

**South Shore Estuary Reserve Council
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

November 13, 2007

Long Island Maritime Museum, West Sayville, New York

Chair: Maureen Dolan Murphy

Vice-Chair: Allan Aronoff

CAC Members Present: Allan Aronoff (Brookhaven League of Women Voters); Pam Burford (Fire Island Association); Hank Dam (Suffolk Alliance of Sportsmen); Ed Davis (Great South Bay Audubon); Maureen Dolan Murphy (Citizens Campaign for the Environment); Linda Freilich (Sierra Club); Lesley Kane (Islip Town Leaseholders Association); Joe Kayal; Dave Schaper (NY Seafood Council); Ben Sohm (South Shore Bayhouse Owners Association); Florence Sharkey (Brookhaven Baymen's Association); Dave Thompson (Trout Unlimited); Rich Troy (South Bay Cruising Club); and, Rob Weltner (Operation SPLASH).

CAC Members Absent: Mastic Beach Property Owners Association; Peconic Baykeeper; South Shore Audubon Society; Students for Environmental Quality; South Shore Waterfowlers

South Shore Estuary Reserve Staff Present: Jeff Fullmer (Director); Lou Siegel (Science Coordinator); and, Clare O'Reilly (Program Administrative Manager).

Guests Present: Paul Breschard, Pattersquash Creek Civic Association; Bob Cizek; Karen Gauconnier, Long Island Maritime Museum; and, Don Harris, Operation SPLASH;

1. Introductions

M. Dolan Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. CAC members and guests introduced themselves.

2. Approval of CAC Meeting Minutes

L. Kane motioned to approve the September 11, 2007 meeting minutes. A. Aronoff seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. Reports

SSER Office Report

J. Fullmer updated the CAC on Reserve office activities since the last meeting:

- The Reserve Council met on October 2, 2007 at Dowling College in Oakdale. The meeting was recorded for webcasting, and the SSER website has a link to the state website where the meeting recording is available. The Reserve Office also has a copy of the recording available on CD. Video recordings are posted to the Department of State website 24-48 hours after the meeting, and are available to the public on the website for 30 days before they are archived.
- Following the Council meeting on October 2, there was a public stakeholder engagement meeting related to the Great South Bay Ecosystem-based Management demonstration project. Reserve Office staff assisted with the facilitation and planning of the meeting, and focus groups which

followed the meeting held in late October and early November. Meetings were well attended and participants provided good input, which will be used as the basis for further development of the draft plan. A second open stakeholder engagement meeting is scheduled for December 13, and the discussion will focus on input generated during the previous meetings.

Some CAC members reported watching the recording, and asked if the recording is transcribed. The Reserve Office will inquire if transcripts are available.

- The third annual Reserve Council Stewardship Award was presented on the “Day on the Bay” Reserve partner boat tour on September 21 aboard the *Lauren Kristy* operated by Captain Mike Eagan South Bay Cruises. Over 100 Reserve partners attended the boat tour. In addition to the Stewardship Award, Reserve stewardship certificates were presented to volunteers who participated in a derelict vessel cleanup of “Wreck Cove.” This volunteer partnership was the result of efforts by 2006 Stewardship Award winner Wilfred Kleisler to bring attention to this area.
- The South Shore Bayway Strategic Implementation and Marketing Plan Advisory Committee met with project consultants on November 8. CAC member J. Kayal will provide an update on the meeting and project progress later in the meeting.

Reserve Office staff reported on the following office activities related to watershed management plans and water quality issues:

- An educational brochure was finalized by the Town of Islip with assistance from the Reserve Office as part of the implementation of the Browns River/Greens Creek Watershed Management Plan. The brochure will be distributed to watershed residents by the Town of Islip.
- Reserve Office staff was invited to attend a press event on September 20 along the banks of the Brown’s River in West Sayville organized by Peconic Baykeeper to launch the 2007 Baywatch report. The report focused on the impacts of stormwater runoff and used Greens Creek as a case study, and was included in several local newspapers as an insert.
- The Beaver Dam Creek Watershed Advisory Committee met for the first time on October 18. Staff from the technical consultant, Nelson Pope and Voorhis, attended and presented information to advisory committee members, and proposed goals and objectives. The next step in the watershed plan development is a public outreach meeting to gather additional information.
- The Reserve Office received a draft report and maps prepared by Bowne AE&T, the technical consultant for the Drainage Infrastructure Mapping Assessment and Inventory project. The office is currently reviewing the report.
- The Western Bays Water Quality Workgroup met on September 26. Several articles related to the Western Bays were distributed to CAC members at the meeting. The work group reported on their activities at the October 2 Council meeting, and the Reserve Council passed a motion requesting that the Reserve Office write a letter to the NYSDEC Commissioner and EPA Regional Director informing them of the need to advance TMDL development for the Western Bays.

