



New York - New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program

HEP Habitat Workgroup Meeting Minutes

January 19, 2006

EPA, 290 Broadway, 28th Floor, Training Room #2829

10 am – 12:30 pm

HEP Budget (Bob Nyman)

Bob Nyman discussed the HEP budget process for the upcoming FY06 budget cycle. The Habitat Workgroup needs to provide input on potential budget items, such as conceptual design grants, key species report card, and HRE CRIP.

Key Species Project Update (Cathy Yuhas)

Cathy Yuhas updated the HWG on the Key Species Project. A key species subcommittee has been formed and they met on December 8, 2005. The subcommittee developed a working purpose for the key species list, which is (1) improve the public's understanding of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary; (2) influence ecosystem conservation, protection, and restoration; and (3) encourage better assessment and research. They also developed a working definition of key species, which is key species in the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary are those that are culturally significant, ecologically important, and representative of estuarine habitats. The subcommittee also developed a working list of key species. The HWG was asked to submit comments.

Presentation: Kelly Kunert's Thesis- A GIS Approach to Habitat Restoration Site Selection & Prioritization in the NY-NJ Harbor (Kelly Kunert)

Kelly Kunert presented her thesis to the HWG, which focused on a GIS approach to habitat restoration site selection and prioritization in the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. All spatial data that is necessary in making an informed decision can be incorporated into GIS. The criteria that was used for this project was size, natural land use/land cover, critical species habitat, opportunity for public outreach, and managed and protected areas. Wetland patches were also used. A GIS suitability analysis model was developed using the criteria to determine site selection and prioritization. Kunert concluded that the GIS approach should not replace stakeholder decision, but the use of GIS can help prioritize lists. Her recommendations were (1) use GIS for the selection of new restoration sites; (2) use GIS for the prioritization of current restoration sites; and (3) collect more spatial data for the Harbor Estuary. Her project was missing the proprietary information for each site and she also did not what areas were degraded.

HRE Plans and Army Corps Work

Alex led the discussion and talked about what has been done, such as the list of sites that HEP has compiled; the workshop that HRF held; and the oyster restoration work done by the NY-NJ Baykeeper. The question was – What are we missing from these accomplishments and how do we pull things together between HEP and the CRIP? There are two pieces to the HRE Study- the CRIP and the Feasibility Studies. The CRIP will encompass all projects in the Harbor not just USACE projects. The Feasibility Studies will be within the USACE chain of command. HEP should provide input to the CRIP and it should be able to bring the Plan to Congress for additional funding. Bob Alpern questioned how and if the CRIP will include the NY Bight, the Public Access list, and the LIS Stewardship Plan. Some of the things that HEP can do is to provide examples of other regional habitat restoration efforts that were successful and comments from the HWG members.

Jim Lodge from HRF told the HWG that the HRF Workshop Proceedings will be available next week.

Lisa Baron from Maritime Resources/NJDOT told the HWG that the restoration sites on the Passaic have been prioritized and can be found at www.passaic.org.

American Littoral Society: Inventory of Restoration Projects (Bryan Becker)

Bryan Becker from the American Littoral Society (ALS) is working on putting together an inventory of restoration projects, specifically potential coastal restoration opportunities from Sandy Hook to Delaware Bay. Four types of sites will be included in this inventory and they are wetlands, migratory fish passages, in-stream, and sediment navigation and replacement. ALS wants to use the inventory to match funders with projects. There will be no weight given to projects. The list will be made available online at www.littoralsociety.org.

Harbor Herons Subcommittee Update (Yigal Gelb)

Yigal Gelb from the NYC Audubon presented the Harbor Herons Conservation Plan, which began at the Harbor Heron Subcommittee Meeting in October 2004. The plan is almost complete. The Subcommittee formed a master plan that they can use to raise money. There are three components to the plan and they are (1) research, (2) habitat (islands and foraging grounds), and (3) education and outreach.

