

April 1, 2022

March 15th Meeting

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Meeting Recording: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/RgdNWLFT35nzhII8uoCkLRaO8I-c1s3OX28XAOckrwkSfTvj_GhIMFP0rgUb51wN.ipYqXimn06hy0yM4?startTime=1647356713000

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Rob Pirani, HEP; Isabelle Stinnette, HEP; Elizabeth Balladares, HEP; Rosana Da Silva, HEP; Meredith Comi, NY/NJ Baykeeper; Allison Fitzgerald, NJCU; Carrie Roble, Hudson River Park Trust; Shino Tanikawa, NYCSWCD; Lisa Bloodgood, NBN; Clay Sherman, NJDEP; Chauncy Young, Harlem River Working Group; Karen Argenti, Bronx Council for Environmental Quality/Harlem River Working Group; Rupu Gupta, Helena Andreyko, Hudson River Foundation, Rebecca Pryor, Guardians of Flushing Bay and Riverkeeper; Louis Kleinman; Tami Lin-Moges, The Nature Conservancy; Peter Brandt, EPA; Chris Schubert, USGS; Sergio Moncada, Jessica Bonamusa, IEC; Michelle Luebke, Jennifer Zhu, Billion Oyster Project; Dan Mundy, Sr; Joseph Reynolds, Save the Coastal Wildlife; Neal McHugh; Sara Harrison, Hudson River Foundation; Tatiana Castro, Billion Oyster Project; Ed Samanns; Future City Inc

11:00 AM – 11:05 AM – Welcome, Introductions & Approval of Minutes

- CAC NY co-Chairs, Lisa Bloodgood and Carrie Roble welcomed everyone in attendance. The NY co-chairs asked members to introduce themselves by name and affiliation on the chat. Minutes were approved.

11:05 AM – 11:35 AM – Stewardship Highlight: Forest for All NYC

- Tami Lin-Moges, The Nature Conservancy New York State Cities Program Deputy Director and Sergio Moncada, Forest for All Coalition Manager introduced the coalition's efforts to help support a healthy, biodiverse and resilient urban forest that justly and equitably delivers its multiple benefits to all residents of NYC and helps the city adapt to and mitigate climate change.
- NYC concerns include Urban Heat Island Issues, extreme weather events, flooding and stormwater.
 - There is an inequitable distribution of tree canopy throughout the City which coincides with areas of the City suffering the most from heat island effect
 - Across the City the average canopy cover is ~22% according to 2017 data

- Benefits of Urban Forest:
 - Carbon sequestration, stormwater capture, energy use reduction, air pollution removal, biodiversity, and overall well-being
 - Net cost of the benefits provided by our urban forest: \$108 million/year
 - Lots of times people tend to overlook the amazing benefits that trees provide but also tend to overlook the maintenance required to care for them
- NYC trees also face challenges
 - Climate change – extreme weather effects can affect different species differently
 - Pests and pathogens
 - Disparate management
 - Lack protection
 - Lack advocates
- Future Forest NYC is focused on better protecting our urban forest
 - Initiative by The Nature Conservancy
 - Science, Policy, Convening and Partnership are some of main ways Future Forest NYC seeks to grow the urban forest
 - Some key projects produced by Future Forest NYC include
 - Urban forest report (which goes into policy, funding and other in depth details)
 - Forest for all coalition which implements the urban forest agenda
 - About the NYC Urban Forest Agenda
 - What used to be the urban forest task force which is now the Forest for All NYC coalition
 - The coalition is made up of more than 50 partners that work to expand NYC's urban forest
 - Vision is to create and maintain a healthy, biodiverse, robust, accessible, well-understood and resilient urban forest that justly and equitably delivers multiple benefits to all NYC residents.
 - Key drivers: human health and well-being, climate change adaptation, distribution of benefits to EJ communities, connection to the urban forest, coordination and collaboration
 - Focal areas for this year:
 - Have the city make a commitment to achieve 30% canopy cover by 2035
 - FY23 budget protected (have the city have enough funds to maintain the canopy right now)
 - Those interested in getting involved should visit forestforall.nyc to:
 - Sign up and join the coalition
 - Download the NYC forest agenda
 - Follow ForestforAllNYC on social media
 - Isabelle Stinnette asked who the agenda is targeting and who is the agenda geared toward?
 - Tami answered that the agenda is mainly geared for policy makers and organizations that take part in this work. Recognizing that there is already a lot of good work advancing some of the goals included in the urban forest agenda, the coalition seeks out to essentially bottle this energy so that organizations can work in synergy and move in a common direction. We also have documents that are

more intended for educational purposes and that geared toward and a general audience.