Reserve Office staff reported on the following activities related to the restoration of diadromous fish habitat:

- Data collection for the barrier assessment project described at previous meetings has been completed by Nelson Pope & Voorhis. A draft report is forthcoming for review by Reserve Office staff and members of the Diadromous Fish Work Group.
- Reserve Office staff attended the annual Carmans River Partnership Meeting on November 7, where installation of the fish ladder on the Hards Lake Dam spillway in Southaven County Park was discussed. Information about aquatic invasive species issues in Upper and Lower Lake and opportunities for acquisition of open space was also presented.
- Reserve Office staff attended a meeting of regional watershed partners to provide comments on Reserve priority species as part of the NYSDEC Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

Reserve Office staff report on the following education and outreach activities:

- The South Shore Estuary Learning Facilitator (sSELF) is underway in eight schools, and with the Great South Bay Buddies and Operation SPLASH. The groups have been provided with equipment and are trained in monitoring for several water quality factors. The groups are monitoring tributaries that feed into the bays, whereas most sampling data currently available is from the open bay areas. Sampling is conducted every two weeks. The Town of Hempstead Laboratory has agreed to work with the program to conduct analysis of some samples. Data will be submitted to the Reserve Office to be compiled. Depending on the level of activity among the groups, a quality assurance/quality control component of the program will be developed. A presentation about the program was given to a graduate class at Dowling College, and pictures from the program will be uploaded to a webpage on the Reserve Council website.

L. Freilich suggested developing a central database for the data collected, and L. Siegel replied that eventually one will be made available on the Reserve Council website. A central database for water quality monitoring data has been previously discussed with Reserve partners. R. Troy suggested using a blog for uploading the data.

H. Dam asked how the monitoring protocol arrived at a two week interval. L. Siegel replied that it was arbitrary, and that eventually the sampling periods will switch to gather data from the opposite tide cycle. H. Dam suggested this interval may not document water quality after a large rain event. L. Siegel replied that groups were educated about “first flush” events, and encouraged groups to collect samples after large rain events.

- The Reserve Office is still preparing and distributing stewardship certificates, and updating the webpage on the Reserve Council website as they are presented. CAC members are encouraged to submit nominees.

R. Troy suggested that nominees for the annual Stewardship Award who did not receive the award should be presented stewardship certificates as a recognition of their past stewardship activities. The CAC Chair suggested that the Stewardship Award subcommittee should discuss and consider..

- The Reserve Office is still collecting and compiling responses to the survey distributed by the Formal Education Work Group to local educators. The Reserve Office will schedule a meeting of the work group soon.

- Reserve Office staff conducted a beach clean-up at the Jones Beach Fishing Piers at Zach's Bay on September 29. The clean-up was part of the International Beach Clean-Up Day coordinated locally by the American Littoral Society, and was held on National Estuaries Day. In addition to the general public, cleanup volunteers included local Boy Scout Troops, and students from Suffolk County Community College.

Council Report

M. Dolan Murphy reported on the October 2 Council Meeting:

- As mentioned in the Reserve Office report, the Council adopted a resolution requesting that the Reserve Office prepare a letter to the NYSDEC Commissioner and EPA Regional Director informing them of the need to advance TMDL development for the Western Bays.
- The CAC's report to the Council included a discussion of the islands surrounding Captree State Park as a possible Bayway destination. While the islands themselves do not meet the criteria for becoming recognized Bayway destinations, Islip will work with the Islip Town Leaseholders Association to incorporate historic information about the islands into signage. The project consultant team for the Bayway Strategic Implementation and Marketing Plan has recommended that the islands should be recognized as an "area of special interest" because of their unique qualities, and therefore will be included in future Bayway interpretive materials.
- The Council passed a resolution to become the formal place-based partner for the Oceans and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council. M. Dolan Murphy reported that this is exciting news because the Reserve Council is the first in the region to formally embrace this partnership.

L. Freilich reported that there are several programs on EBM on National Public Radio (NPR,) are available via their website. D. Thompson asked what the is the definition of EBM. CAC members and Reserve Office staff suggested a definition of EBM as a holistic approach to natural resource management that looks at the ecosystem as a whole, including humans, rather than focusing on individual species. J. Fullmer reported that feedback from the stakeholder engagement meetings suggests that people have a challenge fully understanding EBM as it is defined by state law, and it is important that those involved have a clear understanding of EBM in order for it to move forward. M. Dolan Murphy added that an important part of EBM is bringing state agencies together to coordinate and plan in a holistic manner. B. Sohm added that another important part of EBM is that it is based on unbiased scientific research. H. Dam suggested that previous management approaches claim to be based on science but political aspects tend to dictate management objectives. M. Dolan Murphy suggested that the CAC continue to discuss EBM at future meetings.

