

# South Shore Estuary Reserve Council Meeting

October 14, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

## Draft Minutes

### Attending:

#### **NYS Department of State, Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure**

Kisha Santiago-Martinez, Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure, representing  
NY Secretary of State Rossana Rosado  
Mike Snyder

#### **South Shore Estuary Reserve Office:**

Jeremy Campbell  
Sally Kellogg  
Rachel Neville

#### **Council Members:**

Alison Branco, representing The Nature Conservancy  
Dorian Dale, representing Suffolk County Executive, Steven Bellone  
Maureen Dolan Murphy, representing Reserve Council Citizens Advisory Committee  
Joe Febrizio, representing City of Long Beach Acting Manager, Robert Agostisi  
Peter Fontaine, representing Town of Brookhaven Supervisor, Edward Romaine  
Dan Fucci, representing Nassau County Executive, Laura Curran  
Rich Groh, representing Town of Babylon Supervisor, Richard H. Schaffer  
Stephen Koester, representing Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor, Joseph S. Saladino  
Lane Smith, representing Reserve Council Technical Advisory Committee  
Carlie Schect, representing Town of Islip Supervisor, Angie Carpenter  
Tara Schneider-Moran, representing Town of Hempstead Supervisor, Don Clavin  
Marty Shea, representing Town of Southampton Supervisor, Jay Schneiderman  
Tom Wilson, representing SUNY School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, Dean Paul Shepson

#### **Council Advisors:**

Cassie Bauer, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, representing Commissioner Basil Seggos

#### **Guests/Other Interested Parties:**

Nick Barbarello, Town of Islip  
Michael Bilecki, Fire Island National Seashore, NPS  
Terry Blitman, Long Island Maritime Museum  
Chantal Collier, The Nature Conservancy

Kathleen Fallon, NY Sea Grant  
Corey Humphrey, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District  
Artie Kopelman, Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI)  
Joyce Novak, Peconic Estuary Partnership  
Diedre Ryan, Town of Islip

#### **Presenters:**

Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Dan Fucci, Nassau County  
Scott Sanderson, US Army Corps of Engineers  
Peter Scully, Suffolk County  
Angela Sowers, US Army Corps of Engineers

Sue Van Patten, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
Valerie Whalon, US Army Corps of Engineers  
Ken Zegel, Suffolk County Department of Health Services

### **Welcome and Introductions**

10:06 am Meeting called to order.

**K. Santiago-Martinez** greeted attendees and noted accomplishments made since the last SSER Council meeting including but not limited to the SSER CMP update, the beginning of construction for Bay Park Conveyance Project, completion of the Nassau County South Shore Blueway trail additions, and congratulated Suffolk County on the progress made with the septic improvement program and the DEC environmental excellence award signifying this work. She then thanked all council members for the work they have done and continue to do.

### **South Shore Estuary Reserve Office Report**

**J. Campbell** reminded members that the CMP public comment period ends December 6, 2021. Comments can be emailed with "SSER CMP Update" in the subject line to [sser@dos.ny.gov](mailto:sser@dos.ny.gov) or mailed to Jeremy Campbell, Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Office, c/o New York State Department of State, Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure, One Commerce Plaza, 99 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12231. He also noted some SSER office accomplishments including the SSER newsletter, Alewife surveying, monitoring for Horseshoe Crabs, participation in A Day in the Life of a River, facilitating Estuary Week, and organizing an annual Beach Clean-up.

### **Nassau County Back Bays Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement**

US Army Corps of Engineers presented the tentatively selected plan for the Nassau County Back Bays draft integrated feasibility report and environmental impact statement. The purpose of the study was to determine the feasibility of a project to reduce coastal storm risk in the back bays of Nassau County while contributing to the resilience of communities, critical infrastructure, and the natural environment. It is important that the plan work for all constituents who will be impacted by the plan. Currently, feedback is being solicited from the public and any comments should be sent by email: [PDPA-NAP@usace.army.mil](mailto:PDPA-NAP@usace.army.mil) or by mail: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Planning Division, Wanamaker Building, 100 Penn Square E. Philadelphia PA 19107. Comments will be accepted until October 18, 2021. Study webpage: <https://www.nap.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Nassau-County-Back-Bays-Study/>. Comments will be reviewed and analyzed to see if revisions are needed.

