

Hudson River Estuary Advisory Committee Meeting  
Minutes: June 3, 2015 Approved November 12, 2015  
Norrie Point Environmental Center, Staatsburg, NY

**1. Welcome and announcements** - 64 people attended (see listing below). The meeting opened at 9:10 am.

The April 16, 2015 minutes were approved: Motion made by R. VanSchaack, L. Johnson, seconded by C. Gruetzner, and F. Bergman, The minutes were approved.

HREMAC Membership: New members, Charlie Gruetzner, Shino Tanikawa, and Russell Yess were welcomed to the committee.

#### Hudson River Fisheries Reports:

Striped Bass: G. Kenney, Hudson River Fisheries Unit, thanked the Committee for their input into the public comment process for revised striped bass regulations. These regulations are now in place and provide a balance for protecting the species while still allowing for a recreational fishery. Anglers are now allowed to take 1 fish between 18-28" in length or more than 40" in length, protecting spawning females and focusing the harvest more on male fish and outliers.

It was noted that while regulations for N.J. do allow more fish to be taken than in NY, NY is in keeping with states to the north. Overall, the coast did very well in developing regulations that will meet the required 25% reduction in harvest.

American eel spring migration: C. Bowser reported that the eel migration was lower and later this year than in years past. He congratulated the volunteers on a great turnout.

#### **2. Stakeholder working groups**

**Access:** This group of 18 met February 26, 2015. A number of ideas from this meeting are being pursued. Carole Fraser, DEC Access Coordinator, has agreed to assist in moving this project forward. Key project elements include:

1. Information – getting accurate information on current site conditions out to the public so users can make informed decisions based on their needs and interests.
2. Assessment of existing Hudson river sites: DEC and OPRHP are pursuing the use of assessment techniques developed by the Inclusive Recreation Resource Center (IRRC), at SUNY Cortland, to assess state access sites along the river.

Conversations are under way regarding next steps for the 18 sites that were assessed by Cornell's Employment and Disability Institute (Dr. LaWanda Cook), as part of the Hudson Estuary Accessibility Project, funded by the Estuary Program in 2013.

3. A handbook, guidance document is needed for improving accessibility for access types that have no codified standards, (i.e kayak and canoe launches).

4. The Estuary Program intends to issue a round of access grants that will include accessibility, EJ communities, resiliency of access facilities and education as focus areas.

**HR Comprehensive Restoration Plan- public outreach meetings:** A. Peck reported that a series of public meetings pairing cross-river counties was recently conducted. The meetings focused on known and desired projects needed along the Hudson to improve habitat restoration, community resilience and access. The information gathered will be used to populate a GIS database, with a gap analysis to follow to fill in missing information. This will be followed by meetings in interested communities.

Many infrastructure projects were identified and there was interest in pursuing inter – municipal collaborations as an approach to addressing common problems. Next steps include the submission of project nominations from the public, followed by an on-line database of mapped projects, and background information. More information can be found at: [HudsonWeShare.org](http://HudsonWeShare.org)

**Scenery:** M Castiglione reported that the Estuary Program (A. Meyer) and the Greenway have partnered to assess and identify scenic resources in the Hudson Valley. Building upon previous efforts, including DOS's SASS, this group is working with 6 area land trusts to develop a GIS data base that includes scenic resource locations and justification of scenic values, the goal being a valley-wide GIS layer with background support data.

### **3. The Action Agenda 2015-2020 Next Steps,** F. Dunwell and G. Schuler

D. Suszkowski remarked on the success and energy generated by the April 16 Hudson River Summit. He thanked Fran and staff for a great day.

G. Schuler recapped the *Partner Corner* portion of the Summit. A few overarching messages that came through the comments include:

- the call for deeper and wider public engagement opportunities to bring about change.
- using the estuary's assets as a place for recreation, fishing, paddling, as economic drivers for river towns, generating a broader constituency to care for the river.
- the call for a plan with ideas that capture collective impact, shared vision and goals, pulling together for the resource. People want tools to do things for themselves.

He noted that there will always be forces beyond the watershed that we will all need to deal with: oil trains, development trends, old infrastructure, funding concerns, etc.

He asked the question: How can we get other stakeholders to come to the table? How can we better engage the stakeholder groups we have now?