Self Study Work Group Report

M. Dolan Murphy reported that the Self Study Work Group met prior to the October 2 Council meeting. The group reviewed draft bylaws provided by the Reserve Office that were partly based on the CAC's Charters, Policies and Procedures. The group discussed the draft bylaws in depth and decided to meet again to further develop the bylaws before presenting them to the Reserve Council. Topics for further development include a process to revise and amend the CMP.

Stewardship Award Presentation Report

M. Dolan Murphy and P. Burford reported on presentation of the Stewardship Awards to Trout Unlimited and Charlie Balsamo on the Reserve Partner Boat Tour. The presentation went well, and recipients were also presented with proclamations from a member of the State Assembly and Islip Town Council

members. Stewardship certificates were also presented to the Wreck Cove derelict boat clean up participants as reported earlier. The Stewardship Award program is growing, and CAC members were asked to begin thinking about nominees and categories for next year's award. Applications for 2008 will be distributed at the next CAC meeting. CAC members thanked P. Burford for serving as Stewardship Award Subcommittee Chair.

Pump-out Boat Report

The Town of Brookhaven recently held a press conference announcing the success of their pump-out boat program this year. Currently, Hempstead and Babylon are the only towns in the Reserve without pump-out boats. CAC members asked if boats that sit in marinas can be visited by the pump-out boats, and R. Troy replied that they can be if the boat is called. Concerns were expressed about the lack of pump-out boat presence at marinas and non-working land-based pump-out stations. Pump-out boat seasons were extended voluntarily by pump-out boat operators this year. B. Sohm reported that the Town of Hempstead enforced hooking houseboats up to municipal sewer systems this summer.

4. Update on Western Bays

M. Dolan Murphy reported that Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE) and Operation SPLASH recently developed a position paper on the Western Bays as a result of the work of the Western Bays Water Quality Work Group, documenting what has been accomplished so far and recommendations for how to continue to address pollution problems. The paper calls for \$1 million in state funding to prepare a TMDL for nitrogen and pathogens. The paper recommends consolidating Nassau County's south shore sewage treatment plants and upgrading the Bay Park facility so there is only one plant with treated effluent discharging into the bays. The paper also calls for a feasibility study to construct an ocean outfall pipe. The paper recommends upgrading the Jones Beach plant, and connecting the outfall to the Cedar Creek outfall pipe so effluent is discharged into the ocean instead of Hempstead Bay. Several newspaper articles regarding this topic were distributed to CAC members at the meeting.

R. Weltner commented that the proposed plan has been developed for several years, and that it is the best plan environmentally and economically. He also reported that Citizens Campaign and Operation SPLASH have started a Save the Western Bays Coalition, which includes local businesses, chambers of commerce, and civic associations. He asked that CAC members take a look at the report.

R. Troy asked if the paper is available on the internet, and M. Dolan Murphy replied that it is available on CCE's website along with a press release, video from Newsday, and a photo album touring the Western Bays.

R. Troy asked if the report was given to NYSDEC, and suggested that they should be contacted for possible Clean Water Act funds which may be used to fund this plan. R. Weltner replied that it was distributed to NYSDEC officials, and hopes that the report will generate enough pressure on elected officials to put the plan in place.

L. Freilich said that the Sierra Club would like to be involved, and that they may have grant funds to support the coalition's work.

J. Fullmer replied that he expects to receive a response from EPA to the Council's letter regarding a TMDL for the Western Bays. NYSDEC is a cooperative partner of the work group and is in support of moving forward with preparations for developing TMDLs for the western bays. EPA approval is necessary for adopting a TMDL. J. Fullmer suggested that the CAC consider inviting the EPA to a meeting in the future to discuss their role in TMDL development. A TMDL will allocate how much and what type of pollutants can enter the water bodies from various sources, including sewage treatment

plants which may need to be upgraded to meet waste load allocations determined by the TMDL. L. Freilich said that Sierra Club may be able to support a grant writer to apply for funding sources.

B. Sohm suggested that in the future, treated sewage water should be recharged into the groundwater with sand acting as a filter, rather than discharging into the bays or the ocean. This option had been previously explored but was halted when Federal funding was lost. M. Dolan Murphy suggested that plants should be upgraded first before this option is further explored.

