



New York - New Jersey
Harbor Estuary Program

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

of the New York – New Jersey
Harbor Estuary Program

www.HarborEstuary.org

Harbor Estuary Program Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

October 26, 2009 10 am – 12:00 pm

Future City, Inc.

1045 E. Jersey Street, Elizabeth, NJ

MINUTES

Introductions

Michelle Doran McBean and *Roland Lewis* welcomed attendees, who then introduced themselves.

Public Access Work Group update

Rob Buchanan provided an update on the Public Access Work Group (PAWG). As summarized in the minutes for the last meeting on October 6 (see <http://www.harborestuary.org/publicaccess.htm>), there is a total of \$40,000 available for mini grants to carry out public access events. A request for proposals (RFP) will be released soon and efforts to advertise it widely will be redoubled.

One site—Sommerville Basin in Jamaica Bay—was nominated during the last meeting and it was approved by the group. There was also a discussion about the overall issue of increasing access (as well as connection between sites) within the core of the harbor in accordance to HEP's Action Plan and the possibility of nominating five sites to be included in the water trail. However the sites are owned by private corporations. The group decided that the sites should be first nominated to the Public Access Sites list and then the PAWG could write a letter to bring these issues to the various agencies.

During the PAWG meeting, the question of whether NY and NJ trails could be mapped together in OASIS was explored, and there was also discussion on the fact that the PAWG nominates land sites, but not waterways.

Update on outreach to elected officials efforts—NJ League of Municipalities

The conference will take place in Atlantic City the third week of November and at this point it is not possible for HEP to give a presentation. *Capt. Bill Mc Sheehan* reiterated his offer to display HEP materials at Hackensack Riverkeeper's table. In addition, it would be possible for one or two people to attend the conference and get a feeling of the dynamics and interact with elected officials. HEP will take advantage of these opportunities. The group agreed that the CAC should start working as soon as possible for the 2010 meeting. A proposal for a workshop should be

Citizens Advisory Committee Co-Chairs

Michelle Doran McBean, Future City, Inc. ✧ 908-659-0689
Roland Lewis, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance ✧ 212-935-9831

presented before the holidays because openings fill out quickly. The group will also pursue similar meetings on the NY side.

Action items

- **HEP staff will put together a draft agenda for the group's consideration.**
- **Roland Lewis will find out about similar conferences in NY.**

Local events Update

CAC members shared their news with the group.

Debbie Mans mentioned that NY/NJ Baykeeper is working on its largest oyster restoration project to date, in Keyport, in Monmouth County and is also collaborating with Future City on another oyster project. Baykeeper hopes that these projects will help move forward oyster restoration efforts and overcome negative attitudes, especially now that the Comprehensive Restoration Plan is out.

Future City held its annual Estuary Day in September. In addition, *Michelle* showed a video about Elizabeth Environment Day event (held around Earth Day), which featured Lisa Baron talking about the CRP and the importance of habitat restoration. This video was broadcast last year in cable TV and could be used as a model for other outreach efforts.

Michelle also described the oyster project in collaboration with Baykeeper. Future City and the Elizabeth River/Arthur Kill (ER/AK) Watershed Association plan on planting oyster seed in the water, near the Elizabeth marina at the Arthur Kill. *Clay Sherman* commented that the permitting process for such a project can be lengthy and the timeline may be a bit ambitious.

John Dobosiewicz briefed the CAC about Keane University's project to adopt a park with city support. The university is working with schools and with Baykeeper to build a network of scientists and students to collect data. This project is in its initial phase and a work plan is being developed.

Roland provided a summary of the H₂O9 Forum. The conference was a success and interested parties are looking for funding to continue the collaboration and carry on the dialog on sea level rise. *Michelle* added that Future City invited Dutch attendees to the Estuary Day, which represents a very different approach (bottom up vs. the top down approach by the Dutch).

Roland also reminded the CAC that the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance will be hosting the Harbor Education Task Force meeting on November 10 at the Liberty Science Center to assess how the Waterfront Agenda has moved forward, include new items as needed, and explore funding options to implement the agenda.

Bill Sheehan described Hackensack Riverkeeper's Litter Marshall Program, which was funded by HEP's stewardship grants program and the Watershed Institute. The program consists of an anti-littering campaign that encourages people to report littering to the Bergen County Litter Marshal Hotline. Hackensack Riverkeeper is partnering with the County Sheriff's Office, and reported litterers will receive educational materials and a letter warning that that littering is a

crime subject to fines. Bill showed mock ups of the billboard and brochure, which are being finalized. The billboard will be up in November, and then again in the spring. The brochure will be widely distributed in places frequented by motorists.

Stewardship Grants Update

Gabriela mentioned that two award recipients were selected for the Stewardship Grants Program, and that both projects are under way. One of these is the Litter Marshall Program that Bill Sheehan described. The second one is a project by the NYC Soil and Water Conservation District and partners that will retrofit an existing site in NYC with green infrastructure to manage stormwater. The group will identify a residential building, educate its residents on stormwater issues and engage them in the selection of specific green infrastructure components as well as maintenance. The project will also collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of green infrastructure to capture stormwater.

Then Gabriela summarized, and showed pictures of, the four projects funded last year, which have all been successfully completed. Summaries of these projects will be posted shortly on HEP's website at <http://www.harborestuary.org/stewardship.htm> :

Sebago Canoe Club: Increasing public access and accessibility to the Brooklyn waterfront

This all-volunteer nonprofit group built a new ramp and dock to access Paedergat Basin in Jamaica Bay, replacing a 40-year old structure that was in poor shape. The group was thus able to accommodate more and different types of boats, offering their paddling programs to a wider audience (approximately 600 people) that included the general public, youth, and their first event to disabled paddlers who were especially grateful for the opportunity to access the water.

