

# CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO THE SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE COUNCIL

## **Draft CAC Meeting Minutes**

November 10, 2020

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

### Present:

Maureen Dolan Murphy, Chair CAC/Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Jeremy Campbell, NYS DOS/Reserve Coordinator  
Judi Bird, League of Women Voters Brookhaven  
Rich Groh, Town of Babylon  
George Costa, Trout Unlimited/Art Flick Chapter  
Artie Kopelman, Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI)  
Alexa Marinos, Town of Babylon  
Robert Grover, Great South Bay Audubon  
Rachel Neville, NYS DOS/Reserve Office  
Emily Hall, Seatuck Environmental Association  
Christopher Gobler, SoMAS/Gobler Laboratory/Center for Clean Water Technology  
Lou Siegel, NYS Marine Education Association  
Maureen Dunn, Seatuck Environmental Association  
Arielle Santos, Seatuck Environmental Association  
Adrienne Esposito - Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Rob Weltner, Operation SPLASH  
Sally Kellogg, NYS DOS/Reserve Office

### **1. Introductions**

M. Dolan Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

### **2. Presentation: Summer of 2020: State of the South Shore Bays**

C. Gobler presented on water quality in the SSER. Water quality is changing, nitrogen levels are increasing, and HABs can change from week to week. High nitrate levels in drinking water is associated with increased risk of some cancers. Studies show that nitrogen is coming from wastewater. There were a variety of different harmful algal blooms across Long Island, including brown tide, rust tide, and others. Hypoxia was observed in Fire Island inlet this summer for one week. There were reported fish kills in Oakdale and West Shinnecock.

An invasive seaweed, *Dasysiphonia japonica*, was first detected on Long Island in 2019 and again in summer 2020 which was found throughout the South Shore. Excess nutrients and CO<sub>2</sub> enhance the growth rate of the invasive species which is problematic since nitrogen loading and coastal acidification is prevalent on the South Shore.

Current onsite wastewater systems leach Nitrogen in the ground water and surface waters. On average it can be 100 mg/L but has been observed up to 200 mg/L while other areas in the country have average levels of 60 mg/L. The new wastewater systems the Center for Clean Water Technology is developing have goals of costing less than \$10,000, reducing Nitrogen to under 10 mg/L and will last for 30 years. There are 3 designs (lined, unlined, and a sand filter) that are currently being tested.

The Shinnecock Bay Restoration Program has planted approximately 4 million adult clams in West Bay. Hard clam landings for the Bay have drastically improved since the start of the project in 2012 and have surpassed Great South Bay landings. The occurrence of Brown Tides has declined, and water quality has improved since the start of the project.

### **3. Seagrass: What can the CAC do to advance Seagrass Stewardship?**

J. Campbell recapped that between 2002 and 2018 the SSER has lost 50% of the seagrass while showing the maps from the DOS information gateway. However, one of the new eelgrass beds can be seen by the new inlet and other gains are in western Moriches Bay. A goal of the SSER program is to increase stewardship of the seagrass in the SSER.

M. Dolan Murphy poled the CAC, do you think people know the difference between seagrass versus Seaweed? A few CAC members replied yes but the rest disagreed. M. Dolan Murphy then posed, how can we get members of the public to be Seagrass Stewards? J. Campbell suggested the SSER office make outreach materials, encourage citizen science, and develop a social media campaign. M. Dolan Murphy asked the group if materials were created would they be willing to distribute, and members agreed.

Question: L. Siegel: Can we create a facebook page?

Answer: J. Campbell: SSER website was recently updated, let us focus on working with the resources we have.

Question: M. Dolan Murphy: Is anyone working on any kind of seagrass campaign?

Answer: A. Kopelman suggested an SAV survey be added to the Long Island Wildlife Network Survey when the website is live.

R. Groh: A connection needs to be made between eelgrass beds and increased water quality. Additionally, surveys need to be conducted annually and the public should be encouraged to report algal blooms.

M. Dunn: Eelgrass is greatly affected by temperature which should be noted.

M. Dolan Murphy asked R. Weltner if SPLASH volunteers would be interested to survey for seagrass in the spring when out on the bay. R. Weltner said he did not think it would be an issue, Operation SPLASH will do what we can to help. The coverage is from Nassau/Queens border to Western Suffolk County.

J. Campbell shared that the SSER office is creating an SAV gateway story. L. Siegel noted that people in the Western Bays have a negative opinion of seagrass because it is considered a

smelly mess. R. Groh commented that the public confuses seaweed and seagrass. G. Costa reminded the CAC that seagrass had historically been used as fertilizer.

#### **4. Jeremy Campbell, South Shore Estuary Reserve Office**

J. Campbell announced the SSER newsletter had been distributed earlier in the month and that the SAV gateway story creation will begin soon. He recapped the October 2020 Council meeting and summarized the meeting topics: Bay Park Conveyance project, Suffolk County Reclaim Our Water update including the Subwatersheds Wastewater Plan and Septic Improvement Program, LINAP progress, SAV including NOAA findings and TNC SAV workshop summary, and CAC and TAC reports.

#### **5. Public Comment/Announcements**

**Maureen Dolan Murphy** – The Bay Park public meeting will be November 12, 2020. The vote on the contractor by Nassau County legislature is November 23, 2020.

**Jeremy Campbell** – Sunrise wind project virtual open house is on November 16 at 6:30 pm. M. Dolan Murphy volunteered to distribute the announcement to CAC members. The SSER 2020 Estuary Day presentation and SSER Council meeting presentations is available here: <https://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/sser/>. It was also mentioned that SSER staff participated in A Day in the Life in 2020.

**Lou Siegel** – Noted the passing of Larry Swanson.

**Rob Weltner** – Typically Operation SPLASH conducts 400 trips annually but 340 were managed in 2020. This year had the most garbage collected since Sandy. A new SPLASH boat is being built which should be ready to launch in the spring of 2021.

**Lane Smith** – Sea Grant is hosting virtual seminars, November 10 featuring aquatic invasive species and November 19 topic is the NYC East River fish database. Lane will share the link.

**Rich Groh** – Town of Babylon held a poster contest to raise awareness of plastic waste in the waterways which is sponsored by Winter Brothers. Winners to be announced shortly.

**George Costa** – Trout Unlimited had its first meeting since March, the traditional childrens programming has been limited given the COVID 19 restrictions. The A Day in the Life of a River program continued this year despite children not being able to participate in person.

**Artie Kopelman** – CRESLI and DEC will be collaborating to host a facebook live seal walk event at Cupsogue Beach but the date is still TBD, a Cupsogue Beach seal walk will also part of the First Day hikes program. Seal walks begin this upcoming weekend.

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.