The floor was opened for Committee comments, as follows:

- Several noted the range of ages in the room, nice to see high-school students there. Identify why, and what we want from different groups, and then look at how to better engage them, but first know what we need and want from them.
- Use the Almanac, the new social media landscape, to engage people.

- While changing slowly, the ‘old mentality’ still exists in more rural communities, We need to build success stories to show how things can be done differently. Change is happening in small steps. Good developers do want zoning, have to make changes a little at a time.
- Working at the local level, one on one, is so important. Engage, train CACs. Give them the tools, training to make changes in their communities. Reinstate NYS funding for CACs, to allow CACs to better advise town boards, This tool exists in law and needs to be used. Look at tools available; grants, tool kits and get these to the municipalities
- Need to build bridges between economic development, tourism, agriculture, get to the job creators that add value, hi-tech, manufacturing, specific industries that are desirable.
- Engage the REDC members in Hudson River issues, so that they recognize that natural resources are important to their mission. Give members personal “gee whiz” experiences on the river to get them engage in the region.
- Use current community interest in flood planning conversation and future threats as a focused opportunity to bring communities together, to address emergency response.
- Consider Westchester Co. where a housing development utilized GI principles, and bike paths to connect to a work site, linking the residential development with the business development in green, sustainable ways.
- Need to make sure that existing environmental laws are still honored and enforced, for example the Clean Water Act: in recent years there has been a 65% decline in enforcement actions taken, accompanied by a 20% increase in non-compliance cases. We still need to pay attention to our environmental laws.
- Big corporations like acknowledgement of doing good, i.e. being LEED certified, making positive contributions to the environment. Use this to our advantage.

Action Agenda Public Comment period: N. Beard presented a brief summary of the comments received during the public comment period, which ended May 15, 2015. More than 100 comments were received from individuals, groups and at the Summit. The overall response to the Draft AA was very positive. Many comments were received in support of more DEC staffing, more funding, better use of existing tools (i.e. SEQRA), and better integration of the Estuary Program’s goals into other DEC programs. The Program’s existing strengths were acknowledged: technical assistance to municipalities, education programs, estuary grants, scientific research base and expertise.

General Suggestions included: Stepping up our mission from “helping” to “empowering” people; expanding the program north of the Troy dam to the upper Hudson, and numerous suggestions for expanding partnerships.

Concerns were expressed regarding the human benefit focus of the Agenda, the focus on the main stem of the Hudson vs. the tributaries and watersheds, the need to better understand the role of land use patterns and trends on estuary health, the need to recognize and manage for the active use of the river and its tributaries for recreation.

New ideas suggested include: developing a public health campaign with county health depts. to promote health benefits of water –related recreation, develop recommendations on the benefits of urban trees in GI, address emerging contaminants, ie. micro-plastics, personal care products, and pharmaceuticals, consider the Hudson as a potential “food network corridor”.

F. Dunwell discussed the proposed focus to be on the main stem of the estuary and the need to have the AA be measurable in response to comments received. There was discussion regarding the level at which goals should be aimed; aspirational vs. realistic. The Committee indicated they were comfortable with the main stem being the focus for the agenda, they agreed with framing the AA according to human benefits, including a benefit for a vital ecosystem while working to better clarify the connection of our work in the watersheds and tributaries to its impact on the estuary and that measurable metrics should be part of the process. G. Schuler used the Program’s work on stream barriers as an example, where 100 barriers have been identified that need long term mitigation. The AA might set an outcome to say that DEC aims to mitigate/restore/remove 5 of the 100 in the next 6 years.

**4. Metrics:** There was discussion on Metrics and making the Action Agenda measurable. Committee members expressed a variety of opinions regarding approaches to numeric metrics, however everyone agreed that making the Action Agenda measurable is desirable. Committee comments:

Some members felt it important to measure some shorter term accomplishments: # of miles of fishable, swimmable river by 2020. Some felt metrics should reflect the ultimate impact of change in the resource, or human behavior over the long term. Some suggested a combination approach to capture both.

Comments noted that metrics allow us to check our direction, ie are we doing the right thing for what we want to accomplish? Aspirational goals are great, metrics are necessary to show accomplishments. It was noted that there is a need to clarify who will claim what accomplishments-- DEC vs partners. It was noted that it is difficult to measure results that are many years out.

