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The 2009 Hudson River Summit – Summary of Major Themes and Comments

On June 8, the **2009 Hudson River Summit** brought hundreds of regional, state and national leaders together at the historic Hotel Thayer at West Point Military Academy to focus on strategies for revitalizing and sustaining the Hudson River Valley's environment for the benefit of all its residents. Organized by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary Program, this dialogue about the future of the river was co-sponsored by Historic Hudson River Towns, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Hudson River Foundation, Riverkeeper, Scenic Hudson, The Hudson River Environmental Society, The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, The Nature Conservancy and others.

The following is a brief summary of the major themes and comments received throughout the day.

For more information on the Summit visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/57785.html>

General Estuary Program Scope /Approach:

We need to

Take a team approach and work together to find issues in common, upriver and down river; i.e. brownfields, contaminants, land preservation, making a connections between the environment and the economy. The Summit brought together many agencies to the same podium.

Present the Action Agenda and supporting information in user-friendly language that helps people understand the benefits to human society of a healthy and balanced ecosystem. Find creative ways to get the word out; ie. develop a documentary.

Expand the geographic scope to the entire watershed so that NY Harbor, the upper estuary, upper Hudson and the Mohawk are better linked. -- Up-river projects affect everything down stream.

Make the Estuary Program more diverse in its inclusion of minorities and in its outreach to partners and communities. Provide training and help make connections between state, federal and local agencies. Conduct a jobs analysis for the new action agenda.

Provide for personal experiences with the river and engage the people who will take action to change their communities from the ground up. Promote educational opportunities through internships, SCA, and universities.

Garner the “We’ll do it ourselves” spirit of the Hudson Valley. Work together to get the resources to do what we need to do. Government can’t do more without an army of concerned citizens. Our identify is about overcoming adversity, preserving the republic, winning. Our time is now-- catch the moment.

Water Resources and Aquatic Habitat:

We need to

Acknowledge that the Hudson River is a working river and there will be conflicts. We need to understand these conflicts and the magnitude of potential impacts in quantitative terms.

Protect and attend to our water needs and water sources including watersheds and aquifers. Note: the Hudson Valley serves the water supply needs of itself as well as New York City.

Be cautious about drinking water withdrawals from the Hudson. Viewing the Hudson River as an endless water supply will lead to development; waste water treatment needs, and moves away from water conservation.

Address ongoing water management issues including: CSOs, the incremental decline in tributary water quality and increase in impervious surfaces. We need to slow the water down, spread it out, and soak it in.

Land use protection, development, revitalization:

We need to

Commit to land acquisition to advance all Action Agenda goals in the Valley and in the Harbor.

Address the scenic impacts of shoreline and ridgeline development at the state and local levels.

Promote the adaptive reuse of historic structures in waterfront revitalization programs.

Provide training to local governments to better integrate natural resources into local decisions.

Direct development towards population centers. Promote sustainable, smart growth patterns of development, green strategies for green infrastructure and transportation, revising current land use regulations where needed.

Natural Resource Protection, Ecosystem Benefits:

We need to

Support restoration of the estuary's fisheries through implementation of the Acton Agenda's 12 goals.

Better communicate the value of wildlife-based recreation, hunting and fishing to the state's and local economies.

Continue to improve our understanding of how the river's ecosystem functions and link this with the social sciences to promote changes in human behavior.

River Access, River Transportation:

We need to

Create the infrastructure needed to facilitate transportation on the river; i.e. barge traffic, ferry commuting, and the availability of public marinas to assure access to the river for everyone.

Continue to promote and develop access over the railroad tracks on both sides of the river, Metro North on the east side and CSX on the west.

Climate Change, Energy Issues:

We need to

Make sure we have healthy intact ecosystems, water, land, forests to be prepared for adaptation to climate change.

Upgrade technology at power plants; reinvesting and providing incentives to redo old antiquated facilities that will ultimately benefit fish, air and water.