

# Tributary Connection Subcommittee of the Restoration Work Group

Chair: Megan Lung



## Meeting Minutes

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**Meeting, April 14, 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 January meeting. Eric Bohem suggested that one of his colleagues from the NJDEP freshwater mussels program (Rob Some) may be interested in these meetings. Scott noted that there are other dam removal practitioners that he works with who are working further up the Hudson Valley that may be interested but that might be a larger discussion about overlap between our group and the NYS group. Michelle DeBlasio mentioned that the NJ Dam Removal Partnership is looking to expand their program nationally to grow the partnership.

### **III. Dam Safety Presentation**

Donald Canestrari (NYSDEC) presented on New York's dam safety operations, hazard classification and permitting process. Fun fact: the most high-hazard dams in the state are owned by local municipalities.

The group had multiple questions including:

- How often do you come across dam owners who are interested in removals?
- It depends on if they're using the impoundment. A lot of dam owners don't even know that they are owners. The chief hurdle is money.
- Several times I've observed when a high hazard dam is removed, a part is left above the original stream-grade, is there a reason to leave a sill behind?
- A sill may be left to retain sediment behind the dam or running into bedrock. It's not a necessity though, it can go either way.
- Can anyone submit a technical report to dispute a hazard classification? Or just dam owners?
- I don't think I've ever gotten one from someone who wasn't the dam owner. It would have to be an engineer to present the technical information to raise or lower a hazard class.

- What are the most common hurdles that come up for dam owners who want to remove their dams.
- It comes down to money but specifically often money for sediment removal or remediation. The demolition of the structure itself is not usually the problem.
- Have the sediment TOGS been approved for use yet?
- They've been written but not approved.
- What is the process for public input when dam safety funds dam repairs. We've seen some dams we are looking to have removed to improve fish passage ultimately be repaired through grants from the state.
- This would happen through fish and wildlife during the permitting process. It's not a dam safety issue.
- Are you receiving questions from public dam owners regarding the placement of small hydro turbines in their dams?
- He has been hearing about it but haven't seen the paperwork coming in. Other members of the group chime in that they're hearing a lot of requests for this as well.
- Do the hazard classification include rainfall studies/consider climate changes in precipitation.
- Yes. For the smaller, low hazard dams, the high hazard dams they expect to be prepared for an extreme scenario (10,000 yr. flood event).

#### **IV. Streamlining Dam Removals**

The group discussed ideas for group action items that arose from Don's presentation:

- Does anyone know of any counties that actually post their downstream dam breach inundation maps for high hazard dams? I know of only one county in NY and it is pretty powerful information and great for potential homeowners. New Hampshire does it, it's on a State-by-state basis.
- Why isn't dam safety addressing all the dams that are in disrepair? It's a dam safety issue, they're probably not high or significant hazard classified. There's a disconnect between dam safety and ecological concerns. As a first step it doesn't hurt to share our lists of priority dams (for ecological reasons) with dam safety.
- Save the Sound is trying to improve communications and coordination between state governments, who do have lists of willing dam owners with NGOs that might have capacity to work on dam removals.
- In PA the state required high hazard dam owners to post a sign warning of dangers and it became an awareness mechanism. At the same time sent out a list of funding resources for dam removal and there was a rush of dam owners who applied for removal permits. Maybe we can spread the word about how successful this effort was in lining up derelict dams for removal and preventing safety issues? PA dam safety also did an audit checking vulnerable populations who lived in dam break inundation zones to see if they knew that they were in the zone and if they had emergency plans.
- Gomez and Sullivan put together a flow chart on if you should put micro-hydro on your stream. It would be great to get something like that for our region.

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

Beth Styler-Barry wanted to share with the group meeting minutes from her successful one-stop pre application permitting meeting with NJ state agencies. See that memo for your reference here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12yEDpdTkxRjf7KSFRqCBd8vxdH2-T-Oc/edit>

## V. Priming for Infrastructure Funding: Task Determination and Role Assignment

Lingard Knudson drafted a letter of request to the USACE's Engineer Research and Development Center to put together research on why it's so hard to get federal funding for tributary connections projects in our urban region.

- Please add your comments to the letter by **July 1<sup>st</sup>**, here:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QI\\_BMx4Y7NcZPiuXiB7l8oBaMK8LO/edit?usp=share\\_link&oid=101685574498392268633&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QI_BMx4Y7NcZPiuXiB7l8oBaMK8LO/edit?usp=share_link&oid=101685574498392268633&rtpof=true&sd=true)

## VI. Group Updates

### Save the Sound

- Laura has joined a group called BIL (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) for Bios that is creating checklists for project managers working on tributary connections projects. These are currently in review but will be made publicly available.
- Working with NYS on a feasibility study for a dam removal on Blind Brook Dam.
- Starting their Westchester County stream barrier inventory. Going to submit dams that are not in the NYS dam inventory to the state and going to fund one more feasibility study from a dam as a result of this inventory.
- Westchester county will be releasing a report shortly on their 7 dams on the Bronx River.

### NYSDEC

- Putting together a pre-proposal for NFWF for a state-wide dam removal capacity building grant. Partnering with American Rivers and working with the resilient NY plans to gather flood reduction projects.

### NYC Parks

- Continuing developing concept designs for the two dams at the Bronx River at the zoo and botanic garden.

- Having trouble getting fish to stock the Bronx River this year with low numbers of river herring.

Megan adds that maybe it's time to add a few sentences to our letter to federal funders pointing out that our regional target fish stocks are so low that we can't even find any for transplanting. Anthony Allen adds that the Marine Fisheries Council is working on offshore bycatch issues thanks to a genetic study that showed that the majority of the herring bycatch is from Long Island/Block Island Sound.

#### NY-NJ HEP

- 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. The habitat one can be applied for tributary connections projects.
- They are wrapping up the culvert assessment project funded by EPA and RAE on the Lower Raritan River in NJ. Fact sheets, a conceptual design and a prioritization toolkit are available here: <https://www.hudsonriver.org/article/actcri>

### **VII. Leadership Position**

A co-chair position is open for this workgroup. Please contact Megan or Isabelle if you are interested.

### **VIII. Attendance**

Laura Wildman, Save the Sound (chair)  
Megan Lung, Save the Sound (chair)  
Anthony Allen, Save the Sound  
Eric Boehm, NJDEP  
Don Canestrari, NYSDEC  
Scott Cuppett, NYSDEC  
Michelle DiBlasio, TNC NJ  
Marco Finochiaro, EPA  
Katie Friedman, Save the Sound  
Lingard Knutson, EPA  
Jim Lodge, HRF  
Jamie Ong, NYC Parks  
Lisa Rosman, NOAA  
Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ HEP  
Jaclyn Woollard, EPA