5. Bayway Advisory Committee

J. Kayal reported that the Bayway Advisory Committee had its third meeting on November 8. Dodson Associates presented an outline of interpretive themes for the Bayway, which included descriptions of the themes, categorized destinations and connectors in these themes, and potential destinations. The outline also included descriptions of several areas of special interest as described earlier in the meeting.

Smith and Jones presented three sketches of potential visual identity logos. The group reached consensus on one sketch for further refinement and development. Committee members suggested that a brief identity statement should be crafted to clearly define and convey what the Bayway is to the public, and after discussion the group came up with suggestions for the statement. Smith and Jones and committee members are currently refining the statement, and further iterations of a visual identity will consider this statement. CAC members expressed support of visual identity development to help promote and market the Bayway, and to encourage stewardship and appreciation of the Reserve's natural resources.

6. Discussion: Great South Bay Ecosystem-Based Management Stakeholder Meetings

M. Dolan Murphy asked if CAC members had attended the October 2 public stakeholder engagement meeting or the focus groups, and several indicated that they had. CAC members were informed that there will be a second public stakeholder meeting on December 13 to review what feedback had been provided at the earlier meetings.

M. Dolan Murphy and J. Fullmer reviewed the background of the Great South Bay EBM demonstration project. J. Fullmer indicated that he was aware that some questions regarding the Nature Conservancy's role in the demonstration project had been raised.. He explained that Nature Conservancy was contracted by the New York State to assist the Oceans and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council in developing EBM demonstration projects for two pilot areas in the Great South Bay and Sandy's Creek, a tributary of eastern Lake Ontario. Great South Bay was identified in state legislation as a demonstration area partly because of the active and successful work being done there as part of the South Shore Estuary Reserve. The Nature Conservancy was asked to help prepare a draft EBM management plan for Great South Bay due to their scientific expertise, and their experience and ongoing implementation activities in shellfish and seagrass restoration work on the Bluepoints Bottomlands in Great South Bay and as a member of the Reserve Council. A summary of progress on the draft management plan was distributed to participants prior to the stakeholder and focus group meetings. Focus group meetings were held to ensure that the plan is reflective of stakeholder vision, priorities and concerns.

Eventually, EBM will be implemented on a statewide basis. The Great South Bay demonstration project is an opportunity for the Reserve to incorporate principles of EBM in CMP implementation activities, and what is learned in this project can be applied to other parts of the estuary. A report on the EBM demonstration projects is due to the Governor and State Legislature in November 2008, and a report on implementing EBM on a statewide basis is due in 2009.

Discussion followed:

- How much funding is dedicated to EBM? M. Dolan Murphy replied that approximately \$5 million has been dedicated by the State Legislature in 2007 , with a portion of it funding the Great South Bay demonstration project.
- Can local governments apply for EBM funding? M. Dolan Murphy was not sure if that was possible now, but local governments may be eligible to receive funding for implementation activities and scientific research as Reserve partners.
- CAC members expressed concerns that statements presented in the summary document were not based on unbiased science, and did not recognize the importance of commercial fisheries like the Reserve CMP does.
- CAC members thought it was a good idea that the focus group meetings were tape recorded so that participant feedback was captured accurately and in the context of the conversation.
- Overall, CAC members found the stakeholder meetings to be beneficial.

M. Dolan Murphy reminded CAC members that the next Oceans and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council Meeting was scheduled for December 10 in New York City, and that the meeting will be webcast on the OGLECC website.

7. New Business

D. Thompson informed CAC members of an aquatic invasive species water quality issue in Upper and Lower Lake on the Carmans River. Homeowners near Upper and Lower Lake scheduled a closed meeting to discuss the application of herbicide to control the aquatic invasive species. D. Thompson expressed concern about not considering other options for managing the problem, such as dam removal, and the impacts that herbicide application can have in the whole Carmans River watershed and beyond in the Reserve. D. Thompson wanted to make sure that other CAC members were aware of this issue. M. Dolan Murphy suggested that aquatic invasive species and how they are dealt with should be discussed more at a future CAC meeting, as it could be a Reserve wide problem.

M. Dolan Murphy presented other possible topics for the CAC to explore at future meetings, including a pilot oceans observer program being developed as part of EBM to document bycatch on fishing boats. M. Dolan Murphy asked if this is a significant problem on fishing boats currently, and D. Schaper and F. Sharkey indicated that there is an observer program in place. Other topics include presentations on the stormwater mapping inventory and assessment project, the barrier assessment project, a TMDL for the Western Bay with a representative from EPA, potential impact of climate change on the Reserve, and dam removal.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.