The tentatively selected plan incorporates non-structural practices which will elevate 14,183 residential structures and floodproof 2,667 Industrial/Commercial Structures with an initial cost of over \$3.8 billion but cost could change/decrease as the plan is refined. This plan would result in a remainder of 40% residual risk. The structural measures that were evaluated include floodwalls, inlet storm surge barriers, levees, seawalls, revetments, and beach nourishment but only floodwalls and levees will continue to be analyzed. Inlet closures alone were only able to reduce flooding in the study area by 1 foot. Alternatives using storm surge barriers/interior bay closures reduced flooding elevations within the study area but significantly increased flooding by 2 – 4 feet outside of the study area. Storm Surge barriers were ruled out because of high cost and they only moved the problem. Ongoing analysis includes natural and nature-based features, like marsh restoration, which will provide additional coastal storm risk mitigation while improving ecosystem services. Healthy saltmarsh ecosystems could be a cost-effective method and provide long-lasting benefits with few to no negative impacts to surrounding areas. The project is slated to be fully reviewed by June 2023. See presentation for further details.

R. Groh asked how the wind load will be addressed for properties that are being elevated? S. Sanderson replied that there will be further analysis on the potential risks of wind. A. Sowers encouraged all Council members to review, participate, and provide recommendations to the plan.

#### **Nassau County - Nitrogen Reduction Update**

**D. Fucci** briefed the council members on updates since the last meeting. Nassau County has initiated a septic system replacement program for residents and small businesses – Septic Environmental Program to Improve Cleanliness (SEPTIC). The SEPTIC program will provide grant funding to eligible recipients to replace a conventional or failing septic system with an innovative and alternative onsite wastewater treatment system. Nassau County is offering grants up to \$20,000 for homeowners or small businesses to install state-of-the-art nitrogen reducing septic systems. Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District is administering the program. Thus far, there have been 103 applicants, there are 5 installer agreements in place. For more information, contact: [SepticReplace@nassaucountyny.gov](mailto:SepticReplace@nassaucountyny.gov) or call 516-364-5861. The South Shore Conveyance Project is underway. D. Fucci recapped that microtunneling will be used and excavation pits are being installed for this purpose. Completion is scheduled for 2024. Lastly, the County is working on a 9 Element plan with DEC/LINAP and the Gobler Institute, fertilizer reduction and nitrogen bioextraction are also being investigated. The plan should be complete at the end of 2021 depending on workloads.

#### **Suffolk County – Reclaim Our Water Update**

**P. Scully** provided an update to the Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative. The pandemic delayed progress but in April 2021 federal infrastructure funds were received to implement the projects. Forge River and Carlls River projects are moving forward toward construction at no cost to homeowners, 5,755 cesspools and septic systems will be removed. A new sewer district at Calabro Airport was recently approved and construction will begin in November 2021.

K. Zegel presented on Septic Improvement Program (SIP) which was launched in 2017. Base grants are for \$10,000 from Suffolk County with additional opportunities available. Approximately 70-80 applications are received per month with a slight spike during the pandemic. Total funding allocated from 2017-2021 from the County is \$21.7 million with \$20.1 million allocated from New York State Septic System Replacement Program (SSRP). A total of 862 SIP and SSRP funded projects have been completed as of September 16, 2021. The grant review/scoring process was amended to reprioritize for public health & safety concerns, to reprioritize failing/failed septic systems, and to protect drinking water areas. The sanitary code amendment went into effect for applications submitted on or after July 1, 2021 and requires innovative and alternative onsite wastewater treatment systems (I/A OWTS) be included for: new construction, expanded single-family residence or new other construction project if that date. Exemptions include if the building will be connected to a sewer or if an addition is small enough to not affect the current septic system capacity. Currently, 7 I/A OWTS are approved for use but additional systems could be approved soon. All systems continue to perform well. See presentation for further details.

