

**Final Report Hutchinson River Canoe/Kayak Launching Site Study**  
**NEI Job Code 294-002, 0294-007**  
**Project Code S-2011-046**

**Name of organization:** Hutchinson River Restoration Project

**Project title:** Hutchinson River Canoe/Kayak Launching Site Study

**Date of final report:** June 1, 2013

**Project period:** August 2011 to June 2013

**Goals of the project:** The ultimate goal of this project was to provide public access to the stretch of the Hutchinson River that borders the Thomas Pell Wildlife Sanctuary. At present the communities nearby have no access to it, and if people cannot access the river, they cannot gain direct knowledge of its condition and grow to love the wildness of this area which is so close to parts of the Bronx. Without that knowledge they will not get involved in its restoration and future care. The immediate goal is to provide plans for a practical canoe-kayak launch site giving access to the river.

**One-paragraph summary of the project:** First we visited existing canoe-kayak launch sites in Bronx parks. This allowed us to draw up a list of criteria of what constitutes a good launch site. Using maps, Google Earth photographs and our own knowledge of the area, we drew up a list of possible launch sites which might meet those criteria. Eleven sites were visited and photographed from the land and from the water, at both high and low tide. With the help of the experienced engineers of Laing Associates, we chose the three of those sites that seemed most practical for development. Laing Associates then drew up plans for development of these sites, including parking and access to utilities. In the fall of 2012 public meetings were held at Co-Op City and on City Island, two nearby communities, to get input from possible users of these sites.

**Course of action:** The work described was carried out by five members of the Hutchinson River Restoration Project (HRRP) with the help of an environmental engineering contractor, B. Laing Associates.

A. Preparation of a QAPP. Before starting work on any portion of the study a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) had to be drawn up for review and approval by NIEWPCC, HEP and EPA Region 2. This was done by Laing Associates, with our help.

B. Study of existing launch sites In the fall of 2011 the HRRP launch site study team visited seven existing canoe and kayak launch sites in Bronx parks. From our examination of these sites, we drew up a list of criteria for judging the suitability of any new sites. These criteria were:

1. Access by vehicle, foot and public transportation.

2. Proximity to users' population centers
3. Wetland type and quality
4. Shoreline slope and composition.
5. Shelter from wind/wave action.
6. Man-made hazards, if any.
7. Proximity to high-quality natural resources (birding, fishing, vegetated wetlands. etc.)
8. Access to potable water, electricity and toilets.

A summary report of this study of existing sites, with photographs, was prepared and is attached to this report.

C. Study of possible Hutchinson River launch sites. With these criteria in mind, in the winter of 2011-12 we started exploring possible launch sites along the Hutchinson River. Initially we had five sites in mind, but on examining Google photographs and maps we ended up examining a total of eleven possible sites. They were visited and photographed from the land and, as soon as navigation became possible, from the water, at various states of tide, by the HRRP team and by engineers of Laing Associates. A report on these possible sites, with photographs, was prepared and is attached to this report.

D. Site selection and planning. With the help of the consultants, three sites that seemed particularly practical for development were chosen. Two of them are in Pelham Bay Park, and one of them is on land owned by the RiverBay Corporation which runs Co-Op City. The engineers of Laing Associates then drew up tentative plans for development of these sites, including access roads, parking and boat storage racks. These plans are included in the attached report on possible new launching sites.

E. Community interaction. The HRRP launch site study team contacted local kayak and canoe clubs to solicit their input and invited them to participate in the study. Using available forms of media, the Hutchinson River community was informed of the project and invited to local meetings where their requirements and desires would be recorded. Meetings were held at Co-Op City and City Island. At these meetings results of the survey of the sites and tentative plans for development were presented by the HRRP team and Laing Associates. The presentations given at the community meeting are attached.

**Accomplishments:**

The following is a list of accomplishments and documents generated in the course of the completion of this project:

Preparation of Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)

Survey of existing sites

Survey/analyze candidate sites

Preparation of selected launch sites preliminary designs

Presentations at:

Bronx Parks Speak Up: Feb. 25, 2012 and Feb. 23, 2013

Bronx Council of Environmental Quality: Mar. 14, 2012

Co-op City (RiverBay): Apr. 2, 2012

City Island Fairs: June 2 and 3, 2012 and Sept. 8 and 9, 2012

City Island Chamber of Commerce: June 26, 2012

City of Water Day: July 14, 2012

Grace Episcopal Church, City Island: Sept. 14, 2012

Co-op City Fair: Sept. 15, 2012

Community Board 10: Sept. 24, 2012

Community Study Conclusions Presentations at Co-op City and City Island

Presentation of study conclusions

**Evaluation:** While HRRP had initially proposed that only one site would be selected and a preliminary design developed, ultimately three sites (from the eleven surveyed) were judged worthy of consideration for construction of a canoe/kayak launch site enabling access to the Hutchinson River—two in Pelham Bay Park and one in Co-op City. As a result of the presentation in Co-op City (10-9-12), we have obtained the interest of the RiverBay Corp. and members of the community, as well as that of Assemblyman Michael Benedetto. As a result of the presentation on City Island (10-17-12), we have continued to maintain the interest of the administrator of Pelham Bay Park, Marianne Anderson, as well as local residents

**Lessons learned:** One difficulty encountered that was worse than anticipated was dependence on weather and tide in exploring the sites. This was made worse by unexpected difficulty in getting an appropriate boat. Only one business on City Island rents outboard motorboats and its proprietor will not allow his boats to be taken up the Hutchinson River. To get an appropriate boat thus meant getting one from some distance and bringing it over the day before we used it. We actually have our own boat, a traditional wooden Whitehall skiff with an electric motor named the Anne Hutchinson, but it is small, slow and delicate. It got hard use during this project and required much repair this spring.

It was also unexpectedly difficult to get canoe and kayak users to actually help in this project. When spoken to individually they would express great interest but very few turned up at our meetings.

Finally, the politics of getting funding to actually build a site seems to be a bigger problem than coming up with a viable design for one.

**Pictures:** All pictures shown in various reports are the property of HRRP and are available for use by NEIWPC. Most of the reports and photo will be available on the HRRP web site [www.Hutchinsoriverrestorationproject.org](http://www.Hutchinsoriverrestorationproject.org).

**Attached Materials:** The following is a list of the attached material

Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)

Primary access study poster

Existing site survey report

Candidate sites image

Candidate sites analyst with selected launch site's concept designs report

Community presentations

HRRP Project introduction

Consulting Engineer's selection and design concepts presentation

Study summary presentation

Various image, handouts etc generated to solicit community support

E-mail for interested parties

E-mail requesting responses

General e-mail to HRRP mail list

Store poster for Co-op city meeting 10.9.12

Store poster CI meeting 10.17.12

General email meeting notice of community meetings

Dept of Parks community meeting invitation