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Parks & Recreation**

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To: NY/NJ HEP Habitat Workgroup
From: Marc A. Matsil, Chair, HEP Habitat Workgroup
Date: December 3, 2001
Subject: Minutes from the November 13, 2001
HEP Habitat Workgroup Meeting, Hudson River Foundation

Next meeting: Wednesday, December 12, 2001
10.00 am – 2.00 pm
Hudson River Foundation Conference Room, 9th floor

Present at last meeting:

Bob Alpern (NYC DEP), Al Appleton (RPA), Steve Barnes (Baykeeper), Bernard Blum (FOR), Wei Chan (NYC Parks), Susannah Cox (NYC Parks), Charles de Quillfeldt (NYS DEC), Aleksandra Dobkowski (US EPA), Francis Dunwell (NYS DEC), Frank Eadie (Sierra Club), Evelyn Fetridge (NYC Parks), Cindy Goulder (EL), Eugenia M. Flatow (CAC, NYCSWCD), Len Houston (US ACOE), Dee Jensen (Hudson River AHRI), Paul Katzer (NYC Parks), Hadas Kushnir (NYC Parks), Paul Mankiewicz (NYCSWCD), Marc Matsil (NYC Parks), Dan Montella (US EPA), Joyce Novak (NYC DEP), Bob Nyman (US EPA), Eugene Peck (URS), Lisa Rosman (NOAA), Manuel Russ (CAC/DEP), Eric Scherer (Hudson River AHRI), Christina Scully (NYC Parks), Mike Stringer (Baykeeper), Carolyn Summers (NRDC), Jim Tripp (Environmental Defense), Christopher Zeppie (PA NY&NJ).

Items requiring further action:

Mitigation Ratios (Nancy Niedowski, NYS DOS)

CCMP Objective H-1: Develop a comprehensive regional strategy to protect the Harbor/Bight watershed and to mitigate continuing adverse human-induced impacts.

CCMP Objective H-3: Manage coastal development

CCMP Objective H-4: Manage shoreline and aquatic habitat modifications

CCMP Action H-4.4: Ensure that actions impacting habitat in the Harbor core area, in the aggregate, result in a net increase in the acreage and quality of aquatic habitat, where feasible and appropriate. Emphasize key habitat types such as submerged aquatic vegetation.

CCMP Action H-4.2: Ensure regulation of proposed actions involving less than one acres of fill in freshwater wetlands.

References provided by Joy Zedler (National Academy of Science, University of WI):

- 1) National Academy of Science website summarizing their findings concerning mitigation and wetland reconstruction: <http://www.national-academies.org/webextra/wetlands>

Handbook for Restoring Tidal Wetlands, CRC Press 2001

- ❑ **Beneficial reuse of dredge and rock material and other opportunities:
Emergency Action/WTC and Hudson Raritan Estuary Program Update**
 CCMP Objective H-1: Develop a comprehensive regional strategy to protect the Harbor/Bight watershed and to mitigate continuing adverse human-induced impacts.
 CCMP Objective H-10: Complete ongoing research and initiate special studies on habitat issues.
 CCMP Objective H-12: Develop and implement plans to protect and restore significant coastal habitats and impacted resources.
 CCMP Action H-3.4: Identify projects and issues requiring regional cooperation; facilitate cooperation.
 CCMP Action H-4.4: Ensure that actions impacting habitat in the Harbor core area, in the aggregate, result in a net increase in the acreage and quality of aquatic habitat , where feasible and appropriate. Emphasize key habitat types such as submerged aquatic vegetation.
 CCMP Action H-11: Identify significant coastal habitats warranting enhanced protection and restoration.

- ❑ **Lower Raritan River as area of Special Concern—Proposal to Habitat Workgroup from Lower Raritan Watershed Management Area Steering Committee (Steve Barnes, Baykeeper NY/NJ)**
 CCMP Action H-11.4: Identify and protect locally significant habitats in the Harbor core area.

- ❑ **Update on Acquisition and Restoration Progress for NY (Marc Matsil, NYC Parks)**
 CCMP Action H-11.4: Identify and protect locally significant habitats in the Harbor core area.
 CCMP Objective H-12: Develop and implement plans to protect and restore significant coastal habitats and impacted resources.
 CCMP Action H-12.5: Identify and facilitate implementation of habitat acquisition and restoration projects.

- ❑ **Targets and Goals for the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program (Bob Nyman, EPA)**

HEP is presently developing public-friendly targets and goals to aid the implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The goals have been developed with both the public's perspective and the CCMP in mind. They are to obtain access to, stewardship of, navigable and fishable waters. Goals range from short-term to long-term and culminate with the 400th Anniversary of Henry Hudson, a point by which a World Class Harbor Estuary should be attained. All of the HEP workgroups are contributing to the development of targets and goals, and will be considered at the November Management Committee meeting. The formal signing/adoption of targets by Governors and Administrator is scheduled for the first quarter of 2002. Bob Nyman (EPA) presented the section most relevant to the HEP HWG, the "Habitat and Ecological Health" in order to obtain feedback and suggestions.

Carolyn Summers (NRDC) raised the issue of imminent Arthur Kill dredging and its relation to these new targets and goals. Nyman responded that it is part of the navigability section. Navigability takes dredge material management, sedimentation prevention and beneficial reuse of dredge materials into account.

Marc Matsil (NYC Parks) suggested adding nutrient reduction and *Zostera* establishment to HEP's goals, in conjunction with ACE deepening projects. Matsil also

requested that a provision for overlapping categories be added. Navigability issues often affect habitat quality. Each category is not in and of itself; overlap is common.

