

Norrie Point Environmental Center, Staatsburg, NY

1. Welcome and announcements: 81 people attended (see listing below). The meeting opened at 9:10 am.

The March 15, 2018 minutes were approved: Motion made by Stuart Findlay, seconded by Charlie Gruetzner. The minutes were approved.

Staff Updates: Betsy Blair, HRENERR Manager, will retire from DEC later this month to pursue other professional endeavors. She will be replaced by Heather Gierloff, DEC Marine Resources biologist. Dennis S. thanked Betsy for her years of dedicated work. Both Betsy and Heather were congratulated and wished well in their future endeavors. Gavin Lemley, the program's HRECOS coordinator has accepted a position in DEC's Division of Water. Gavin was recognized for the excellent work he has done in growing the HRECOS system.

Budget: Andy B. reported that the NYS budget for this fiscal year includes an increase of \$1 million, for a total budget of \$6.5 million for the Estuary Program. This includes \$1 million for the Mohawk River program. He cited a new level of interest in the river, centered around the PCB cleanup effort, and in the metropolitan area, including the work being done by the NY/NJ Harbor & Estuary program (Rob Pirani). Scenic Hudson is seeing a growing interest in the river from the business community.

John Lipscomb, Riverkeeper, will receive Mohonk Consultation's Distinguished Achievement award on June 10, 2018.

Navigation Safety: John L. presented an overview of the recently formed US Coast Guard (CG) Navigation and Safety Commission committee. This group is an outgrowth of the proposal to establish multiple anchorages for commercial vessels throughout the estuary. The CG received an historic number of public comments (more than 10,000), mostly in opposition to the proposal. A PAWSA process was then conducted, resulting in recommendations, including: 1) to establish a safety committee, 2) increase recreational boater education and, 3) clarify the CG's authority to grant anchorages. The committee provides a forum where a diverse group of constituents can discuss and collaborate on these and other critical issues. Committee members include representatives from: State Pilots Assoc., the Tug and Barge industry, the Port of Albany, shipping agents, recreational boaters (the Greenway), and environmental groups, (Riverkeeper) among others. Non-voting representatives include: DEC (the Estuary Program), DOS, NOAA, ACOE, and the CG. A public meeting is being planned for the fall.

Committee Activities:

Dennis S. reported on three letters recently sent by the Committee to Commissioner Seggos regarding the following topics: (All three letters will be sent to Committee members. Sent: June 13, 2018)

- 1) Proposal by AMTRAK to fence off a stretch of the railroad line in Dutchess and Columbia counties, limiting public access to the river. Jim Tierney has forwarded this

correspondence to DOS. In response to extensive public comment, AMTRAK has expanded its public participation process.

- 2) ACOE Harbor and Tributary Study (HATS), A letter, drafted by Dan Shapley on behalf of the Committee, was sent to the Commissioner this morning, requesting an extension in the public comment period, and expressing concern that the proposal for larger barriers in the harbor area poses potential conflicts with the intentions and goals of the Action Agenda.
- 3) NYS Draft Invasive Species Management Plan: A letter was sent expressing concern that the draft plan, as it outlines the state's approach to the management of and response to potential invasive species, does not address the Hudson River ecosystem, and the potential for introduction of invasives through the NYS Canal system.

Andy B. and Dennis S. are completing work on the 2017 Annual Report letter to the Commissioner.

HATS: Peter Weppler responded to the HATS issue raised in item 2 above. Public meetings are being planned for late June, early July in NYC and the mid-Hudson region. As proposed in the ACOE's "Smart Plan" process, there will be 2 draft reports issued before a final decision is made. A draft feasibility report, similar in structure to a scoping document is expected to be released in 2021. Alternatives that will be studied further will be winnowed down to two (perhaps 3) by November 2018. At this time, there is no preferred alternative.

John L. requested specific meeting dates be provided and the ACOE website be updated to keep the public informed during the process. He thanked Peter W. for his work on this issue.

There was additional discussion regarding options to extend the timeline from 3 to 6-7 years, options to request additional funding, and incorporate the findings from additional studies that are planned or are underway by other agencies and organizations.

