

Hudson River Estuary Advisory Committee Meeting

Minutes: **March 2, 2016**

Approved: June 1, 2016 (as revised)

NYS OPRHP Taconic Regional Office, Staatsburg, NY

1. Welcome and announcements - 58 people attended (see listing below). The meeting opened at 9:00 am.

The November 12, 2015 minutes were approved: Motion made by G. Schuler, seconded by C. Gruetzner.

Staff updates: The Program's 2016 SCA members were welcomed. Elisa Chae-Banaja has joined the program, working on source water protection.

Budget update: Fran reported the Governor's budget has requested \$4.2 million for the Program, a bump up from last year, a testament to our staff and partners. We await action by the legislature, so this number is not finalized at this time.

Draft Action Agenda 2015-2020: We are still awaiting approvals. Based on comments received from the Committee, changes were made to the report to increase the acreage goal, and include an acreage goal for the watershed as well as other edits made in response to committee concerns.

On May 4, 2016, HRES will host a conference at SUNY New Paltz on the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers.

Riverkeeper's River Sweep day will be 5/7/2016.

2. Program news and updates:

The Mary Dell property in Upper Nyack: Ben Weiland, Trust for Public Lands, announced a land protection action at the base of Hook Mt., where 30 acres have been acquired that help connect Nyack State park with the Long Path and provide public access to the top of Hook Mt.

2016 Citizen Science Volunteer Opportunities: L. Heady urged volunteers to get involved in the various citizen science opportunities available through the Estuary Program this spring including: American eel research, amphibian migration crossing on Big Night, Trees for Tribes plantings, the Hudson River Cooperative Angler Program and the Great Hudson River Fish Count.

Comprehensive Restoration Plan status: Lisa Baron, Project Manager, Civil Works US ACOE, announced that a work plan for the Hudson River Comprehensive Restoration planning effort will be funded in the 2017 work plan and is expected to be included in the 2018 federal budget. She thanked Jim Tierney, the committee and local partners for their support. A fact sheet is appended to these minutes.

3. Welcome and opening remarks: J. Tierney, Deputy Commissioner for Water Resources, thanked the Committee for its collaborative work in addressing the issues of the Hudson estuary. He reflected on the historic importance of the Valley to the environmental movement.

4. Hudson River 2015 Coordinator's Report: F. Dunwell presented an overview of the Program's accomplishments during 2015. Her remarks are embodied in the Hudson River Estuary Program 2015 Coordinator's Annual Report. (To be posted to the web)

Highlights for the year included:

-More than 300 dedicated, involved citizens and local officials attended the April 2015 Hudson Estuary Summit in Poughkeepsie.

-Encouraging signs indicate that SAV may be making a comeback in the river.

-Hydrilla, an invasive aquatic species, confirmed in the Croton reservoir and river, has not been found in the mainstem of the estuary.

-General Electric completed the dredging of 2.75 million cubic yards of PCB contaminated sediment from the 40 mile stretch of the Hudson between Fort Edward and Troy.

-Encouraging signs are being seen regarding the recovery of the Atlantic Sturgeon stock. The annual survey in 2015 shows the highest number of juvenile Atlantic sturgeon in the Hudson River in the 10-year history of the survey.

The full Coordinator's Report is available on the web: (www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920)

4. HREMAC 2015 Annual Report, Chairman D.Suszkowski presented the HREMAC 2015 Annual Report. He noted the remarkable enthusiasm and support felt at the April Summit. He noted the staff changes that have recently occurred in the Hudson River Fisheries Unit and praised the new staff taking over the program as well as the revitalization of the NY-NJ HEP program and the new leadership being provided by Rob Pirani.

The Committee noted the following concerns in their comments:

PCBs – While the mandatory cleanup has been completed, concerns exist regarding remaining PCBs left in the river's ecosystem.

Funding for water supply and waste water treatment infrastructure repairs and upgrades is needed and will be expensive.

The threat from crude oil transport and the threat of spills, both by train and ship continues to raise safety and emergency response concerns.

Ships anchoring off Hyde Park may be impacting the benthic environment, by creating anchoring trenches that scar the river bottom in an area known to be important for sturgeon.

Emerging micro-pollutants are being documented and continue to be of concern in both our waste water and drinking water supplies.

5. Conversation with Jim Tierney, Deputy Commissioner for Water

The committee entered into a conversation with Jim, raising a number of additional issues:

The positive work of several partner organizations was recognized including; Scenic Hudson, Clearwater, Riverkeeper, Historic Hudson River Towns, DOS, OPRHP, NYNJ HEP, Greenway, TNC, EPA, the ACOE, Trout Unlimited, Cary IES.

New development underway and proposed in Rockland County continue to threaten the scenic resources along the river. Currently there are approx. 12 large projects between Poughkeepsie and Yonkers. Scenic resources need to be protected at the local level.

(added as per June 1, 2016 edits): While the mandatory dredging of PCB contaminated sediments in the upper Hudson has been completed, and a 5 year review process will be undertaken, concerns about the remaining PCBs in the river ecosystem remain. A clear understanding of the effectiveness of the cleanup's impact on reducing PCB impacts to the estuary is needed. The committee urged DUC to continue to closely monitor the process.

