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The Tidal Exchange

~E-news~

Of the



New York-New Jersey
Harbor & Estuary Program

News and upcoming events in the harbor!

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THE NATIONAL DISASTER RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program engages in the recovery planning process

For the first time in history at this scale, the federal government is employing the [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#) to support cooperation among all federal agencies in creating a recovery strategy. When produced, the strategy will be supported by the Sandy appropriations funding as well as leveraging efforts, and will include a broad range of projects ranging from the replacement of hard infrastructure to research and monitoring efforts.

New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program staff have been meeting with representatives from the Joint Field Offices to discuss program priorities and resources. Priorities discussed at these meetings included: [roles of the Estuary Program relevant to Sandy](#), establishing clear communication about the recovery strategy process, priorities for restoration and acquisition in light of Sandy and future storms, and ongoing issues worsened by Sandy such as marine debris.

There has been a strong interest in incorporating natural resources and green infrastructure approaches in the recovery effort, and a particular interest in these strategies when they can be tied clearly to a human infrastructure benefit. There may be resources and ways to connect these interests through subsequent community planning efforts as well.

In February, a FEMA representative presented on the recovery strategy process to our Citizens Advisory Committee. You can see that presentation by advancing to 2:00:00 of [this presentation](#). At this time, the Joint Field Offices are focused on collecting all relevant resources and creating the recovery strategy. We will continue to provide updates as we continue to engage in discussion, but please get in touch with us with your thoughts and recommendations as members of the HEP community.



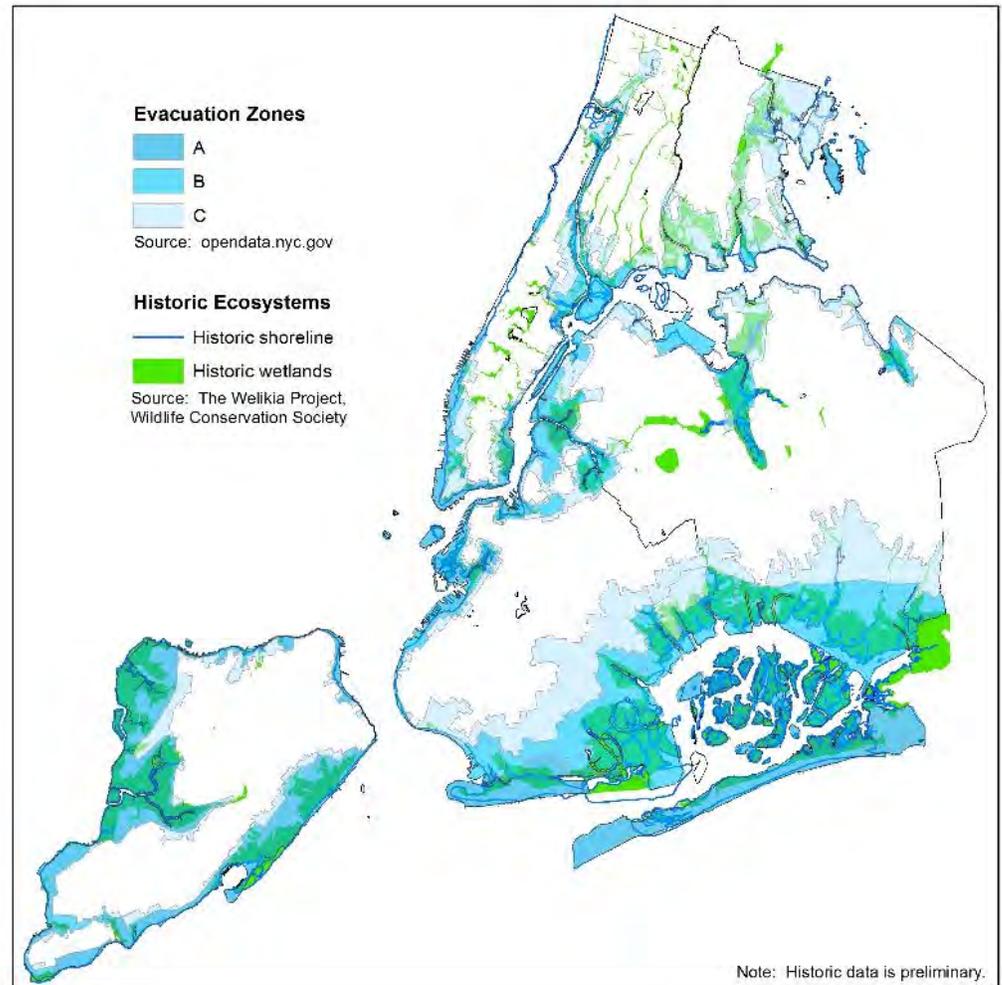
The National Disaster Recovery Framework supporting the recovery effort

A CALL FOR A FAR-SIGHTED APPROACH TO RESILIENCE

Natural resources: investing wisely in our recovery and future

It is encouraging to hear the recovery and resiliency conversation include the benefits that our natural resources provide. Using natural resources, green infrastructure, and sound planning decisions as a centerpiece in our response is critical, even to address current conditions alone. But it is also important to recognize our starting point for these decisions. As a region, we have lost 85% of our coastal wetlands in the past century.

