

Tributary Connection Subcommittee of the Restoration Work Group

Chairs: Megan Lung and Laura Wildman



Meeting Minutes

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Meeting, January 13, 2022

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Virtual

I. Welcome and Attendance

The group was welcomed by Isabelle Stinnette, Megan Lung, and Laura Wildman. Attendance listed below.

II. Minutes Approval and Membership

Minutes were approved from the November meeting. Megan announced that she is changing jobs and will be working with other members of our group at Save the Sound. Because both of our co-chairs are now in the same organization, either Megan or Laura will step down as chair. Our group is now looking for a new co-chair to help plan these meetings. Please email Isabelle, Megan or Laura if you are interested in the position.

III. Highlighted Update: Connecting Habitats Across NJ Program

Gretchen Fowles presented the NJDEP's efforts to connect terrestrial and aquatic habitats across the state, protect against further habitat loss and fragmentation. Major products include a guidance document and interactive mapping to help inform connectivity planning and restoration. Additionally:

- As of 2016 NJ passed a Flood Hazard Area Control Act rule that wildlife passage is required when the new structure causes fragmentation of habitat of a terrestrial threatened, endangered, or species of special concern.
- They have a new survey app for reporting rare species and road kill (of any species).
- Gretchen wants to encourage adding a terrestrial component to any aquatic connectivity project because it is a long time between upgrades to crossing structures.

<https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/conservation/connecting-habitat-across-new-jersey-chanj/>

IV. Group Updates

NYSDEC/ HR Estuary Program

Scott Cuppett will probably start joining these meetings for NYSDEC in Megan's stead.

TNC NJ

- Just removed a dam in the Delaware River watershed, have another one expected this year and several more funded in design.
- They just had a good meeting on monitoring dam removal methodology that was recorded if anyone is interested in watching that, reach out to Beth.
- They are holding a project manager training in March for folks that are working in the Delaware watershed basin. They may be able to open up the registration to others in NJ if they have room.

NOAA

- No word yet on the awards for the Transformational Habitats Grant.
- They are planning on reaching out to folks that did not get the fish passage grant for some feedback.

Save the Sound

- A new committee has been developed through the Bioengineering Section of American Fisheries Society and the Fish Passage Joint Committee that is looking to develop more resources and gather training resources for Project Managers (i.e. tools for project managers). The idea is to help build capacity to handle all the funding coming out of the federal government right now.
- World Fish Migration Foundation is working to develop a global guidance document for Dam Removal.
- Starting their Westchester County stream barrier inventory.
- Looking to get their prioritization into an interactive map together with the existing data TNC and Seatuck put together for Long Island.

NY-NJ HEP

- They are wrapping up the culvert assessment funded by EPA and RAE on the Lower Raritan River in NJ. Fact sheets will be available shortly as well as a tool kit of restoration scenarios.
- They are supporting 5 more organizations to monitor for American eel in northern New Jersey.
- HEP has RFPs coming out within the next couple months for habitat restoration, helping communities with climate change issues and stewardship for City of Water Day.

V. Open Grants for Barrier Removal

We added in the open RFP for the 2023 NEP Coastal Watersheds grant. For more information see here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/13mWHAPvzKq6-A2wUUu1YWDVE_rf85Vj2RpPDuenXElo/edit#

VI. Priming for Infrastructure Funding: Task Determination and Role Assignment

The group decided not to discuss this agenda topic to spend more time on the Streamline Dam Removal task. However, Isabelle will remind folks that volunteered to work on outstanding tasks.

VII. Streamlining Dam Removals

The group looked at the task ideas in our tracking document and prioritized actions.

- One of them is creating a visual flow chart NY showing specific offices or agencies and permits required. Laura volunteered that Save the Sound could tackle that for NY by our next meeting and Beth and Eric thought that she could work towards that for NJ. Beth had a recent pre-application meeting with NJ for a dam removal that was the first time she felt like she had a real “one-stop” planning meeting where all the regulators were in the virtual room, gave notes on their issues and followed up with a contact person.
- The group discussed the need for sediment management guidelines for permitting from the regulators. There are currently no approved guidelines, although some have been drafted, and regulators make decisions on a case-by-case basis. Sub-tasks for the group could be: Collect the known data including precedents set by previous projects, and identify a regulatory champion of this research project.
- The group decided to reach out to the States dam safety teams to ask them to join us for the next workgroup meeting. We would ask them for a general overview of dam safety operations, permitting processes, and hazard classification. Following these presentations, we could also ask for presentations on sediment TOGs from NYS or even MA.

Here is our action item tracking document to follow along with our progress:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/167-R_OXoOYpyrSnGWSx3HjbtBfev4W2M/edit#gid=1665080857

VIII. Attendance

Laura Wildman, Save the Sound (chair)
Megan Lung, Hudson River Estuary Program/NYSDEC (chair)
Carl Alderson, NOAA
Eric Boehm, NJDEP
Gretchen Fowles, NJDEP
Katie Friedman, Save the Sound
David Hsu, Montclair
Lingard Knutson, EPA
Jamie Ong, NYC Parks
Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ HEP
Beth Styler Barry, TNC NJ
Jaclyn Woollard, EPA