

Hudson River Estuary Advisory Committee Meeting

Minutes, March 5, 2014

(Approved: June 4, 2014)

Norrie Point Environmental Center, Staatsburg, NY

Please Note: Please refer to the following link to the Hudson River Estuary Advisory Committee webpage: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/46924.html> to access additional information and reports.

Welcome and Announcements: 75 people attended (see below for listing). The meeting opened at 9:00 am.

- Martin Brand, Region 3 Director welcomed the group and thanked the committee for its support and good work.
- The group acknowledged the passing of Pete Seeger.
- The November 2013 minutes were approved: motion made by L. Johnson, seconded by E. Svenson.
- The Estuary Program's 2014 SCA interns were recognized and welcomed.
- DEC fisheries biologist Andy Kahnle has retired.
- Kris McShane, will be leaving the Hudson River Fisheries Unit.
- Committee member Steve McDonald will be leaving the committee. Steve's contributions were acknowledged.
- The Town of Pleasant Valley Open Space and Farmland Plan, funded by an Estuary Grant, has received the Heissenbuttel Award for Planning Excellence from the New York Planning Federation.
- Videos of historic ice boats sailing on the Hudson near Barrytown were enjoyed by. (Video by E. Vail). Ice boating has been enjoyed on the river since the mid-1800's. This year's conditions were exceptional.

1. Program news and updates:

-D. Fresch, GIS specialist, introduced his **Wastewater Infrastructure GIS** project which is gathering a variety of data sets related to wastewater infrastructure and creating GIS maps to help people make better decisions about future infrastructure improvements, upgrades and related land use planning decisions. The project covers the 10-county Estuary Program area and will be made available on DEC's website.

- P. Gallay cited the importance of the **Sewage Right to Know Law**. Riverkeeper's database of water quality information continues to grow, and improvements are being made as infrastructure issues are addressed.

-DEC has announced an **agreement between the state and 6 Capital region communities** that will result in upgraded sewage treatment systems, improved CSO conditions and green infrastructure projects in the Albany Pool area. Improvements are expected to produce an 80% reduction in pathogens by summer. The intent is to make the river swimmable for swimmers. (Press release: nysdec@public.govdelivery.com>01/16/14)

-**The NY/NJ Harbor & Estuary Program** is now hosted by the Hudson River Foundation. Rob Pirani, previously of the Regional Planning Association, is the new Director. Rob addressed the group, noting the program now extends up to the Troy dam. He recognized the similarity in the two programs' goals and looks forward to working with the Estuary Program.

-**2014 Citizen Science Volunteer Opportunities:** C. Bowser alerted the committee to the many ways that volunteers can participate in the field this spring and summer. A handout was distributed.

2. Working Group and HREMAC Focus area reports:

Restoration and Resiliency Opportunities for Action: G. Schuler reported that work is ongoing to develop a spatial database of projects and project types for restoration actions on the Hudson.

ADA Access: S. McDonald reported that the Dutchess County Federation has been looking into suitable

sites to hold a fishing day that would provide universal access. This is proving to be difficult as no sites fully comply with 2014 ADA accessible criteria. The Federation is now looking into providing volunteers for Wounded Warriors events as well as encouraging scout projects to create fish rack holders.

3. Fisheries Regulation Update Report: K. McKown, DEC Region 1 Marine Resources, presented DEC's proposed regulations in the Marine District to require terrapin excluder devices (TEDs) on blue crab pots. Research has shown that the excluders do not impact catch numbers for blue crab. After considering various options, DEC has decided to recommend the mandated use of TEDs in the Marine District (includes the Hudson River up to the Tappan Zee bridge), with a preferred size of 1 3/4" x 4 3/4". Comments can still be submitted.

4. 2013 Coordinator's Annual Report & Annual Conversation with Jim Tierney, Assistant Commissioner for Water and Watersheds:

J. Tierney addressed the committee, recognizing the Estuary Program for its innovative projects and watershed approach that are now being replicated throughout the state. He looks forward to the next iteration of the Action Agenda. He noted the federal Sandy funding and the use of collective partnerships as opportunities to get things done.

Coordinator Report

F. Dunwell presented the 2013 Annual Report, which has also been posted to the web (www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html). Resilience was the theme for 2013 as the state and communities continue to learn and recover from storms Irene/Lee and Sandy. The Estuary Program committed \$1.3 million in climate change initiatives this year. She noted the continued absence of observed submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) is of particular concern. Partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders continue to be key to the Program's success.