Sturgeon: Gregg Kenney reported that the HRFU crew has been on the river attempting to link up information from benthic habitat maps with field data of where sturgeon are spawning. As a result, a new short nose sturgeon spawning habitat area has been identified.

2. Presentations:

Visualizing the Fish Advisories: Helping Families Choose Better Water, Audrey Van Genechten, NYS Dept. of Health (DOH) (PPT presentation). The DOH Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach program has developed a series of maps to better communicate to the public where they can fish and eat their catch in the Hudson River watershed. The maps have proven to be a good conversation 'starter', and help explain the DOH fish advisories to people with limited English skills. In addition, the maps help to promote fishing with a positive message about where to fish. The maps show water bodies where the General Advisory applies (Whole family: 4 fish meals/month) in blue (OK to eat), and water bodies with specific advisories (for women of child-bearing age, children under 15) in red (Don't eat). The maps have been used in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in Albany, Rensselaer, Orange and Ulster counties in 2017 and 2018. They have been translated into three languages in Rockland and Orange counties. For more information go to:

https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/maps.htm

DEC's Hale Creek Analytical Lab: Measuring Contaminant Levels in New York's Fish and Wildlife, Chuck Nieder, DEC Bureau of Habitat, (PPT presentation). Chuck provided a brief history of DEC's involvement in monitoring contaminants in fish and wildlife, an overview of the Hale Creek Lab's current capabilities, discussion of emerging contaminants, i.e. PFAS, and recommended several studies that would benefit our understanding of the status of fish in the Hudson estuary. He noted that DEC's collection and analysis of contaminants in fish forms the basis for the Department of Health's fish and wildlife advisories presented in Audrey's previous presentation. The Hale Creek lab analyzes PCBs, pesticides, mercury, and most recently Perfluoroalkyl substances (PFOA, PFOS). An additional suite of heavy metals analysis capability is planned. PFOA and PFOS are the most recent chemicals of concern. They are resistant to environmental breakdown, bioaccumulate, and have recently been found in fish collected near Newburgh and Hoosick Falls. DEC is now surveying fish statewide for these chemicals. Fish are collected annually across NYS for PCBs, organochlorine pesticides and mercury. Hudson River fish have been tested for PCBs on a regular basis since 1970. Hudson River Blue crabs were last tested for cadmium and PCBs in 2005.

Areas where the Lab and the Estuary Program could collaborate include:

- Repeat the 2005 Blue crab study for cadmium and PCBs
- Conduct an intensive PCB study in fish in 2019, as a follow up to the 1999 study
- Measure PCBs, dioxins, and furans in striped bass collected from the Marine District, including NY Harbor.

Funding resources would be needed to undertake these projects.

Comments:

Dan S. commented that a threshold for PFOS needs to be defined. Response: DEC is working to define a threshold limit by the winter of 2018.

Dennis S.: PCB contamination is still an issue in the estuary. While the upper river dredging, project has concluded and the EPA 5-year review is under way, many questions remain. The Committee applauds DEC's active interest in the situation. Questions remain: What is the relationship between HREP and the PCB issue? What does the cleanup mean? Will people be able to eat the fish? What did the clean-up actually do for the lower river? He is concerned that there are too few resources to adequately monitor the situation.

Andy B: The time is right to study PCBs in fish, as the PCB cleanup is being evaluated.

Rob P. noted the importance of blue crab studies to the Hudson River and Jamaica Bay.

Municipal Planning Outcomes and Our New Mapper: Laura Heady, Ingrid Haeckel, Conservation and Land Use Team, Estuary Program. (PPT presentation) Laura presented an overview of the Program's outcome-based approach to engaging Hudson Valley municipalities in natural resource inventory (NRI) and conservation planning. While planning tools have improved over the years, the basic approach has been to work with communities to a) identify what they have, b) prioritize the most important resources/places and then c) plan to protect and manage those resources. The Land Use Team developed a guidebook in 2015, "Creating a Natural Resources Inventory", and most recently the on-line Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper. Twenty-five municipalities are now engaged in NRI projects. For example, the Towns of Rochester and Wawarsing, Ulster County are currently working on a

joint grant on an open space plan. The Towns of Cornwall and Blooming Grove, Orange County are working on an intermunicipal inventory project through an Estuary Grant. In Rensselaer County, the Rensselaer Land Trust is completing a County Conservation Plan (Estuary Grant funded). The team plans to continue this work by engaging new communities, building existing inventory and planning work, as well as developing relationships with additional communities and partners in Hudson Valley municipalities.

