

Tributary Connection Subcommittee of the Restoration Work Group

Chairs: Megan Lung and George Jackman



Meeting Minutes

www.Hudsonriver.org

Meeting, July 14, 2022

10:00 am – 11:30 pm

Virtual

I. Welcome and Attendance

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

II. Minutes Approval and Membership

Minutes were approved from the April meeting. A request was made to share the recording of the last meeting where there was a presentation from NYS dam safety. George Jackman (Hudson Riverkeeper) volunteered to be the new co-chair and Sara Donatich from NYC Parks has joined the group.

III. Priming Projects for Infrastructure Funding - Review and decision on re-releasing letter to federal funders

Last year the group sent out a letter to federal funders advocating for changes to the application and review process that benefit urban tributary restoration. In the intervening months there were no projects funded in the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary area despite many applications from members of this group. Some members report that in many cases they did not even get feedback on their proposal. The group discussed re-releasing this letter with the addendum that none of our projects were funded, the following actions were decided on:

1. Schedule a call with NOAA to discuss our concerns.
2. As a supporting tool, fill out a spreadsheet of our projects that were rejected. See here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11J7OqPyVbahmSAaFCfWa6o9fPN7D_KuLiDz27cQ2wG0/edit#gid=0

3. Bring the letter/our concerns to our elected officials in congress.
 - a. Rob will research who to reach out to in congress.

IV. Priming Projects for Infrastructure Funding - Review and decision on asking USACE for help on supporting tributary connections in urban areas.

Lingard Knudson drafted the letter, and the group was given opportunities to comment on and edit this request for technical support from the Army Corps, ERDC branch. See: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QI_BMx4Y7NcZPiuXiB7l8oBaMKe8LO/edit#heading=h.gjdgxs. While there was some debate as to how effective this effort would be the group was generally in favor of making this request.

- The letter was sent to Jennifer.M.Seiter-Moser@usace.army.mil and other region 2 USACE folks on July 28, 2023. There has been no response yet.

V. Streamlining Dam Removal: Follow up on NYSDEC Dam Safety Presentation

This discussion was tabled to the next meeting for the sake of finishing the meeting on time.

VI. Review New Funding Opportunities

Megan highlighted some new NOAA grants through the office of coastal management. Please see this running list for open grants:

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

VII. Group Updates

USEPA

- They have drafted a protocol for assessing tidal restrictions. It is out for comments now and they will be setting up an effort to pilot the protocol as a next step.
- Regional wetland development grants next grant announcement should be available soon.

Save the Sound

They just finished QAPP development for a complex assessment project for Westchester County. Megan is happy to share the QAPP once approved for folks to use as a template.

NYC Parks

- Continuing developing concept designs for the two dams at the Bronx River at the zoo and botanic garden. Partners have been cautiously open to the latest drafts.
- They need to determine if the Stonemill Dam itself is landmarked.

NY-NJ HEP

- Isabelle Stinnette and other NJ partners have now been trained in the tidal crossings assessment protocol from NAACC.

- HEP is developing a 2-year project to assess road stream crossings on the Raritan Bayshore in NJ with Save Coastal Wildlife nonprofit. They are still looking for NJ partners to pilot using the newly developed toolkit to prioritize fixing road-stream crossings.

Nature Conservancy (NJ)

Working on dam removals in the Delaware watersheds on the Peaquest and Paulinskill Rivers. They are noticing more interest in dam removals in New Jersey.

NYSDEC

Scott Cuppett wants to raise awareness that these kinds of recent flooding issues are a great opportunity to highlight the importance of dealing with our stream infrastructure issues.

Hudson Riverkeeper

They have added a new first barrier to their list of priorities, are contracting with the dam owner now, and will be seeking funding as a next step.

VIII. Attendance

Megan Lung, Save the Sound (chair)

George Jackman, Hudson Riverkeeper (chair)

Scott Cuppett, NYSDEC

Sara Donatich, NYC Parks

Lingard Knutson, EPA

Jamie Ong, NYC Parks

Rob Pirani, NY-NJ HEP

Isabelle Stinnette, NY-NJ HEP

Beth Styler-Barry, TNC NJ

Jaclyn Woollard, EPA