



New York – New Jersey
Harbor & Estuary Program

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

of the New York – New Jersey
Harbor & Estuary Program
www.HarborEstuary.org

NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

November 15, 2013
The Hudson River Foundation
17 Battery Place, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10004

MINUTES

1. Introductions

2. Vote to accept new CAC members

A quorum was present and New CAC members Joe Reynolds, Robert Laumbach, and Don Chesley were accepted as new members of the Citizens Advisory Committee.

3. CAC NY Co-Chair Elections

The New York Co-Chair's (Rob Buchanan) first term is coming to an end and, at this time, CAC members have until December 18 to send nominations (including the existing Co-Chair). Rob Buchanan expressed interest in continuing for a second term, but also stated interest in other nominees. Anybody (regardless of CAC membership status) may nominate a candidate, including self-nominations. Nominations should be sent to Bob Nyman at nyman.robert@epa.gov. A list of nominees and their bios will be circulated shortly after, and the elections will be conducted during the first CAC meeting in 2014.

Action items:

- Bob Nyman sent out instructions for nominating co-chairs to the CAC.
- The CAC will make any nominations by December 18, 2013.
- Voting will occur at the next CAC meeting or via web.

4. HEP Transition

Dennis Suszkowski introduced the transition discussion by giving a background about HRF and their interest in hosting the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program, before a discussion with the full CAC about what they would like to see in the future HEP.

- a) **History of the Hudson River Foundation (HRF):** HRF formed approximately 30 years ago out of the Storm King settlement with conEdison. This was initially a \$12 million settlement, and has resulted in the sponsoring of over \$40 million in science and other projects. Since then, HRF has also administered other funds including the Hudson River Improvement Fund and the North River Water Treatment Plant settlement funding. Rob Pirani, of the Regional Plan Association (and expected future Director of the NY-NJ HEP) also described his background at RPA, with the Governor's Island Alliance, and work on open space and how his expertise would mesh with the Program.

Citizens Advisory Committee Co-Chairs

Meredith Comi, NY/NJ Baykeeper ✧ meredith@nynjbaykeeper.org ✧ 732-888-9870
Rob Buchanan, Village Community Boathouse ✧ avironvoile@gmail.com ✧ 917-656-7285

- b) **HRF Interest in hosting the NY-NJ HEP:** Dennis Suszkowski and Clay Hiles described what they see as a natural fit between the two organizations. HRF has been engaged in the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program since the Program's inception, in 1987, and felt that the Program and the Comprehensive Restoration Plan are important in setting society's vision for the harbor. They recognize that it is very difficult to deal with a relatively small budget and a large scope, and intend to focus on further developing partnerships and leveraging funds. Rob Pirani highlighted some of the key foci they see for the program: building on ecologically-enhanced shoreline work, climate change and resiliency, public access, citizen science, and environmental justice.
- c) **Open discussion with the CAC:** main points (and responses, if applicable) are paraphrased below.
- Rob Buchanan suggested that HEP should be the **convener of opportunity** for issues regarding the harbor, resiliency, etc. However, many of these efforts do not recognize HEP. How might we move HEP from the sidelines to the middle of the conversation? Rob Pirani: We need to come up with the resources to use the platform to enter the conversation – such as a place to discuss leveraging.
 - Rob Buchanan: there is an expectation that moving out of EPA will make the Program more **flexible with opportunities for funding, and possibly even advocacy**. Dennis and Clay Hiles: we expect to use mutual projects as a way to attract a group to the table. Regarding advocacy – HRF doesn't see advocacy as part of HEP's future. The HEP can push for clean water, oysters, etc. but the Program cannot advocate for policy positions (to maintain its character/who is at the table, as well as fulfill rules of federal funding). Rob Pirani: there are many capable advocates in the room and it's the job of the Program to bring together the advocates, states, federal agencies, NGOs, and academia to discuss ideas.
 - Bob Alpern asked for clarification on the **expected relationship between the Management Committee, the National Estuary Program, and HRF**. Rob Pirani: the structure of HEP continues and will not change in the near term. Other NEPs around the country have more or less the same management structure.
 - Meredith Comi: How do we get the **regulators to the table and engage more**? Rob Pirani: we need to make sure that we have good reasons to get them to the table.
 - Rob Buchanan: how do we **deal with issues that the CAC really disagrees with** (the recent New Jersey Public Access Rule was cited). Dennis: we expect to try to move the Program more toward roles that are supportive of all programs. Money is also an issue. There is also a different dynamic when everyone feels like they are working on projects together.
 - Maggie Flanagan: at what level can HEP put pressure on policy and regulatory entities to be **accountable**?
 - Merryl Kafka: will there still be **grants opportunities**? Rob Pirani: we're still determining what we will be focusing on in this year, determining a near-term budget for the Management Committee meeting on the 10th of December.
 - Jamaica Bay Ecowatchers (to Rob): how will your **background with RPA shape your** interaction with Jamaica Bay? Rob Pirani: RPA and HEP are very much two separate entities, and policies will not overlap.
 - Roland Lewis: other CACs have **negotiated the advocacy – federal relationship**. We should look at how have they been able to draw political will, and that there may be different ways to operate the CAC (e.g. acting more independently). Rob Pirani: this will be part of the evolution of the Program, and we will reach out to other NEPs to look at their structures. The Long Island Sound Study CAC has played a partner role in the Congressional

Caucus. In some ways that very much defines how other NEP CACs operate; here we have the Harbor Coalition.