Ingrid introduced the group to the recently announced Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper, an interactive online mapper to view and query GIS data layers including: the estuary, streams and watersheds, wetlands, forests, biodiversity and scenic and recreation (access) areas. She demonstrated how the mapper can be accessed and the kinds of features it offers. A fact sheet was provided. For more information and to access the mapper, go to: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/press/113902.html>

Action Agenda 2020-2030 and the Hudson River Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP): Fran Dunwell, Andy Peck, and George Schuler presented:

Fran D. discussed the planning process for the next Action Agenda, 2020-2030 (PPT presentation). She outlined a timeline for 2018 (handout) that includes opportunity for the Committee to reflect on trends, challenges and opportunities, and the reactivation of topical working groups. An initial draft of targets, outcomes and actions will be presented to the committee at the November meeting. 2019 would include broader outreach to a wider network of stakeholder groups, followed by a Summit meeting in 2020 and final adoption of the Action Agenda. She reviewed a few key trends facing the river including, sea level rise, invasive species, pollution, large estuary-wide projects, increasing development pressures, and emerging energy issues.

It was agreed that a separate meeting to discuss trends and issues in more detail will be scheduled.

Andy P. reported that the final draft of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan is complete and is undergoing internal review. June 29 is the comment period deadline. The Committee was provided a copy of the 12 Target Ecosystem Characteristics (TECs). Work continues on the mapping tool component of the project. The report will be presented as a support document to the Action Agenda and the NY&NJ Harbor action plan. He requested that the Committee send a letter to the Commissioner requesting DEC adopt the plan as appropriate.

Following some discussion, the Committee agreed to review and comment on the TECs by the end of June. (email sent 6/8, with due date 6/22/2018), and indicate their conceptual agreement with the TECs. Partners Restoring the Hudson will also be considering what their role will be in the future. A meeting is being planned to brief the Commissioner to be followed by a more public release of the report later in July.

George S. led a conversation on how these efforts could improve collaboration moving forward and accelerate progress by engaging more resources and more people. It was noted that the CRP has a narrower physical focus than the Action Agenda and he opened the question of how to address this difference of scale. There was discussion on establishing working groups under the HREMAC umbrella, starting with the Program's already existing subcommittees. One such group met later in the day to discuss dams and barriers. It was agreed that more information will be sent out to members providing opportunities to engage in topics of interest to them.

Issues raised included:

- SLR will be important river wide, and should be infused into all targets.
- Traffic, safety issues are being addressed through the USCG safety committee
- Cultural diversity inclusion as a deliberate focus point of programs and outreach is important.
- Shino T. noted the lack of inclusion of SLR predictions in CSO discharge planning in NYC.
- Dan S. stressed the importance of including tributaries, i.e. the Mohawk River Basin Program, the Clean Water Act process, the future of PCBs in the lower river, other toxic sites, i.e. Wappinger Creek hazardous waste site, now designated a federal Superfund site.

Staff from the USFWS expressed interest in participating in the CRP/Action Agenda process, helping to “grow the pie”.

Dennis S: Supported incorporating the TECs into the Estuary Program. These ideas need a ‘home’, and it makes sense to incorporate them into the ongoing planning processes of both the Action Agenda and the HEP action plan.