Many of our natural resources our estuary are already severely impacted, and were in a state of compromised functioning before Sandy. Before we knew better, wetlands were historically considered wasted land - an opportunity to be tamed and built upon. In addition to loss, most of our natural resources have been fragmented or sectioned off by development, creating hard barriers that prevent them from expanding upland. Many of the areas that were evacuated during Sandy are former wetlands, filled in during the 19th and 20th centuries to create more land for residential and industrial development.



Many of the evacuation areas were historically wetlands, later filled to create more land area (Eric Sanderson, Welikia/WCS)

Once we have acknowledged our starting point, we must also consider that any choices we make now will have implications for many years to come. As communities and governments discuss difficult issues like building resilience, moving to higher ground or building raised structures, it is important to remember that natural resources don't have that choice. Without aggressive restoration and conservation, we will face difficulty maintaining the precarious status quo, let alone reducing the increasing risk to our natural and built world brought on by our deepening natural debt.

While Sandy was a wake-up call for the region, and her historic surge and destruction was more than most New Jersey and New York residents have experienced in their lifetime, we have little way of knowing whether we will see her twin, little sister, or vastly different cousin in the near future. Extreme rainfall during storms Irene and Lee were also disastrous in 2011, but for different reasons. These caused flooding of many homes along rivers and increased the difficulty of treating drinking water. Our region is also no stranger to inundation or flooding from other storms and even during the highest high tides of the year (the [King Tide](#)). In building resilience, we must prepare for this extended family of storms, and understand that at the same time our quantity of natural resources is lowering due to development, pollution, and other factors, the baseline of those pressures is rising due to sea level rise and climate change.

Over the past decade, participants in the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program have engaged in a large partnership to create and manage an evolving list of opportunities for restoration and acquisition in the Harbor Estuary (www.watersweshare.org). These opportunities have been included for their natural resource value and/or their potential to expand public accessibility to and from our waterways. As a Program and as partners in boosting resilience and restoration, we can look at these opportunities in the context of not only Sandy, but of Irene and the rest of the storm family. For example, acquisition of flood-prone habitat where opportunities arise is one of the few powerful tools for preventing additional damage to our communities and built environment, as well as our natural capital in the case of a storm bringing high surge like Sandy. For storms like Irene and Lee, opportunities to restore and reconnect floodplains, reduce impervious surfaces, retain stormwater on site through bioswales and stabilize stream banks with vegetation are important to reduce flooding and the amount of sediment rushing down our rivers. For storms with more moderate surge, restoring wetlands, maritime forests, natural dune systems and oyster reefs may aid in attenuating impacts and erosion to the shoreline directly behind them. To prepare for extreme events and a changing climate, we can also do things like remove stream barriers, which, when intact, can prevent fish and other creatures from migrating or escaping quick changes in salinity, sediments, or chemical changes.



Many of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan sites and projects are located in low-lying areas that were inundated by Sandy's surge

Increasing and protecting the quality of our coastal and riverine habitats, we put our natural and built environment in a better position to deal with the future. As we clear the wreckage of Sandy and anticipate her potential relatives, there are many opportunities for smarter and more sustainable recovery. Even if our next major storm doesn't come in the next few years, shouldn't we take the opportunity to prevent future economic loss and improve the long term enjoyment and resilience of our region?

MARINE DEBRIS: AN EXISTING NUISANCE, EXACERBATED

Sandy Worsens the Problem of Unclaimed Marine Debris

The Floatables Action Plan—a collaborative effort by numerous partners to address marine debris—has led to decreases in the medical waste, household garbage, and other debris seen on swimming beaches in the past 20 years. Much of this work has focused on locating floating debris "slicks" and cleaning them up before they reach the beaches. But there remains a sizable amount of debris, often lodged within vegetated areas. Certain types of debris are particularly challenging to deal with because of legal issues or because they are hard to reach. This includes, much larger debris—such as abandoned boats and pieces of wooden pier structures that do not pose an immediate navigation threat. However, these items still affect the health of our marshes, hindering their growth and altering the natural flow of water and tidal cycles. In addition, this debris may represent a future risk as it is mobilized by future storms.