2013 HREMAC annual report to the Commissioner: Through the coordinated efforts of D. Suszkowski and A. Bicking, this report is under development. A. Bicking presented a verbal summary. The draft report will be sent to members for comment. Andy and Dennis will transmit the final report to the Commissioner.

Summary of committee comments:

- Support was expressed for the positive work DEC has done on the CSO issue in the Albany area.
- Getting information to the public is important to motivate people to demand clean water.
- The crude oil shipments being moved along the Hudson River corridor by ship and rail pose serious threats to people and the environment. It was noted that while Federal regulations play a large part in this issue, Committee members encouraged the State to change its recent negative declaration to a positive one related to this issue and the Port of Albany, noting that a spill in the river would have an effect both upstream and down. Spill response in regions 3 & 4 has a longer linear range to cover than in the harbor. Jim acknowledged this issue, clarifying the federal and state roles, and noted there are limitations on just how far state jurisdiction can go. He emphasized the need to have repeated drills to actively involve all players and identify what needs improvement before a problem arises.
- There is still a need to reach out and educate municipalities on appropriate and environmentally sound responses to major flood events, including stream dynamics and best management practices. Jim noted the work that the Delaware County Soil, Water, Conservation District has done on Steam Response training and in developing protocols and field tools to help localities know what and what not to do. (Contact for this work is Tom Snow: (518) 402-9395). E. Svenson noted similar work is being done by the Lower Hudson River Coalition of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Pro-active land acquisition of strategic properties is one way to help buffer the impacts of storm events

and increase resiliency in the Valley. The Black Creek corridor is an example. Property values are in an excellent place right now for acquisition in the Hudson Valley. The links between our scenic resources, the need for natural resource protection and tourism are major economic drivers in the Valley.

5. Presentation: Cornell University Water Resources Institute (WRI): "Tapping higher education for innovation in water infrastructure assessment and planning". Brian Gramlich Rahm presented an overview of Cornell University's role in helping to provide the science for the science-based management approach of the Estuary Program. WRI work has been focusing on 2 areas: water-resource infrastructure, and building long-term resilience in light of weather and climate change. He noted that infrastructure challenges include: the need for an estimated \$65 billion to address aging infrastructure across the state; current and anticipated reductions in federal funding; and indications through studies of water quality of a 24% decline in water quality during the past 30 years in the state. Resilience trends and issues include: an increase in flooding during all seasons, impacts from intense storms such as Irene/Lee and Sandy, threats posed by aging dams, and increased urbanization leading to increases in stormwater runoff issues.

WRI sponsors 2 types of projects: Projects where USGS funding and Estuary Program funding are combined to fund competitive grants available to a wide variety of institutions, and Cornell coordinated projects that sponsor research conducted by Cornell faculty. Examples of successful projects include the Pace University Land Use and Leadership (LULA) training, and recent research conducted on the adequacy of culverts in Columbia, Dutchess and Orange counties to handle peak flows.

This approach has worked well by; including involvement across the state, promoting stakeholder participation, providing undergraduate training (summer), integrating research themes, and understanding critical issues for the estuary and the region. More work needs to be done to identify appropriate audiences, get faculty to engage, and balance the goals of the Estuary Program and faculty partners. Contact info for WRI: nyswri@cornell.edu, (607)-254-7163, wri.eas.cornell.edu

6. Strategic Planning, Overview of planning work to date and results of the Institutional Analysis, F. Dunwell recapped that a strategic planning process has been under way since last fall, working to define who we are, what we do best and what our role should be moving forward.

P. Fairweather reviewed the strategic planning elements being applied in this process; the development of a core idea, and the use of a strategy screen to analyze proposed projects, and help set priorities for the next Action Agenda. He summarized the results of an institutional analysis that the Program conducted last fall as part of this process.

7. Progress on the Action Agenda 2015-2020: L. Heady then presented an update on the development of the next action agenda including a review of the planning process, a summary of desired conditions and trends developed to date and organized under 6 benefits that people receive from the estuary: Vital Ecosystem, Clean Water, Fish, Wildlife and their Habitats, Resilient Communities, Scenery and the Opportunity for Education, Access and Recreation.

Committee Discussion: The Committee discussed trends that will affect our ability to deliver these benefits to the public and for the estuary. A summary of these comments follows:

Environmental Trends:

-Climate change is happening everywhere, needs greater recognition, acceptance of CC, increase in severity of storms, flooding, drought, heat, more extreme conditions.