While the rebound of juvenile sturgeon is encouraging, mortality rates observed of adult sturgeon in the area of the Tappan Zee bridge project is of concern.

There appears to be an increasing trend for people to recreate and swim in the NYC area of the river, even if the water is not suitable for contact recreation, creating a public health issue.

Boating on the river faces a number of concerns from safety issues regarding barges, crude oil transport, the need for updated navigation charts, and the safe use of the river by both motor and non-motorized boaters.

Access has been improved on the Dobbs Ferry waterfront including a dock, pier, park, all of which are ADA accessible.

Urban communities would benefit from a common agenda for urban waterfront communities to help pool resources and support.

To better plan for the future, environmental flow guidelines for water withdrawal and usage (TOGS) need to be developed to better understand how fresh water flows impact the estuary.

The continued collaboration between DEC and DOH is important to be able to provide timely health advisories to the public regarding eating Hudson River fish. DEC collects the fish that DOH then analyzes to develop the advisories. Note that the advisory for Walleye in the Rondout has changed. (from 1/month to Do not eat).

Jim responded to many of the comments raised, acknowledging the challenges of addressing issues such as the oil trains, PCBs, drinking water supply contamination, and planning for a resilient and sustainable future. He cited the work being done now by staff on CRRA, and the need to bring additional federal funds to the estuary.

6. Special Presentation: Watershed Initiatives

-How's the Water? Community Science Water Quality Monitoring in the Hudson River Watershed, Dan Shapley, Water Quality Program Manager, Riverkeeper, noted that the water quality monitoring program now includes 12 different community projects and expanded into the Mohawk River last year, with plans to expand further up river next year. With the help of the Estuary Grant program, this effort has been able to expand into the Rondout/Walkill system and will add more community groups to the effort.

-The Culvert Report: 3 Years of Work for Better-Connected Streams: Andrew Meyer, Shoreline Conservation Specialist, and Megan Lung, Environmental Analyst, presented an overview of the ongoing culvert prioritization project that has been mapping and analyzing biologically important barriers (culverts and dams) in the watershed and developing interactive Google maps. A separate project is underway to identify and reach out to private land owners of dams.

Committee member A. Beers noted the value of this partnership to work being done in Rockland County on culvert assessment and identification.

5. Old business, new business:

Linda Cooper, OPRHP, presented a brief overview of the history of the Taconic regional headquarters. The building, once an elementary school was brought back to life through a private donation, and renovated to become the first platinum LEEDS building in NYS. Features include geothermal heat, solar panels, environmentally friendly flooring and fixtures, permeable pavement, and universally designed access.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Respectfully submitted: Nancy Beard, recorder

Attendance: 58

HREMAC Members:

Allan Beers	Rockland County Environmental Resources
Andy Bicking	Scenic Hudson
Janet Burnet	Ramapo River Watershed Council
Dave Conover	HR Sloop Clearwater
Chris DeRoberts	Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp.
Jerry Faiella	Historic Hudson River Towns
Stuart Findlay	Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies
Charlie Gruetzner	HVMTA
Dan Shapley	Riverkeeper, Inc. (for Paul Gallay)
Suzette Lopane	Westchester County Water Agency
John Mylod	MT Nets
Steve Noble	City of Kingston Parks and Recreation
George Schuler	the Nature Conservancy
Dennis Suszkowski	Committee Chair, Hudson River Foundation
Shino Tanikawa	Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts
Russell Yess	Trout Unlimited

Ex-OFFICIOS:

Tom Baudanza	NYC DEP
Peter Brandt	US EPA
Mark Castiglione	Hudson River Valley Greenway
Diana Carter	NYS OPRHP
Jamie Ethier	NYS DOS
Regina Keenan	NYS Department of Health
Rob Pirani	NYNJ HEP
Peter Wepler	US ACE

Guests:

Helena Andreko	Hudson River Foundation
Lisa Baron	US ACE
Linda Cooper	NYS OPRHP
Matt Cosby	US ACE
John Ferro	Poughkeepsie Journal
Rich Schiafo	Hudson Valley Regional Council
Audrey Vangenechten	NYS Dept. of Health
Ben Weiland	Trust for Public Lands

