



New York - New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program

HEP Habitat Workgroup Meeting Minutes

June 22, 2005

Bloomberg Building

10am

Nomination For HEP Acquisition Site- PA Railroad Harsimus Stem Embankment

Maureen Crowley nominated this site as a Priority Acquisition site to be added to HEP's list. She showed an 11-minute video of the site. The site is an abandoned rail corridor owned by Conrail and currently, it is 6.2 acres of open space. The site has gone back to nature through natural succession and it could provide habitat. The Harsimus group would like to the site to be recognized as a historic site. Jersey City would like to take over the property and there is quite a bit of community interest in it. Maureen has helped draft a development plan that would include turning the site into a park. There are many HEP sites that could be linked by this site, such as Liberty State Park, Lincoln Park, Kearny Marsh, and Laurel Hill. The HWG nominated the site to HEP Priority list. The site needs to be approved by the Management Committee as well as the Policy Committee.

Rahway Fish Ladder

Mark Jaworski (Weston) presented to the HWG the Rahway River Fish Ladder project that Weston and the Rahway River Association received a grant from HEP through the Conceptual Habitat Restoration Plans. A fish ladder would be constructed on the Rahway River at the Rahway River Water Supply Dam. A pool and weir ladder will be the type of ladder used and there will be a grate on top of it. Herring and gizzard shad have been seen in the Rahway River. They would also like to do some sampling to obtain fisheries data. The fish ladder could restore indigenous species to the Rahway River including fisheries, avian populations, and endangered species. This project could be tied into regional wetland restoration and mitigation projects as well as shoreline restoration projects to realize the maximum ecological benefit. They would also like to obtain additional funding to conduct more work on the Rahway River therefore they applied for the Coastal America Grant.

Harbor Herons Update

Yigal Gelb (NYC Audubon) gave the HWG an up date on the Harbor Heron activities. Yigal discussed the monitoring of the islands and the nesting survey. The nesting survey revealed that here were no new nesting on abandoned islands and they think that there is a decline in species.

The Harbor Herons Monitoring Survey is going to use a Fuji Blimp for monitoring the nesting islands and for photographing foraging areas. They will also conduct shore and boat monitoring of the islands. All of the work conducted during the Harbor Heron Monitoring during the summer of 2005 will go into the Conservation Plan.

HEP Species and Habitat Articles for the Tidal Exchange

Cathy Yuhas (NJ Sea Grant/HEP Office) informed the HWG that species and habitat articles for the HEP Tidal Exchange are always welcomed from the HWG members. The specifications for those two types of articles are as follows:

Habitat Priority Acquisition and Restoration Site Article

- 600 – 900 words (1 – 1½ pages)
- 1-3 images
- Site #- for HEP Priority Acquisition and Restoration Site
- # of acres
- Property Owner
- Key habitat types and species
- Recent/current restoration activity
- Recent/current threats to property
- Contact Alex Brash if you want to contribute an article at
 - o Office: 212-617-2989

Species Article:

- 300-500 words (½ - ¾ pages)
- 1 image
- Importance of species to the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary
- Current status of the species (endangered, abundant, native, invasive, etc.)
- Habitat of species
- Range of species
- Geographic Area of Focus
- Contact Cathy Yuhas if you want to contribute an article at
 - o Office: 212-637-3792

All Articles should include the following:

- Title (and subtitle)
- Author line (organization, title, etc.)
- Giff, Tiff, Jpeg, or Bmp images – at least 300 dpi (the more options, the better)
- Image captions
- Photo credits

HEP Site Nomination Process

There was a discussion about the process of nominating sites to the HEP Priority Acquisition and Restoration Site list. Gregg Remaud (NY-NJ Baykeeper) felt that the HWG did not stick to the process during the nomination of the Harsimus Tract. There was too much discussion about HEP projects, such as the HRE. HE also noted that the potential acquisition of the site is irrelevant to the nomination. A consistent process needs to be followed. There was also a question of when the debate, discussion, and voting of the site should occur- while the site is being presented or after the presentation is completed and the person who presented the site has left the meeting. Should there be a follow-up letter to those that nominated the site informing them that their site was approved or not approved by the HEP (i.e., approval was or was not received by the Management and Policy Committees).

Key Species List

There was a discussion on the key species list that needs to be created for the HEP Targets and Goals. The types of species that should be identified are high functional species, assemblages, indicator species, and common and rare species. There can be several different focuses for the list. A list of who is monitoring what types of species should be identified. The list can be used as a planning tool.

Harbor Vision

Alex Brash (NPCA) led the discussion on the Harbor Vision. A general strategic plan is needed for the Harbor for benthic areas, parks, and natural areas. Habitat types and their uses should be defined especially in the water. The 2001 Habitat Status Report (Blue Mussel Book) could be a start for this strategic plan. Some questions that should be answered are what are the problems and how do we apply the process for the HEP list out to the other areas.

Next Meeting: August 31, 2005