- Nicolette Witcher: in considering the success of the Hudson River Estuary Program meetings, participants feel very **invested** and are unafraid to offer their engagement. There is a culture of empowerment, but also more of a “**what are we going to do together**” attitude rather than “what can the Program do for us.” This is an important thing to consider.
- Joe Reynolds: the **outreach and grants programs** are priorities.
- Nellie: New Jersey feels less interested/attracted to engaging with the Program.
- Bob Alpern: How is HEP going to deal with the **Bight**? Dennis: Tony MacDonald from Monmouth University is very interested in this issue, and HRF has recently had discussions with Monmouth regarding the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body. A lot has to be sorted out related to the structure of that entity, but it is definitely something we should figure out as part of this process.
- Shino: there has in the past been difficulty **setting targets** for restoration goals (in the past have not felt like they were **ambitious enough**). Will being located outside of the EPA help that? Rob Pirani – need to demonstrate the value of achieving those goals.
- American Littoral Society – **restoration projects** are still a priority.
- Caitlyn Nichols: water quality monitoring and coordination are priorities.
- Dan Tainow: public access and stewardship projects are a priority.
- Michelle Doran-McBean: **transparency and accessibility** is very important during the transition. HRF should **post information about the transition on the website**, updating it as we move forward in the process, and provide a platform for members to make comments/provide input.
- Other commenters stated priorities related to the HEP as an important platform, restoration goals, stewardship and education, understanding estuarine health, specific management issues (e.g. West Pond in Jamaica Bay), and communication.

Action items:

- Any additional questions should be sent to the CAC Co-Chairs or HEP staff so that they can be aggregated and addressed.
- HEP staff will follow up with HRF to see if information can be posted to the website related to the transition.

5. Public Access

a) Presentation of NYC Water Trail Association’s Citizen Science Monitoring Project:

Nancy Brous and Rob Buchanan presented on the NYCWTA’s Citizen Science Water Quality Monitoring program, which involves sampling for pathogens at many different public access sites throughout the NYC region. The project was launched after those in frequent contact with the water were concerned about CSOs potentially affecting their health. Since fall of 2011, the NYCWTA has been sampling for enterococci using the IDEXX system and incubating samples at The River Project. The tests are expensive (\$13-15/test), but all sampling is by volunteers. There is a need for more data and a high variety of sites that are challenges to getting predictable results and clearly understanding risk. They have used a lab in Queens as well. A few suggestions were made to the NYCWTA from CAC members, including connecting with additional rainfall data (Bart Chezar), the Rachel Carson School at Coney Island Creek as a potential additional incubation lab (Merryl Kafka).

6. HEP Updates

- a) **Citizen Science Monitoring grants from NY-NJ HEP:** a decision will be made soon and announced to the HEP community.
- b) **NYC Department of Health:** Hooked on Our Waters conference was a success; more outreach is intended for next year.
- c) **December 10th HEP Management Committee meeting** will include a discussion of the transition, a plan for existing funding, shooting for an April 1 transfer of funds to HRF.
- d) **Merryl Kafka – there is a new non-profit called Gotham Whales:** www.gothamwhale.com

The meeting was adjourned at 1 PM.

ATTENDEES

Bob Alpern, NYS Water Resources Planning Council
 Helena Andreyko, Hudson River Foundation
 Rick Balla, USEPA Region 2
 Andy Bicking, Scenic Hudson (by phone)
 Kate Boicourt, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
 Nancy Brous, NYCWTA
 Tracy Brown, Riverkeeper (by phone)
 Rob Buchanan, Village Community Boathouse, NY Co-Chair of the CAC
 Bart Chezar, Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club
 Meredith Comi, NY/NJ Baykeeper, NJ Co-Chair of the CAC
 Michelle Doran-McBean, Future City Inc. (by phone)
 Maggie Flanagan, Marine Educator
 Clay Hiles, Hudson River Foundation
 Sam Janis, New York Harbor Foundation
 Merryl Kafka, NYSMEA
 Robin Kriesberg, Bronx River Alliance
 Robert Laumbach, Rutgers University – EOHSI
 Roland Lewis, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
 Harvey Morginstin, Passaic River Boat Club
 Dan Mundy, Jamaica Bay Ecowatchers (by phone)
 Gabriela Munoz, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
 Caitlyn Nichols, IEC District
 Robert Nyman, NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
 Rob Pirani, Regional Plan Association
 Joseph Reynolds, Monmouth County Park System
 Manuel Russ, Concerned Citizens of Bensonhurst
 Cathy Sohn, American Littoral Society
 Lilo Stainton, NY-NJ Harbor Coalition (by phone)
 Elizabeth Stoehr, American Littoral Society
 Dennis Suszkowski, Hudson River Foundation
 Dan Tainow, Lower East Side Ecology Center
 Shino Tanikawa, NY Soil & Water Conservation District, NY Alternate Co-Chair of the CAC
 Adina Taylor, Floating the Apple
 Nellie Tsioura, NJ Audubon Society, NJ Alternate Co-Chair of the CAC
 Nicolette Witcher, Hudson River Park Trust
 Nina Zain, The River Project