DEC, Estuary Program staff and SCA interns

Nancy Beard	Estuary Program, Citizen Participation
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Betsy Blair	HRNERR, Program Manager, goalkeeper
Martin Brand	DEC Region 3 Regional Director
Chris Bowser	Estuary Program, Research Reserve, education
Ann Marie Capprioli	HRNERR, grants administration
Elisa Chae-Banaja	Estuary Program, watersheds
Scott Cuppett	Estuary Program, watersheds
Fran Dunwell	Estuary Program, Hudson River Coordinator
Mike Flaherty	DEC Region 3, Fisheries
Michele Golden	Estuary Program, GIS Coordinator
Ingrid Haekel	Estuary Program, biodiversity
Laura Heady	Estuary Program, biodiversity
Rebecca Houser	Estuary Program, education
Gavin Lemley	HRECOS
Sarah Lipuma	Estuary Program, SCA
Megan Lung	Estuary Program, watersheds
Sherri Mackey	Estuary Program, administration
Jeff Mapes	DEC, Lands and Forests
Susan Maresca	DEC, Region 2, permits
Andrew Meyer	Estuary Program, scenery, watersheds
Dan Miller	Estuary Program, habitat restoration
Libby Murphy	Estuary Program, climate change
Chuck Nieder	DEC, Fish and Wildlife, energy generation permitting
Susan Pepe	Estuary Program, estuary grants
Karen Strong	Estuary Program, biodiversity
Jim Tierney	DEC, Deputy Commissioner for Water Resources
Libby Zemaitis	Estuary Program, Climate Change

Appended :

HUDSON RIVER HABITAT RESTORATION, Hudson River Basin, New York Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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DESCRIPTION

The study area includes 140 miles of the Hudson River Federal channel from the Tappan Zee Bridge to the federal lock and dam at Troy, NY. The reconnaissance study completed 30 April 1996 found there was federal interest for proceeding with the feasibility level analyses for navigation improvement measures and aquatic ecosystem restoration measure, including evaluation of eroding shorelines, degraded fish and wildlife habitat, impediments to fish passage, and flooding control measures.



AUTHORIZATION

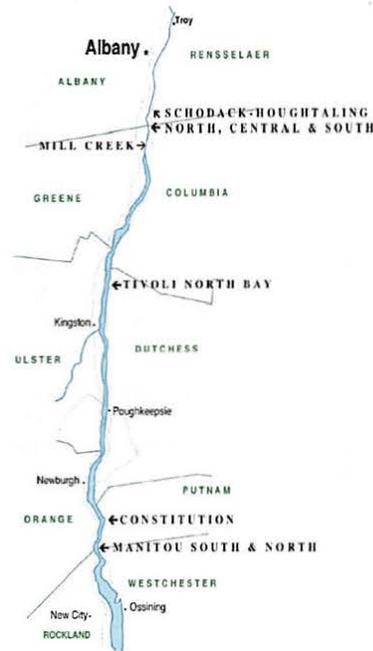
Section 551, Water Resource Development Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-303)

STATUS

A feasibility cost-sharing agreement (FCSA) for \$4,048,000 was executed in 1996 with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) serving as non-federal sponsors. A total of \$987,772 had been expended on restoration planning efforts to select several sites for detailed investigation. In 2001, the sites which were evaluated to be restored were found to be no longer available for construction. In addition, the feasibility study was suspended due to lack of consensus on path forward and delays in non-federal sponsor funding.

In April 2012, HQUSACE proposed close out of the feasibility study. In response, NYSDEC Commissioner Joseph Martens requested that the study be resumed (July 2012). The sponsors' renewed interest resulted from the recommendations of the Hudson Raritan Estuary Feasibility Study and the publication of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan. NYSDEC's intent is to complement the restoration plan prepared for the lower Hudson River in the upper 140 miles above the Tappan Zee Bridge to the Troy Dam.

The local sponsors, NYSDEC and NYSDOS, have formed the "Partners Restoring the Hudson" with more than 30 organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, Hudson Riverkeeper, and Scenic Hudson, with overwhelming support to advance the study. The Nature Conservancy has provided the leadership for the Partners and has been the designated facilitator for the effort. The Non-Federal sponsors have committed significant resources to the development of the



restoration plan for the Hudson River. The "Partners Restoring the Hudson", along with NYSDEC and NYSDOS, have made progress towards the preparation of a Hudson River Comprehensive Restoration Plan through the identification of restoration goals, Target Ecosystem Characteristics (similar to the Hudson Raritan Estuary TECs) and implementation of baseline ecological investigations.

The New York District has been working closely with the Partners' restoration planning efforts in order to resume the Feasibility Study. The New York District and Partners were **successful** this year to **resume** the Feasibility Study as federal funds were appropriated via the FY 2016 Work Plan. The Study was not included in the President's Fiscal Year 2017 budget and will continue to compete for continued federal funding.

Activities planned for FY 16 following resumption includes finalizing the Project Management Plan, advancing development of the restoration goals and objectives, conducting baseline conditions and identification of restoration opportunities and alternatives. The New York District is grateful for the support provided by the Congressional delegation, Local Sponsor and "Partners Restoring the Hudson".

Go to <http://thehudsonweshare.org/> for more details.

STUDY COST

Estimated Feasibility Federal Cost: \$ 1,700,000 (includes \$200,000 for Independent External Peer Review)

Estimated Feasibility Non-Federal Cost: \$ 1,500,000

Total: \$3,200,000

CONTACT

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CONGRESSIONAL INFORMATION

Senator Charles E. Schumer (NY) and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY); Representatives Nita Lowey (NY-17), Sean Patrick Maloney (NY-18), Christopher Gibson (NY-19) and Paul Tonko (NY-20).