#### **NYS Department of Environmental Conservation – Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan**

**S. Van Patten** described LINAP, a governor's initiative that focuses on partnerships, partners at every level including federal agencies, state, counties, academia, estuary programs, not-for-profits, and other stakeholders. The goals of LINAP include assessing nitrogen pollution in LI waters, identifying sources, establishing nitrogen reduction endpoints, and developing implementation plans. Current initiatives were described. LINAP is working with the estuary programs to make messaging for similar programs simpler for the public to use and understand. The bioextraction initiative is funded through Long Island Sound Study (LISS), the sugar kelp pilot project looks at using kelp as fertilizer, and the ribbed mussel pilot project will analyze how much nitrogen was taken up by cultivated mussels. Additionally, there is an RFP

that went out in September 2021 to look at the economic feasibility of commercial bioextraction for industries that don't already exist. A seaweed symposium will be held in 2022. The Solute Transport Model that started with the Peconic Estuary will now expand to the entirety of Long Island using LISS funding. The project will add historical/legacy nitrogen to give managers better information for making decisions, but model scenarios will only be for LISS. USGS recently published study delineating groundwatersheds for Long Island and determining groundwater recharge areas, travel times and outflows to streams and embayments. Sue encouraged council members to sign up for the LINAP newsletter and to email [Lwaterquality@dec.ny.gov](mailto:Lwaterquality@dec.ny.gov) with any questions.

R. Groh asked if there are temperature restrictions for the bioextraction pilot projects? S. Van Patten replied that the growing season was the winter and harvesting was done in May because of physical onsite restrictions. See presentation for further details.

### **Fire Island Wastewater Management Plan**

**A. Esposito** provided background to the Coalition for Fire Island Wastewater Solutions which was formed in 2018 with the purpose of identifying a comprehensive approach to wastewater management on Fire Island. The Coalition was founded by Citizens Campaign for the Environment and Legislator Steven Flotteron but is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders ranging from government entities at all levels, nonprofit organizations, and other interested entities. A. Esposito described the nitrogen related issues for Fire Island. Currently there is only one sewage treatment plant located in Ocean Beach servicing 575 residents but there are 3,600 residents using outdated septic systems. The water table in Fire Island is very high, close to the surface, making drainage difficult during storm events and rising sea levels are exacerbating this issue. According to USGS, 80% of septic systems on Fire Island drain to the SSER which is 6% of the Nitrogen load to the system. Additionally, for most Fire Island communities there is no system in place to pump out overflowing septic systems. To combat the wastewater issue, several solutions have been identified. Ocean Beach sewage treatment plant (built in 1921) is being upgraded and expanded. The upgrades will allow 700 additional homes to be connected to sewers. However, sewers are not feasible for the rest of Fire Island but Suffolk County approved funding for a Fire Island wastewater solutions Planning and Engineering study which will assess conditions and identify potential solutions. The County is in the process of creating a contract, it will take 12-14 months for the study to be complete. See presentation for further details.

### **South Shore Estuary Reserve - Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**

**L. Smith** described the accomplishments of the TAC. Using the draft CMP, a management action plan for SAV is being finalized by the SAV subcommittee. The current TAC chair and co-chair terms conclude at the end of December with the next term beginning January 2022 for the newly elected chair, Tara Schneider-Moran, and co-chair, Kathleen Fallon. J. Campbell thanked Lane Smith and Corey Humphrey for their leadership of the TAC.

### **South Shore Estuary Reserve - Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)**

**M. Dolan Murphy** recapped CAC activities. Virtual meetings are bi-monthly with presentations including but not limited to restoration work done on Canaan Lake, Terrapin monitoring and management work, menhaden fishkills, and findings from a study looking at microplastics in the Patchogue River. CAC members have increased efforts to promote safe and responsible human and wildlife encounters given the increased outdoor recreation over the past year. Efforts to encourage debris cleanup have also been increased. The next meeting will have DOS present on the draft CMP and USGS present on the recently published study delineating groundwatersheds for Long Island and determining groundwater recharge areas, travel times and outflows to streams and embayments.

### **Approval of Minutes from Meeting on October 21, 2020**

**Motion** by Tom Wilson to approve October 21, 2020 council meeting minutes, seconded by Rich Groh; carried.

**Council Member Updates and Roundtable Discussion**

**Rich Groh, Town of Babylon** worked with Save the Great South Bay to install a marine debris collection device on the Carlls River. Additionally, the park at town hall was connected to an existing sewer system utilizing Suffolk County funding.

**Jeremy Campbell, South Shore Estuary Reserve** encouraged council members to visit the new website.

The meeting adjourned at 12:44.

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