Old Business, New Business

Lucy J. announced that HRES will be hosting a field trip tour of the Upper Hudson on September 22, 2018

The meeting adjourned 12:15 PM

Respectfully submitted: Nancy Beard, recorder

Attendance: 81

HREMAC Members:

Allan Beers	Rockland County Environmental Resources
Andy Bicking	Scenic Hudson
Dave Church	Orange County Planning
Chris DeRoberts	Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp.
Jerry Faiella	Historic Hudson River Towns
Stuart Findlay	Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies
Dan Shapley	Riverkeeper, Inc. (for Paul Gallay)
Charlie Gruetzner	HV Marine Trades Assoc.
Lucy Johnson	Vassar College, HV Consortium, HRES
Julie Noble	City of Kingston (for Steve Noble)
George Schuler	The Nature Conservancy
Dennis Suszkowski	Committee Chair, Hudson River Foundation
Shino Tanikawa	Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts
Rene VanSchaack	Greene County IDA

Ex-OFFICIOS:

Dan Jeanson	Hudson River Valley Greenway (for Scott Keller)
Rick Winfield	US EPA (for Peter Brandt)
Diana Carter	NYS OPRHP
Jamie Ethier	NYS DOS

Nicolette Witcher	Hudson River Park Trust (for Noreen Doyle)
Regina Keenan	NYS Department of Health
Rob Pirani	NYNJ HEP (for Rob Pirani)
Peter Wepler	US ACE

Guests:

Carl Alderson	NOAA
Lisa Baron	US ACE
Cathy Bozek	USFWS
Margaret Byrne	USFWS
Sean Carroll	Cornell University
Carla Castillo	HVRC
Maureen Cunningham	HR Watershed Alliance (HRWA)
Michael Finewood	HRWA
Alana Gerus	DOH intern
Jesse Jaycox	ORPHP
Dan Jeanson	Hudson Valley Greenway
Carolyn Klocker	CC Extension Dutchess County
Michael Liebl	
John Lipscomb	Riverkeeper
Liz LoGuidice	Columbia/Greene Cooperative Extension- Cornell
Mary McNamara	HRWA
Megan Nickel	Scenic Hudson
Andy Peck	The Nature Conservancy
Terry Platz	Beacon Institute
Lisa Rosman	NOAA
Monica Spies	
Pat Sullivan	Cornell University, conservation and land use team manager
Russell Urban-Mead	HRWA, Chazen Companies
Audrey Van Genechten	NYS Dept. of Health

DEC, Estuary Program staff and SCA interns

Nancy Beard	Estuary Program, Public Information
Jessica Best	HRFU
Betsy Blair	HRNERR, Program Manager, goalkeeper
Ann Marie Capprioli	HRNERR, grants administration
Elisa Chae	Estuary Program, source water
Emma Clements	Estuary Program, grants assistance
Scott Cuppett	Estuary Program, watersheds
Alex Curtze	Estuary Program, SCA intern, T4Tribes
Brian DeGasperis	HRNERR
Kristen Dieterle	DEC, Division Fish and Wildlife
Fran Dunwell	Estuary Program, Hudson River Coordinator
Heather Gierloff	DEC Marine Resources, HRNERR
Mo Grassi	HRFU
Ingrid Haeckel	Estuary Program, conservation and land use

Emily Hauser	HRNERR, Coastal Training
Laura Heady	Estuary Program, conservation and land use
Rebecca Houser	Estuary Program, education
Gregg Kenney	DEC, Hudson River Fisheries Unit
Ted Kerpez	DEC, R3 Fish and Wildlife
Erin Lefkowitz	Estuary Program, SCA intern
Megan Lung	Estuary Program, culvert assessment
Sherri Mackey	Estuary Program, administration
Jeff Mapes	DEC, Lands and Forests
Susan Maresca	DEC, Region 2, permits
Katie Matus	Estuary Program, climate change
Dan Miller	Estuary Program, habitat restoration
Chuck Nieder	DEC, Fish and Wildlife
Rich Pendleton	HRFU
Wayne Richter	DEC, Fish and Wildlife Hale Creek Lab
Bill Rudge	DEC, Natural Resources, R3
Maude Salinger	Estuary Program, communications
Martice Smith	Estuary Program, SCA intern
Becky Thomas	Estuary Program, administration
Kelly Turturro	DEC, R3 Director
Emily Vail	Estuary Program, watersheds