DEC should consider revisiting what the program has accomplished over the life time of the Estuary Program. Take a breather and look back and see what we have done, where we are now, and has this had an impact on the resource ( i.e. Hudsonia natural resource trainings)? Could we look at what has been done and see if there has been impact? It might not reveal hard numbers but may give us stories. We need to tell the success stories, with metrics built in, capture these stories and archive them in some way. Combine the Gee-whiz with the numbers.

Challenge: Need to know what the threshold is that will make a difference in the environment, (# of fish you need to sustain the stock.) The TECS being developed by the HRCHP are a test case for this challenge.

Consider how much investment you want to make, funding and staff time in trying to come up with these metrics and measuring if you have hit your mark. Counting the number of access sites improved is very doable vs trying to count increase in users would be harder and expensive to do. These are 2 very different things. Need to weigh cost vs benefit of metrics chosen.

**4. Cross Benefit Conservation / Access Opportunities in the Hudson Valley, The Black Creek Corridor Case Study;** Presented by Sacha Spector, Matt Shipkey and Andy Bicking, Scenic Hudson, Inc.

The Black Creek conservation project is an ongoing partnership effort that has been under development for many years and has proven to be a successful collaboration that can hopefully serve as a model for how to advance conservation efforts in other parts of the Valley.

Sacha Spector summarized the ecological values of the Black Creek watershed that make this area a unique and excellent ecosystem to work. It is the most intact watershed in the Valley (outside the Catskill preserve), 80% forested, 10% ag, 2% impervious surface, it is a connector area for the Catskills, Gunk's, Marlboro mountains, all coming together here. There are thousands of acres of wetlands, more than 100 vernal pool systems, many species of significant and special concern, (important turtle habitat), its topography is difficult to access, with steep slopes, so it is relatively untouched. The water is cold, and lends it to be very climate resilient. There is great habitat diversity, biologically important areas, linking to Illinois Mt, Shaupeneake Ridge, Chodikee Lake, and serves as an outlet to the Hudson River. It came up on Scenic Hudson's rating system as one of the most important conservation opportunities and priority areas to conserve.

Matt Shipkey presented Scenic Hudson's Burroughs/Black Creek Corridor Trail concept to increase public awareness and appreciation of the area, to gather support and advance stewardship while increasing public access. The vision includes development of a sensitive trail system (keeping human use focused and away from ecologically sensitive areas), a foot trail from the mouth of Black Creek at the Hudson River south, to near the Esopus/Lloyd line, and then via a water trail south to the Highland Rail trail, taking in the area's access to the Hudson River, Slabsides at the John Burroughs's sanctuary site, waterfalls on the Whitman lands.

Partners in this effort include: Town of Esopus and Lloyd, Boards and ECCs, John Burroughs Association, Wallkill Valley Land Trust, DEC, Estuary Program, Greenway, Esopus Business Alliance, others. Other potential partners/ stakeholders suggested: REDC, NY Open for Fishing and Hunting, Partners through History, I love NY. Ted Kerpez reflected on the history of this project, dating back to the first biodiversity inventories supported by the Estuary Program.

**Assignment to Committee Members:** Fran asked the membership to write down one way to measure one 2020 outcome, " 2020 , what should we aim for..." Ideas generated by the committee include the following:

- Access – that every access point (new and old) along the river has a sign or educational materials about the Hudson River fish advisory.
- # Communities/Municipalities will include some consideration of resilience into local land use management (ie. Improved flood risk laws in zoning codes)
- #Acres of open space conserved as a measure of habitat protection, climate resilience, public access and awareness.
- Green Infrastructure will be utilized on all DEC funded projects and encourage local use
- DEC will install x # of Green Infrastructure projects in areas of Access/Watershed resiliency, etc.
- By 2020, 2000 NYC Public School Students have visited a waterfront site in a school trip. Environmental Education will continue to be taught on and off the river. DEC will provide x #s of students/teachers opportunities
- Work w/state parks and other partners (Cornell) to focus recreational user surveys (day use, camper, trails, etc.) on questions that can help monitor existing recreational uses and identify needs of the users specifically in the Hudson River Estuary.
- Identify, increase and evaluate climate related courses at colleges and universities in the Hudson River Watershed. Partnership with Environmental Consortium
- # of grants awarded that contributed to scenic resource protection, same for access/type, EJ. # of completed projects that contributed to same
- By 2020, 100 miles of tributaries will be opened for fish passage through removal of impediments (eg. dams, culverts, etc.)
- By 2020 NYS Education department mandates a Hudson River Curriculum in every public school in the watershed
- Water Quality – improvement through teaching river users – fisherman, boaters, etc. to take water samples, record results and forward to DEC – thus giving users an active role in improving water quality and awareness
- How many state or local permit/landowner decisions have had specific items included that were the result of training with data derived by the HREP
- By 2020, a number of sites that relate to number of users, be improved, not necessarily to ADA standards but to the degree that people who previously could not use the sight now can.
- Complete a toolkit/handbook on canoe/kayak access for municipalities and disseminate it to all (later measure increased number of such access points created and/or improved).