(Brooklyn) Center for the Urban Environment (CUE) & NJ Marine Sciences Consortium (NJMSC): Harbor Education Program

These two not for profit educational groups built on previously developed materials (also funded by HEP) and created new materials for students in grades 4 to 8. They delivered one classroom session, one field session, and one tour of the Harbor to 275 students from 12 classes (for most of which this was their first time on the water) and their teachers, from underserved public schools in NJ and Brooklyn, NY. They also held a professional development session for 58 teachers so they can use the materials in their classrooms. Although unfortunately the CUE closed shortly before the end of the project, the NJMSC completed all deliverables.

Council on the Environment of NYC (CENYC): Shoreline Preservation

This non-profit environmental organization offers environmental education programs for middle and high school students. With HEP's grant, the group delivered 7 weekly lessons on the estuary and stormwater issues to over 800 students from 8 high schools from 3 NYC boroughs. After learning in the classroom, the students had a field session where they planted native trees and plants, removed invasive species, and conducted other shoreline preservation activities in nearby parks.

NY/NJ Baykeeper: NY Oyster Program

Baykeeper continued and expanded their oyster program and produced educational materials that are available from their website. The group and partners expanded and delivered hands-on

activities at several oyster gardens, including experiments on growing oysters from larvae in NYC and building oyster cages. This program involved approximately 125 K-12 and high school students, some of which had the opportunity to study oysters in collaboration with scientists at The River Project, and using equipment at Brookhaven National Lab. Baykeeper also organized a lecture series on oyster issues that attracted 175 participants and included four lectures and an educators' workshop. In addition, they carried out an Urban Oyster Restoration Conference in Governors Island, with over 130 participants, where students presented the results from their research.

STEW-MAP Collaboration

The US Forest Service finalized the online STEW-MAP form and Gabriela sent out emails and letters to almost 400 stewardship groups on October 2nd, including approximately 150 from NJ. So far 20 groups filled out the form and hopefully more will join as Gabriela sends periodic reminders. Groups will be able to join at least until the end of the year. Gabriela asked CAC members to please fill out the form as soon as possible, forward it to others, and get in touch with her if they found any problems. The STEW-MAP team will format and add the information to their database as it comes, but the OASIS map will be updated only once, when we stop accepting entries. Gabriela also reminded the CAC that some NJ organizations filled out the form a while ago, but were not added to the map in the first round as the STEW-MAP team was focusing in NYC. However, these organizations will be added to the OASIS map in this update. If not sure whether your information is already in the database, please get in touch with Gabriela (gabriela@harborestuary.org or 212-637-3793) or fill out the form just in case anyway.

Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP) Update

The US Army Corps of Engineers is planning outreach meetings in each of the eight CRP planning regions. These meetings will serve to brief the audiences about the CRP, collect regional master plans, identify restoration opportunities, and determine whether these two components are compatible (see minutes for July 29, 2009 CAC meeting). *Lisa Baron* will start scheduling meetings in January 2010 and is looking for CAC input regarding good locations to hold these meetings, as well as help to spread out the message widely so the meetings are well attended.

Several attendees commented on the challenges of holding such meetings and shared their experiences and ideas. It was suggested to hold a conference call in December, prior to the CAC meeting, to provide further input in time to start scheduling the outreach meetings next year. In addition, Lisa encouraged CAC members to contact her at Lisa.A.Baron@usace.army.mil at any time to contribute their suggestions, and also to share their contact lists if possible, or to forward the meeting announcements when they are sent out. The list of potential locations for these meetings is available at <http://www.harborestuary.org/citadvcomm-reports.htm>

Next CAC Meeting

HEP staff will find a convenient time to hold the conference call to provide input for CRP outreach efforts.

The next CAC meeting will take place in NY, possibly the last week of January. It had been suggested that NY meetings could be held together with the Long Island Sound Study CAC.

Gabriela will find out when the LISS meets in NY and the CAC will evaluate the feasibility of combining the meetings. When a date and location is established, it will be announced to the group.

The meeting was adjourned at around noon, but those interested stayed for a discussion on fish advisory issues.

Fish Advisory Issues

The group continued the discussion that began last meeting.

The main goal of the CAC is that the two states work together and create a common approach to address the many issues related to fish advisories. These include: disparate advisories (most notably in the Arthur Kill, where people harvest and consume crabs in Staten Island but not on the NJ side), subsistence fishers distrusting authorities, cultural and economic factors behind subsistence fishing, environmental justice issues, and lack of signage on the NY side, among the most significant.

Attendees shared their perspectives and experiences and there was general agreement that the CAC should move forward and work on this issue. After considering several options, the group suggested to form a Fish Advisory Subcommittee. The first steps would be to assemble a group of stakeholders and formalize the action items to be addressed. It was also suggested to hold a meeting involving all HEP work groups and committees in the near future and include this topic in the agenda.

ATTENDEES

Lisa Baron, USACE
J. Christian Bollwage, Mayor of Elizabeth City
Rob Buchanan, Village Community Boathouse
Don Chesley, Stevens Institute of Technology
Bart Chezar, Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club
Jerry Davis, Future City, Inc
John Dobosiewicz, Kean University
Michelle Doran McBean, Future City, Inc.
Maggie Flanagan, South Street Seaport Museum
Edgar Freud, Sierra Club
Louis Kleinman, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
Roland Lewis, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
Debbie Mans, NY/NJ Baykeeper
Gabriela Munoz, NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program
Robert Nyman, US EPA Region 2
Manuel Russ, Concerned Citizens of Bensonhurst
Bill Sheehan, Hackensack Riverkeeper
Clay Sherman, NJ DEP DWM
Adina Taylor, Floating the Apple, Inc.
Nina Zain, The River Project