- Sea Level Rise is happening and will affect resources, natural areas, funding, and structures – i.e. hardening of shorelines, walls, vs. natural barriers.
- Municipalities will need to spend money on infrastructure, need to take into account natural resources. Aging infrastructure is affecting our cities and waterfronts, i.e. CSOs, sewage flooding streets.
- Chemicals of emerging concern: prescription drugs, personal care products, microbeads, and other new pollutants are entering our water ways and are not addressed by conventional treatment systems. Needs to be discussed in the context of sewage treatment plant upgrades. Need to better educate the public on disposal.
- Manufacture of new medicines/chemicals in on the increase
- Increase in invasive species occurring and will continue
- Innovation is happening: NYC now using solid waste products for bio-generation to power homes
- Green infrastructure - as getting better providing multiple results, conserve, improve cities
- Trends in Science: the capacity to apply science is improving, it's getting cheaper to get data.
- Scientists are more willing to engage and get into discussion with managers and social relevance. Colleges are asking students to apply what they are learning, becoming more relevant to the real world.
- Need to update sediment, contaminant transport, uptake of PCBs data post big storms. (DOH gets calls about affect of sediment transport on fish contaminants. Data is old. Need new research. There is not the comfort level in making statements about contaminants in fish. Are PCB levels really going down as a result of GE dredging?
- Fishery quality, contaminant reduction, loss of fish recruitment will continue to be of concern until declining trends are reversed.

Social Trends:

- Demographic changes in the Hudson Valley are occurring: the population is aging, becoming more ethnically diverse, cultural changes between generations -how people define recreation time and how it's valued and used.
- Building a stronger advocacy/constituency is the most important thing we can do
- Environmental donor base is aging and homogeneous in its makeup/need more diversity in outreach, to develop boarder donor pool
- Some organizations are leaving behind traditional issues and audiences for more urban work
- People are consumption driven, perceive the environment by what they see, as something to consume (skiing, kayaking), target people's personal experience
- The role of technology is shaping people's experiences, both indoors and outdoors - people are

increasingly connected. This can be a challenge but also an opportunity.

- The need for more and better compliance to provide universal ADA access to the outdoors will increase as the 'boomer' population continues to age.

Resistance to Change prevails: People are still not conserving energy. We continue to depend on fossil fuels, depend on water to treat and dispose of waste.

- Positive trend: municipalities (at least in some part of the Valley) are developing a greater understanding of need for environmental protection; need to collaborate to share info and resources. Could help with HREP outreach to communities, to spread the word of certain practices.

Economic Trends:

- Economic Realities and limitations: Federal, State and Municipalities will continue to face funding challenges and reductions in funding. Funding cuts to monitoring programs (USGS, DEC, etc.)

- Fiscal constraints will provide opportunities to be more creative/utilize partnerships, also creates more pressure to build up tax base – Note: tax rates drive land use: not all rates are good.

- The economic value of ecosystem services (nature's benefits) continues to not be considered in economic analyses and decision making processes.

Energy: -Energy transmission from points of origin to population centers/ processing facilities is increasing and expanding in its complexity and potential environmental impacts: crude-oil transport, cable installations, transmission lines, and pipelines.

Agriculture:

- Agricultural changes: the types of farming are changing- moving to multi-species, growing more crops for beer, barley, hops.

- Opportunity to better connect to increase in farm markets and CSAs.

Outdoor Recreation& Education:

- In NYC, (while overall numbers of people seeking outdoor recreation may be down), those that do go to the river are **in** the river, kayaking, paddle boarding, in greater numbers than ever before. Demand for this is expected to continue.

- Through STEM! Teachers are looking for innovative science projects.

8. Next Steps: F. Dunwell reviewed the timeline for developing the Action Agenda: As currently planned, March - June will be a series of stakeholder meetings, June HREMAC will be an all day Executive meeting of the committee focused solely on the Agenda, a draft agenda will be available for public review in the fall, with a public comment period that will include the November HREMAC meeting, and the final agenda will be ready for 2015.

9. New Business:

C. Nieder announced the HRES conference scheduled for May 7, 104 at SUNY New Paltz,

R. Keenan, DOH, announced a new round of Hudson River Fish Advisories mini-grants, April 9 deadline. DOH has a new Blue crab Fishing and Eating Guideline booklet that is available in several languages.