Nyman responded that he would like to hear from DMMIWG for the navigability area. He also expressed interest in modeling the document after the Hudson River and Long Island Sounds' programs. Frances Dunwell (DEC) offered advice on modeling after the present HRF's document.

Jim Tripp (ED) recommended making annual or at least biannual targets with regards to deepening projects given the potential for damage over short periods of time. Nyman responded that a more specific, multi-year work plan will be adopted. Al Appleton (RPA) warned that the HEP process should not confuse planning processes by, for example, adding controversial navigability goals that interfere with the CPIP process. Matsil stated that mitigation is another issue to include since dredging will occur in HEP priority and adjacent areas. Mitigation that addresses lost ecological and functional use, as well as compensation for restoration already conducted (i.e. oil spill damage restorations, NYS Bond Act restoration projects) is a likely course of action. He mentioned Joy Zedler's (National Academy of Sciences) mitigation document as a reference.

Appleton began discussion about deciding which ecosystems to restore. He favors a view of the overall estuary as a system of linked ecosystems. Thinking of restoration in terms of the quantity and quality of habitats is an old fashioned way of looking at things. Barnes stated that this has been done by the HWG. Len Houston stated that quantity and quality are important determinants for habitat productivity whether it be acquisition or restoration. Houston continued that purchasing small, isolated tracts is not nearly as ecologically effective as purchasing or restoring larger tracts of land adjacent or connected to other natural areas. Matsil responded that most of the HEP acquisition and restoration priorities adhered to these principles as criteria for selection. Matsil recommended that language be adapted from the USFWS's *Significant Habitats and Habitat Complexes of the New York Bight Watershed*, as has already been adopted through the HEP process. Appleton also suggested that language discussing threats be included. Paul Mankiewicz (NYCSWCD) agreed stating that priority for acquisition should be based upon threat, distribution and acreage and added that the HEP HWG has already done most of this.

Summers recommended that the goals be articulated to express the importance of preserving critical, core habitat. Steve Barnes (Baykeeper) suggested that this had been done and reminded everyone to read the HEP HWG Status Report. Lisa Rosman recommended developing a table organized by watershed to show progress. Rosman and de Quillfedlt both stated that they would like to keep the Arthur Kill and Jamaica Bay watershed goals separate. Al Appleton recommended that language for wetland preservation go beyond stating a "no net loss" goal.

Dunwell recommended focusing on resources with both ecological and anthropogenic importance. Matsil suggested tying that into swimmability and fishability; perhaps using oysters and *Zostera* as indicator species, which means, in essence, we will never swim these waters. Discussion about bringing back healthy oyster populations ensued. Mike Stringer (Baykeeper) volunteered to draft language specifically tied to this subject area. Dunwell recommended characterizing habitat to protect key species throughout their life cycles.

❑ **Dredging the Arthur Kill (Carolyn Summers, NRDC)**

Summers raised the HEP HWG's attention to the imminent dredging of the Arthur Kill. The environmental impacts will include altered bathymetry, increased wading and wave action, tug activity, and erosion. In addition, the salt marsh restoration funded with money from the Exxon damages account and monitored since 1993 will be dredged out and/or destroyed by erosion. This restoration is now the longest-term, continuously monitored urban site in the nation. No mitigation is proposed for the loss of this unique scientific site and data collection center. Summers questioned whether or not certain issues, such as coastal erosion and resulting loss of habitat, had been addressed yet and if the dredging project was even necessary. She additionally suggested that the mitigation package be improved, for she feels it is currently unsatisfactory and does not address the impacts. Len Houston responded that the EIS review period is already finished. The ACE already decided that it is a viable project. Some of the not-for-profit and CAC participants of HEP decided to draft a letter to go on record as being against this action.

❑ **Seamless Habitat Map (Susannah Cox and Paul Katzer, NYC Parks)**

Marc Matsil began by describing the Seamless Habitat Map which proposes to record present restoration, research and monitoring activities, with their associated protocols to assist the QA/QC process. Matsil introduced Paul Katzer, NRG GIS Manager (NYC Parks) who began by describing the watershed mapping approach he employed in beginning the Seamless Habitat Map. Instead of using a municipality based watershed approach, a regional view of the Harbor Estuary was created by using surface-water data sets developed by the EPA and the US Geological Survey.

Nyman suggested that delineation of watersheds be done in conjunction with other habitat workgroups so that overall watershed decisions are made. Bob Alpern said that it is vital to list the methodology involved in identifying watersheds and added that it should be in sync with the CALM methodology. He pointed out that Hydroqual has watershed boundary information also.

Summers said that the islands cannot be a watershed onto themselves as represented on the watershed map. Staten Island for example feeds into two different watersheds; the Arthur Kill and Raritan Bay. She saw a similar problem with Manhattan. Since it is so engineered, it is difficult to determine watershed delineation, but something can be done. She recommended giving non-political names to watersheds also.

Flatow wants to get signage for the watersheds to teach the public the importance of watersheds and what watersheds they live in. Barnes suggested breaking the watersheds down into sub-watersheds.

Susannah Cox (NYC Parks) demonstrated how the Seamless Habitat Map could be made into an interactive Internet tool. Each watershed will have links, which show current ecological projects, habitat images, along with monitoring protocols, results and contact information for those projects. The format will be PDF downloadable and available to all. Matsil emphasized it is crucial to emphasize methodologies and research/monitoring protocols, as well as length of studies. They must adhere to the QA/QC protocols that are useful. This standardization will foster data exchange, that may be useful. Several workgroup participants (Flatow, Barnes, Alpern, Nyman)

requested to know how much this project would cost and expressed interest in getting this project up and running. Katzer volunteered to work on an estimate including software, development, and NRG staff salary. Agenda items from this meeting that were not covered will be addressed at the next meeting scheduled for 12/12/01.