- Chauncy Young asked – while we have two very large park parcels, we also have a big vulnerable population because the south Bronx has less access to parks and greenways, so I wonder how you will take this into consideration in the future. Also, great if Harlem River Working Group and BCEQ can get more involved.
 - Tami answered that they welcome more representation from Bronx and are always looking for new organizations that will diversify the coalition. Tami added that through the coalition they are pushing for more funds and resources to go towards the neighborhoods that have smaller canopy cover and low-income families so that they have access to green spaces too.
 - Shino added that as a coalition, they center equity into almost every conversation and that they look at the disparities from neighborhood to neighborhood. There have been maps created that show on a neighborhood level the disparity in tree coverage across neighborhoods.
 - Rupu – I’m curious what kind of systems are being set up when it comes to engaging communities in this process and since there are a lot of partners involved, how are you making sure everyone is being brought to the table?
 - Tami – every partner that joins the coalition is considered a member, and everyone has an equal say. We also have a comprehensive model that allows us to discuss our way into coming to a consensus. In terms of participation, it is completely voluntary but understanding that different organizations have different capacities, we offer funding for meeting times.
 - Karen – mentioned that it’s important to get political officials also sign up to the list of the coalition’s supporters.
 - Tami – it’s absolutely important that we get officials and other advocates on board. Shino – it’s also important to point out that the 2035 goal we have set as a coalition also calls out for maintenance because it is just as important. Also focuses on work force development.
- **Next steps:** since we did not get a chance to address the remaining chat questions, the CAC will distribute written answers provided by Tami & Sergio and will continue to highlight the work of the coalition in future meetings.

11:35 AM – 12:15 PM – Groundwater Flooding Vulnerability

- Christopher Schubert, Hydrologist with the USGS New York Water Science Center, began by mentioning some of the images used come from preliminary studies and so if shared they must include a disclaimer. He began by introducing some of the building blocks that get us to the main issue of groundwater flooding and vulnerability.
- When talking about groundwater flooding, we mean:
 - A hidden hazard that is commonly overlooked
 - Often occurs near waterbodies like lakes and streams but not exclusively
 - Visible where the water table intersects land surface but usually hidden below ground
 - Affects underground infrastructure (subways, sewers, basements)
 - Health and safety concerns include mold and physical damage
- Some common causes of water table rise include:

- Climate change – increased precipitation and storm intensity
- Sea level rise
- Increased ground water recharge during urbanization
- Water level recovery from cessation pumpage
- Aftermath of drought
- Changes in water table position in Queens is largely attributed to historical pumpage
 - During 1970s, nearly 40 ft lower in Eastern Queens
 - Present time – vulnerability extends throughout much of southeastern queens and other low-lying coastal and interior areas
 - Projected changes in water table position – relatively modest increases in eastern Queens and south-central Nassau
- Importance of monitoring and modeling:
 - Monitoring networks provide data for model calibration
 - Model predictions can help identify future monitoring needs
 - Monitoring and modeling go ‘hand in glove’ in understanding future changed in hydrologic conditions
 - Coupled use of both tools can help inform and mitigate vulnerability to groundwater flooding
- Lisa asked – how can we incorporate these types of studies into our plans and what can we do as community groups to be part of the conversation?
 - Chris answered – we need to do a better job at making sure we are informing folks about this information. We need to be better at communicating this to our communities especially those that are low lying and are more vulnerable, we need to be mindful of how we pursue things like green infrastructure which can actually help in recharging and causing changes to the water table.
- Isabelle asked - Does the vulnerable infrastructure extend to stream culverts in the red/pink zone? Do you have data for the rest of the estuary?
 - Chris answered – the infrastructure in the stream corridors in the areas where we historically streamed channels are no longer daylighted and are now part of a storm sewer system, now going to a treatment facility. As the water table rises, that leaky infrastructure will likely intersect with more water and so moving forward there’s going to be a variety of opportunities and challenges on how we manage that water table rise in those areas. Some opportunities will involve daylighting some streams, which would help with the position of the water table. Another possibility is to expand the use of blue belts, which can help contain storm water. However, this requires real estate.
- Rob asked – do you know of other research done on mobilization of contaminants through groundwater?
 - Chris answered – there was some interesting work done in the San Francisco Delta, where they looked at some heavily industrialized areas and rising water table. It definitely is an issue, there are former landfills that are saturated and sitting right on top of the water table. It is an area of emerging science but there is some great stuff already being done.
- **Next steps:** The CAC will continue to highlight the issue of groundwater inundation as well as the impacts on the most vulnerable communities and support the NY USGS Water Science Center in sharing the final data about their study.