The American Littoral Society and others had surveyed and mapped much of the debris in Jamaica Bay in the past year. But Superstorm Sandy has completely changed the picture, moving many of the items from their previous locations. The storm has also amplified this issue, adding more boats and other large debris, as well as smaller items to be cleaned up. You can hear John Tavoraro, of the Army Corps summarize the issue in [a video from our December meeting](#).



An abandoned boat sits atop a marsh in Jamaica Bay, Queens

The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program has brought together government and non-government entities across the harbor to collaborate in inventorying this larger universe of debris, and to develop a plan for addressing it.

One of the major hurdles to resolving the issue is identifying or creating an authority to fund and act on removal and disposal. For example, much of the debris that ends up on our wetlands and adjacent uplands falls outside the agencies mandates. In light of climate change and the likelihood of increasingly severe and frequent storm events, it would be desirable to create a response framework to handle debris that triggers automatically when such events hit, similar to the Incident Command System for oil spill response. These issues need to be resolved to avoid permanent damage to our already struggling wetlands and shorelines.

UPCOMING EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

For more events, check out our [calendar](#). To post your Estuary-related event in our calendar, [please send us the details](#)! For up-to date

events, [like our facebook page](#).

SAVE THE DATES

March 8: College of Staten Island's [Superstorm Sandy Forum](#). HEP will be there!!

March 13: Gowanus Canal Conservancy's [Gowanus Watershed Urban Ecology Lecture Series](#). Natural Resource Damages & the Gowanus Canal, by Ken Finkelstein.

May 14 & 15, 2013 - NEIWPC and Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation's [24th Annual Northeastern Nonpoint Source Pollution Conference](#) in Burlington, VT.

March 20: NYC Parks Uncommon Ground Lecture Series presents [Diadromous Fish and the Bronx River Fish Passage](#) talk with John Waldman at the Arsenal in Central Park.

March 27: Raritan River Collaborative presents [Renaissance on the Raritan](#) - free film at the Raritan Bay YMCA Theater.

April 4: NJ Invasive Species Strike Team's [Invasive Species Conference](#).

May 11: [Hudson River Fishermen's Association's](#) 28th Annual [Hooked on the Hudson](#) at the Palisades Interstate Park.

May 11: Second annual [Riverkeeper Sweep](#), a day of service to cleanup and care for our shorelines. Register to organize a project in your community or volunteer to help out. organizing a service project in your community, or volunteering for one near you - See more at: <http://www.riverkeeper.org/news-events/events/rvk-events/sweep2013/#sthash.ginVwjp7.dpuf> organizing a service project in your community, or volunteering for one near you - See more at: <http://www.riverkeeper.org/news-events/events/rvk-events/sweep2013/#sthash.ginVwjp7.dpuf>.

Spring (dates TBD): American Littoral Society's 2013 [Spring Marsh Planting](#) in Jamaica Bay.

FUNDING

Hudson River Estuary Program & NEIWPC: [Improving Access to the Hudson River Estuary and its Tributaries for Environmental Justice Neighborhoods](#). Deadline: March 12.

Hudson River Foundation 2013 [Mark B. Bain Graduate Fellowship](#) research proposals. Deadline: March 18.

Hudson River Estuary Program & NEIWPC: [Sea-Level Rise, Storm Surge, and Flood Adaptation Planning for Estuary Shoreline Communities](#). Deadline: March 26.

HEP and NEIWPC: [2013 Stewardship and Public Access Small Grants](#). Deadline: April 3.

NYSDEC Office of Environmental Justice: [Environmental Justice Community Impact Grants and Green Gems Grants](#). Deadline: April 5.

EPA's [Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants](#). Deadline: April 9.

NJDEP's [Conserve Wildlife Matching Grant Program](#). Deadline: April 11.

[ioby](#) (in our backyards), a community funding platform, accepts applications for environmental projects across the nation on an ongoing basis.

City Parks Foundations' [Community Group Recovery and Capacity Fund Grants](#) Deadline: Rolling

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

[Volunteers needed](#) for Waackaack Creek cleanup on March 10 and River Gardens Park (near the historic Matawan Creek) on March 23.

Gowanus Canal Conservancy is [looking for interns](#).

Woods Hole Science Aquarium [Summer Programs for High School Students](#). Application deadline: March 15.

Woods Hole Science Aquarium [Undergraduate Summer Program](#).

Hudson River Valley Environmental Education Institute's [Fishing the Hudson Spring Break Camp](#).

PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITIES

[Bayonne Bridge Navigational Clearance Program](#). Deadline for comments: March 5.

[Gowanus Canal Superfund site proposed plan](#). Deadline for comments: April 7.

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