The research component includes population level studies and geographic distribution; migration studies; telemetry studies; ecotoxicology and health studies; and reproductive success studies.

Island colonies and foraging grounds will be the focus of the habitat component. Frank Steimle from NOAA had commented that there were colonies on Sandy Hook in the early 1970's and that Yigal should contact Mike Fehay from NOAA. Mark Jaworski from Weston Solutions also commented that there were egrets roosting on Shooters Island on the Shrewsbury River. Yigal noted that there is a new nesting island this year and that island is Mill Rock Island. Alex Brash and David Berg suggested Ruffle Bar Island in Jamaica Bay.

Jean Lynch a graduate student from Duke University is working with NYC Audubon and is looking into which sites need to be acquired and/or restored for the Harbor Herons. Some sites could be in the NJ Meadowlands, the Bayshore of NJ, and the Raritan River.

The education and outreach component will include ecotourism, reaching out to students and teachers, citizen science, outreach materials, and webcam.

Timeline for the Plan:

- February 2006: Circulate Draft
- April 2006: Final Review
- June 2006: Print
- Date Yet to be Determined: Hold conference to promote the Plan

Conceptual Planning and Design Grant Update: Rahway Fish Ladder (Mark Jaworski)

Mark Jaworski from Weston Solutions updated the HWG on the Rahway River Fish Ladder Project that was funded through the HEP Conceptual Planning and Design Grant. A completed report was submitted to HEP. Activities conducted during the grant period were a geotechnical investigation, hydrologic evaluation, topographic survey, feasibility alternative analysis, and reporting. They have applied for additional funding through other grant programs, such as American Rivers and NOAA grants and the Coastal America grants. If they do get the additional funding, they will conduct fish surveys, habitat evaluation, and design.

Other Business

Joel Banslaben from the Coastal Marine Resources Center introduced his business stewardship plan to the HWG.

Next Meeting: April 11th

Attendees

Alexander Brash, NPCA, 212-617-2989
Alice Belling, NYCDEP, 718-595-4366
Anne Carpenter, NYCSWCD, 212-431-9676
Bill Shadel, USACE, 917-790-8726
Bill Tai, NYC Parks, DPR/NRG, 212-360-1425
Bob Alpern
Bob Nyman, USEPA, 212-637-3809
Bryan Becker, ALS, 609-294-3111
Cathy Yuhas, NJSG/HEP, 212-637-3792
Chris Villari, NYCDEP, 718-595-5565
Cindy Goulder, Ecological Landscapes, 718-237-0466
Dan Montella, USEPA, 212-637-3801
David Burg, Wild Metro, 212-308-9453
Ellen K. Hartig, GEE, Inc., 212-579-6800
Eric Rothstein, Great Eastern Ecology, 212-579-6800
Frank Steimle, NOAA NMFS, 732-872-3059
Janine Harris, NYC Parks, NRG, 212-360-1432
Jeremy Thomas, Biohabitats, 410-554-0156
Jim Lodge, HRF, 212-483-7667
Joel Banslaben, CMRC, 646-515-9290
John Cantilli, USEPA, 212-637-3810
John McLaughlin, NYCDEP, 718-595-4458
Kunert, USEPA, 202-564-0608
Lisa Baron, Maritime Resources/NJDOT, 609-530-4779
Manuel Russ, CAC NYCDEP, 718-435-5037
Mario Paula, USEPA, 212-637-3819
Mark Jaworski, Weston Solutions, 732-417-5862
Melissa Kuskie, NPCA, 212-617-2771
Mike Feller, NYC Parks, NRG, 212-360-1424
Paul Brunn, NYCDOP, 718-556-7296
Porter-Ann Gaines, MWA, 212-935-9831
Ray Hinkle, URS, 973-812-6886
Robert Will, USACE, 917-290-8635
Rosalie Siegel, PANYNJ, 212-435-4405
Sarah Ralph, NYCDEP, 718-595-6959
Susan Schneider, USACE, 917-790-8725
Yigal Gelb, NYC Audubon