

FINAL

July 26, 2006 Restoration Work Group Meeting Minutes
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, USEPA Region 2 office – 290 Broadway, Room 2728D

Restoration Opportunities Report and Comprehensive Restoration Plan

- Main feedback received to date on the Restoration Opportunities Report was that the document lacked a cohesive approach to identify restoration sites. The report was revised with comments received from Tierra Solutions, OMR-NJDOT, NOAA, and USACE. The revised Restoration Opportunities Report will be posted in early August on ourpassaic.org.
- USACE and NJDOT (with the Partner Agencies) will develop the Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP) consistent with approach for the Hudson-Raritan Estuary (HRE) and HRE-Hackensack Meadowlands Basin. CRP document will be a tool for stakeholders to use.
- The final joint-integrated Feasibility Study report will include both the CERCLA RI/FS and the WRDA restoration.

USACE/NJDOT Presentation on CRP and Table 3-2 Restoration Actions

- Removing Floatables – PVSC (active) and USACE (inactive) collection programs and “Drift Removal Programs” need to be enhanced. PRC mentioned that municipalities did pass resolutions to continue drift removal programs.
- The CRP will provide the “State of the Watershed,” outlining existing conditions and restoration actions that will comprehensively restore the watershed that can be taken by the Partner Agencies or by others. The Passaic CRP will be consistent and rely on efforts of the HRE CRP that will be developing a “mosaic of new and existing habitats that provide the ecosystem services values by society.”
- General goals –how will we know if we achieved goals? We need measurable quantities or metrics to evaluate the achievement of project goals.
- Sequencing considerations – timing of remediation and restoration, locations, and opportunities for earlier near-term action. Near-term actions can take place in locations that are not influenced by the final remedy.

Participant Discussion on Restoration

- PRC explained previous issue of obtaining title for land below Mean High Water; “riparian rights.” PRC noted that it is possible to obtain a waiver where the State gives rights to the Municipality. *Action Item –Begin dialogue with Tidelands Commission and identify ways to streamline the process and minimize costly fees for public restoration improvements. One suggestion was to establish a “District” within the Lower Passaic River that would result in waivers.*
- NJDEP and PRC discussed Paradise Island and the memorial bought by Clifton. PRPs were evaluating the creation of a wildlife sanctuary (wetland restoration) near Dundee Dam and Paradise Island. PRC indicated that NJDOT leased land to Clifton and potential negotiations with the PRPs for the restoration project have been delayed.
- PRC mentioned a bank stabilization report (developed under the 1986 WRDA program). Report included a three-phased approach for developing a

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- greenway/walkway along the Lower Passaic River. Most of projects completed or in their second phase. These walkways extended from Dundee Dam to Kearny Point.
- NJDOT discussed opportunities to control/mitigate storm water runoff using green development principals, such as green roof restoration and rain gardens. These types of opportunities were discussed in WMA4 meeting minutes and relayed from dialogue with Andy Willner. These green programs would be opportunities for near-term actions. Increased educational opportunities through improved access and bringing communities to the river would also be critical near-term actions.
 - Participants Discussed: Passive Park versus Recreational Facilities. Land use adjacent to river should complement the goal of river access. Recreational facilities located on upland waterfront sites should have unrestricted public access and should have a river-oriented recreational component (e.g., bike trails, bird watching, boating access, etc.). Environmental and human use: coupled usage is the way to go.
 - Newark Bay and Passaic River are eligible for park redevelopment under Green Acres – Bond act through NJDEP (budget \$100-200M for 8 years). To acquire land (in some cases develop), the Counties/Municipalities may have to provide matching funds. There was a suggestion for the Green Acres program to place a higher priority on the development of parks. *Action Item – Need to have participants of NJDEP Green Acres program in restoration planning opportunities.*
 - Bergen county parks – potential improvement or habitat restoration – see 1986 WRDA report (Pogan Associates). Bergen County parks have erosion projects – these areas may also allow restoration opportunities through the concept of greenway connections.
 - Field Sampling Plan, Volume 2 (FSP2) sampling should include tributary data collection to support WRDA restoration – allows for restoration within tributaries. PRC suggested sampling First River where exposed (with the intent of proposing an alternative that would “daylight” some of the enclosed sections of First River). In addition, the Cooperating Parties Group representatives indicated that they will be sampling the tributaries for chemical characterization for the risk assessment in a phased approach.
 - Comments on handout (Table 3-2 Restoration Actions) due by end of August – will post handouts on ourpassaic.org.
 - NJDOT noted that as a result of the Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment Workshop held in December 2005, the belted kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) was as an ecological receptor for the Project’s upcoming Risk Assessment and is also a beneficiary of potential restoration actions. NJDOT relayed that the partner agencies conducted preliminary field activities for 8 days during the spring nesting season of the belted kingfisher. The partner agencies (representatives from OMR, USACE and NOAA) took the opportunity during the short nesting

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window to collect information that would aid in the development and refinement of FSP 2 for implementation in spring 2007. The activities followed SOP 28 (in the FSP 2) and identified kingfisher burrows and habitat suitability within much of the 17 miles and small segment within the major tributaries (Second, Third and Saddle River). During the field effort, the burrows did not contain active nests and most had mammalian inhabitants (e.g., groundhogs). This activity will be discussed at the next work group meeting regarding FSP 2 comments. A report is forthcoming.

Restoration Vision Map

- A draft of the project's vision for restoration on the Lower Passaic River was presented. The map includes nominated upland/riparian restoration sites and proposed restoration actions. Map will be posted on ourpassaic.org.
- *Action Item – Gather other town master plans for redevelopment and land use planning (build consensus with municipalities) and add areas as potential restoration opportunities.*
- Habitat restoration and the addition of wetland fringe should be a “coupled use” component with as many restoration sites (e.g., public access site, recreational fields, parks, etc.) as possible.
- Restoration opportunities need to also consider navigational (commercial and recreational) use of river. The future use of the river is a critical factor in influencing remediation and restoration of the river. The agencies will be reaching out to the municipalities to ensure that their future visions and plans are incorporated. This first step will take place at the September 27, 2006 meeting with the municipalities led by PRC through the USEPA TAG grant.

Reference Site Selection for FSP2

- Discussion was initiated in this restoration work group meeting and was then was continued in the Sampling Work Group Meeting from 1:00- 3:00 PM.
- The Mullica River was designated as a reference site for FSP2. Additional reference sites were discussed in order to include all three salinity gradients (freshwater, transitional, and brackish) and multiple habitat types. The Mullica River has most habitat types without the contamination.
- We must balance the need to obtain necessary quantitative data for restoration planning and performance metrics at reference sites and excessive costs. *Action Item- Develop a matrix identifying all data needs, habitat types, and potential reference sites.*
- Once potential reference sites have been identified, a literature review should be conducted to determine existing data at each site.
- Available reference site data must be comparable based on methodology in order to maximize usage in restoration planning activities and utilize for design and performance metrics.