New Business:

New DOH advisory brochures are now available for the Hudson Valley region.

N. Coddington invited others to join her to work on the food network corridor idea. S. Tanikawa noted work done by Gene Flatow, for the Lower Hudson, Long Island Sound council, and NYSERDA, who conducted a feasibility study for barge transport of food from producers to population centers.

D. Suszkowski thanked Betsy Blair for the use of Norrie Point.

The meeting adjourned 12:00 noon. Motion made by S. Findlay, seconded by A. Bicking.

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Beard recorder.

**Attendance: (64 )**

**HREMAC Members:**

Frank Bergman	Hudson River Boat and Yacht Club Assoc.
Andy Bicking	Scenic Hudson
Nicola Coddington	Irvington Green Policy Task Force
Paul Gallay	Riverkeeper, Inc.
Peter Gross	Hudson River Sloop Clearwater
Charlie Gruetzner	NYMTA
Lucy Johnson	Vassar College, HV Consortium, HRES
Tom Lake	Naturalist/Educator
Suzette Lopane	Westchester County Water Agency
Barney Molloy	Hudson River Watertrail Association
Steve Noble	City of Kingston Parks and Recreation
George Schuler	the Nature Conservancy
Dennis Suszkowski	Committee Chair, Hudson River Foundation
Rene VanSchaack	Greene County IDA
Shino Tanikawa	Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts
Russell Yess	Trout Unlimited

**Ex-OFFICIOS:**

Peter Brandt	US EPA
Mark Castiglione	Hudson River Valley Greenway
Diana Carter	NYS OPRHP
Jamie Ethier	NYS DOS
Nordica Holochuck	NY Sea Grant
Audrey Vangenechten	NYS Department of Health, (for Regina Keenan)
Robin Jazxhi	Interstate Environmental Commission (representing)

**Guests:**

Dave Conover	Hudson River Sloop Clearwater
Bob Ewald	Orange County Sportsmen
Amanda LaValle	Ulster County Dept. of Environment
Andy Peck	the Nature Conservancy
Bob Reuter	Orange Count sportsmen
Matt Shipkey	Scenic Hudson (speaker)
Sacha Spector	Scenic Hudson (speaker)
Emily Svenson	
Rich Schiafo	Hudson Valley RC
Leela Stalzer	

### **DEC, Estuary Program staff and SCA interns**

Nancy Beard	Estuary Program, Citizen Participation
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
Scott Cuppett	Estuary Program, watersheds
Kathy Czajkowski	Mohawk River Program
Fran Dunwell	Estuary Program, Hudson River Coordinator
Sarah Fernald	HRNERR
Katie Friedman	HRNERR
Ben Ganon	HRNERR
Kacie Giuliano	Estuary Program, SCA intern
Ingrid Haekel	Estuary Program, biodiversity
Ann Harrison	DEC, Environmental Education, goalkeeper
Amanda Higgs	Estuary Program, Hudson River Fisheries Unit
Rebecca Houser	Estuary Program, education
Gregg Kenney	DEC, Hudson River Fisheries Unit
Ted Kerpez	DEC. Region 3 FWMR, (goalkeeper)
Megan Lung	Estuary Program, SCA intern
Sherri Mackey	Estuary Program, administration
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
Beth Roessler	Estuary Program, Trees for Tribs
Bill Rudge	DEC, Region 3 FWMR
Maude Salinger	Estuary Program, Communications
Steve Stanne	Estuary Program, education
Karen Strong	Estuary Program, biodiversity
Emily Vail	Estuary Program, watersheds