference attendees said worked well included, the in-person component, the content and variety of sessions and the free tickets offered. Some things that could use improvement included more science based debates and discussions and live streaming capabilities.
- Allison mentioned she really enjoyed the focus on engaging students and allowing them to share their work as well as get the opportunity to network during the in-person day.
- Chris Girgenti agreed with Allison and mentioned he really enjoyed the fact that he got to enjoy the NJ side of the estuary as well as the American River film.
- Shino Tanikawa mentioned even though we did well this year she will still like to see us work harder at increasing BIPOC representation
- When Isabelle asked for feedback on what are some of the topics we should explore in the future Chris G. mentioned it would be good to highlight more EJ issues and concerns by using future conferences as a platform.
- Next steps: the cac will continue adding feedback on the content of future conferences and CAC members are encouraged to participate in conference advisory committee

1:30 PM – 2:00 PM: Bipartisan Infrastructure Act Workplan and HEP Equity Strategy

- HEP's FY 22/FY 23 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law workplan has been approved by the Policy Committee. One of the requirements as part of HEP's BIL funding is the preparation and adoption of an equity strategy, reflecting HEP's commitment to meeting EPA's guidance for the administration's Justice40 policies.
- Rob Pirani provided a brief overview on the background for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL - also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) which will provide HEP \$909,800 a year for the next five years (FY 2022 through FY 2026). Lingard Knutson along with others at EPA R2 have been working with HEP to advance contracts so that we can begin to fund projects as early as January 2023.
- A fair amount of money for the first two years is going to go out in the form of rfps related to climate change and resilience. The CAC is also encouraged to let HEP staff know if anyone is interested in helping review proposals as part of these rfps.
- During the discussion Dan asked if the summary of the FY22/23 Workplan was available and Rob mentioned he will circle around a link to the summary although folks should be mindful that the MC need to approve it formally. Chris Girgenti asked if it would be possible for these grants to take into account organizations that may not have the capacity to put full proposals together. Rob mentioned we're stiving for low barriers to entry, for example letters of entry may be required to ensure that folks aren't being asked to put full applications together.
- We are including at least right now in the climate rfp, the opportunity for folks to talk about capacity building as part of their proposed projects.
- Allison Fitzgerald asked if because this money is federal money, will projects require a match. Although there will be some restrictions like the standard plate stuff like the funds not being used for advocacy, QAPP requirement if data is being collected, etc. no match will be required.
- Meredith Comi asked for a quick synopsis of the climate rfp - aimed at building capacity in disadvantaged communities to address and advance climate resilience. HEP hopes to leave this relatively open ended so that as many groups can apply.
- One of the requirements of the funding is the preparation and adoption of an equity strategy, reflecting HEP's commitment to meeting EPA's guidance for the administration's Justice40 policies.
- HEP envisions the equity strategy will not only help to calculate benefits and progress towards Justice40 but would also help inform criteria for funding decisions and be a cornerstone of the next Action Agenda/CCMP revision.
- Several draft maps and initial considerations for an equity strategy were shared with the Committee. HEP staff is proposing three geographies to help prioritize its work: Areas meeting the Five Factor Demographic Index suggested by EPA guidance (where any of the five factors are greater than 80%, buffered by ½ mile and the boundary of adjacent waterfront parks); New York and New Jersey definitions of Disadvantaged (NYS) and Overburdened (NJ) communities (also buffered by ½ mile and the boundary of adjacent waterfront parks); and HEP's identification of higher need public access and stewardship areas in the 2017- 2025 Action Agenda along with the Federal Urban Waters Partnership service areas in the Lower Passaic and Bronx and Harlem Rivers.
- HEP proposes using the combination of these factors to report our progress in serving disadvantaged/overburdened communities with the BIL funding and to help guide our action

agenda going forward. While the presentation focused on the Harbor Estuary, the HEP analysis extended to the entire HEP watershed boundary.

- HEP is looking to develop sort of an ad hoc committee to ensure that the engagement process is as effective as possible.
- The stakeholder Engagement Process includes the following stages: outline and preliminary mapping (dec 2022), draft strategy and final proposed maps (april 2023), and final strategy development (June 2023).
- Meredith mentioned that it would be very beneficial to take a look at the powerpoint along with the draft maps.
- Next steps: CAC members are asked to review follow up documents and provide feedback on topics like but not limited to definitions of disadvantaged communities, means of assessing benefits, and what's a meaningful stakeholder engagement process. As well as notify Rob if folks are interested in joining that ad hoc committee to dive in deeper into this process. The CAC is looking forward to continuing this conversation in the spring of 2023.

2:00 PM – 2:30 PM – Liberty State Park Natural Resource Restoration Project

- John King with NJDEP's office of resource restoration began sharing an update on the Liberty State Park (LSP) Interior Restoration Project
- The restoration project has been in the works for over 20 years, John focused on some of the major accomplishments made in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers since 2017.
- In April of 2020 NJDEP completed their 60% design, which was then presented to stakeholders in October of 2020. During this meeting, the public requested for more active recreation opportunities for the park.
- An extensive public outreach effort in the form of two surveys was also done. The second survey saw more than 3600 responses. Breakout sessions focusing on things like active recreation were also conducted.
- In June of 2021, the Department held another meeting and announced that 50 acres of the park interior would be set aside for active recreation. Later, another 11 acres of the park outside the interior were designated for active recreation as well. As a result of this design had to be updated.
- A complete 60% designed (redesigned) package is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.
- Some of the highlights: a portion of the project within the park interior will be approx. 165 acres, the entire site will have to be recontoured and require 1 foot fill. Other highlights include 46 acres of tidal wetland, 26 acres of Non-tidal wetland, 77 acres of upland habitats, 5.6 miles of trails, wildlife viewing areas and scenic overlooks.
- During the discussion portion Liz Balladares asked if other parts of the park will be closed down while construction is set to start and the what is the timeline of the project. John mentioned no other parts will need to be closed other than the road closure of Freedom Way.
- Rob mentioned that with the new updates to the site, lots of people may want to use it as a birding spot and so was wondering if anyone at the Department estimated how many more individuals can be expected once the site opens up? At this time the Department does not have that information.

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM – Maximizing Citizen/Community Science efforts around Microplastics

- Allison Fitzgerald kicked off a discussion on how the CAC can help support our shared monitoring efforts around microplastics, picking off some early discussions from this past summer.
- Liz shared an EasyRetro Board (<https://easyretro.io/publicboard/U3sWMN0VgINLmKvDMOzU3tfmjAh2/0e081bb8-ac8a-424f-bce3-5ffd768b674a>) where CAC members were encouraged to share their thoughts and feedback around the following three main questions:
 - What are some the ways we can help support & encourage conversations around Microplastics? (ex. host meetings to share what partners are doing throughout the region, invite experts to speak, etc.)?
 - Do you already monitor for microplastics within your group/organization?
 - Would you consider adding microplastics monitoring to your repertoire?
 - How can we go about creating an estuary wide database? Does something already exist? How can we encourage similar parameters and data sharing?
- Next steps: Allison and Liz will gather and analyze the content of the EasyRetro board and use it to move forward with exploring the best ways to organize discussions and conversations around microplastics and the cac.

2:45 PM – 3:00 PM – Participant Updates & Announcements

- Members shared updates with the group regarding open positions with their organizations and about upcoming events
- Liz also reminded the group about the open [CAC NY co-chair application](#) and [EJ officer form](#)