12:15 PM – 12:25 PM – Program Updates: Environmental Monitoring Plan

- Rosana DaSilva, HEP Water Quality Manager, introduced the Environmental Monitoring Plan, which consists of three tools: interactive map, storymap, and the research and monitoring recommendations.
 - indicators – are we missing indicators? Is there anything out there that we haven't been able to capture yet? Map will be updated by the end of this year.
 - Rosana can be reached at rosana@hudsonriver.org
- **Next steps:** The CAC will provide Rosana with any comments on indicators

12:25 PM – 12:45 PM – Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL): Identifying our Shared Objectives and Long-Term Goals

- Rob Pirani, HEP Program Director, provided a recap of the additional funds the BIL provided national estuary programs with. For the next 5 years, HEP will receive \$909,800 k to augment existing programs
- Formal anticipated EPA guidance anticipated soon
- Match likely to be waived
- Timeframe:
 - Spring 2022 – approval of plan by policy committee
 - Summer 2022 – EPA/HRF contractual process
 - Fall 2022 – Funding available
- Workplan projects are a mix of action agenda priorities, congressional intent, administration priorities and level of capacity and value added
- Goal for the CAC would be to help identify some key considerations and ways by which HEP should invest this funding and to identify key opportunities for partnerships where HEP can work with agency and community partners to advance that work – in particular in areas of community engagement and capacity building.
 - Meredith – HEP used to have a small grant program that a lot of NJ groups really used to benefit from, Is there consideration for restarting this program?
 - Rob – what did you envision being the purpose of those grants? Is there a particular goal or angle for those grants and what size did you envision them being?
 - Meredith – I think they were under 20k, they weren't necessarily for capacity building but allowed community groups to decide how it was they wanted to spend it, giving them ownership. I can still see this tying into resilience and a lot of this type of work.
 - Rob – It definitely is a goal to make these opportunities community driven. The question is should we try to target toward agency expenditures that are coming down the pike? Could be both and reference this as an option.
 - Meredith - I can definitely see this being a good idea
 - Michelle – Just building on what Meredith just shared, one of the things I've always heard re getting involved with community engagement is that there's always a missing nexus. So I wonder if HEP could be that nexus? Being an equipment loan hub for example, would be helpful, allowing groups to use equipment they can afford but need it. Figuring out a way to be that bridge would be great because having access to equipment is a big hurdle for a lot of our groups.

- Shino – In terms of mini grants, I think it's important to spend some of this initial money in building community capacity.
 - Rob – what do you envision as 'community capacity'? One way to look at it could be to help support whatever the programmatic goals of each group, the other is funding could help cover administrative cost for groups. Is there a good suggestion?
 - Meredith – I don't really have an answer for that other than I hope it can be both
 - Rebecca - WE ACT's EJ Capacity Building Grant Program is something I recommend you can take a look at. Their grants were offered all throughout the City and consisted of \$50k grants, it was huge for us. They were very open in terms of requirements and what we were able to propose was incredible.
 - As an overview of their program: WE ACT got 1 million through DEC, kept \$100k for their own operations and administered \$900k in grants to small groups

12:45 PM – 1:00 PM – Participant Updates & Announcements