The meeting adjourned 12:10 pm. Respectfully submitted, Nancy Beard, recorder

Attendance: (75)

HREMAC Members:

Bicking, Andy	Scenic Hudson, Inc.
Coddington, Nicola	Irvington Green Policy Task Force
DeRoberts, Chris	Central Hudson Gas & Electric
Jerry Faiella	Historic Hudson River Towns
Stuart Findlay	Cary Institute of Ecosystems Studies
Gallay, Paul	Riverkeeper, Inc. (Tracy Brown, attending)
Johnson, Lucy	Environmental Consortium of Colleges and Universities, HRES
Lopane, Suzette	Westchester County Water Agency
McDonald, Steve	Federation of Dutchess Co. Fish and Game Clubs
George Schuler	The Nature Conservancy
Suszkowski, Dennis	Hudson River Foundation
Svenson, Emily	Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts

Ex-Officios:

Baudanza, Tom	NYC DEP
Brandt, Peter	US EPA
Carter, Diana	NYS OPRHP (Mark Hohengasser attending)
Castiglione, Mark	Hudson River Valley Greenway
Nordica Holochuck	New York Sea Grant
Keenan, Regina	NYS DOH
Mitchell, Brian	Interstate Environmental Commission
Rob Pirani	NY/NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
Witcher, Nicoletter	Hudson River Park Trust (for Noreen Doyle)

Guests:

Curran, Jennifer	
Eakin, Wes	
Fairweather, Peter	Fairweather Consulting
Gramlich Rahm, Brian	Cornell University, Water Resource Institute
Gruetzner, Charlie	Hudson Valley Marine Trades Assoc. (HVMTA)
Henshaw, Bob	HRES member
Maresca, Susan	DEC, Region 2, Fish, Wildlife, Marine Resources
Nieder, Chuck	DEC, Fish, Wildlife, Marine Resources,
Schiafo, Rich	HV Regional Planning Council (??? check this one)
Stevens, Gretchen	Hudsonia
Tierney, Jim	DEC Assistant Commissioner, Office of Water Resources
Van Genechten, Audrey	NYS Dept. of Health
VanLuven, David	VanLuven consulting
Vedachalam, Sri	Cornell University, Water Resources Institute
Wilson, Stephen	HRES member

DEC: Estuary Program staff and SCA interns

Adamovic, Mike	Estuary Program, SCA intern
----------------	-----------------------------

Adams, Robert	Hudson River Fisheries Unit
Beard, Nancy	Estuary Program, citizen participation
Bonacci, Lisa	DEC Region 1, Marine Resources
Bowser, Chris	Estuary Program/ Research Reserve, education
Brand, Martin	DEC Region 3 Regional Director
Capprioli, Ann-Marie	HRENERR, grants administration
Cuppett, Scott	Estuary Program, watersheds
Dunwell, Fran	Estuary Program, Hudson River Coordinator
Fernald, Sarah	HRENERR, _research _____
Fresch, David	Hudson River Estuary Program, GIS
Ganon, Ben	Estuary Program, SCA
Haekel, Ingrid	Estuary Program, biodiversity
Hattala, Kathy	DEC, Hudson River Fisheries Unit
Hauser, Emilie	HRNERR, coastal training
Heady, Laura	Estuary Program, biodiversity
Higgs, Amanda	Estuary Program, Hudson River Fisheries Unit
Hornstein, Jesse	DEC Region 1, Marine Resources
Houser, Rebecca	Estuary Program, education
Kenney, Gregg	DEC, Region 3 Fish, Wildlife, Marine Resources
Kerpez, Ted(Goalkeeper)	DEC Region 3, Fish, Wildlife, Marine Resources
Ladd, John	Estuary Program, benthic mapping
Laible, Nicole	Estuary Program, SCA intern
Lowery, Mark	DEC, Office of Climate Change
Mackey, Sherri	Estuary Program, administration
Maloney, Zoraida	Estuary Program, eel ecology
Mapes, Jeff (Goalkeeper)	DEC, Lands and Forests
Maresca, Susan	DEC, FWMR
McKown, Kim	DEC, Region 1, Marine Resources
Meyer, Andrew	Estuary Program, open space, watersheds
Miller, Dan	Estuary Program/HRNERR, habitat restoration
Nieder, Chuck	DEC, Electrical Steam permitting Unit
Oblander, Jacob	Estuary Program, SCA intern
Onion, Alene	Estuary Program, HRECOS, WAVE
Roessler, Beth	Estuary Program, watersheds, Trees for Tribs
Rosamilia, Brianna	Estuary Program, SCA (HRNERR)
Salinger, Maude	Estuary Program, Communications/Information
Stanne, Steve	Estuary Program, education
Strong, Karen	Estuary Program, biodiversity
Tierney, Jim	DEC, Assistant Commissioner Water and Watersheds
Vail, Emily	Estuary Program, green infrastructure, watersheds
Zinsley, Caitlin	Estuary Program SCA intern