

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO THE SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE COUNCIL

Final CAC Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2022

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present:

Maureen Dolan Murphy, Citizens Campaign for the Environment/Chair CAC
Rob Weltner, Operation SPLASH/Vice-Chair CAC
Jeremy Campbell, NYS DOS/Reserve Coordinator
Alexa Annunziata, Peconic Bay Keeper
Judi Bird, League of Women Voters Brookhaven
George Costa, Trout Unlimited/Art Flick Chapter
Dorian Dale, Suffolk County
Alli DePerte, Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMCS)
Maureen Dunn, Seatuck Environmental Association
Kathleen Fallon, Co-Chair TAC/NY Sea Grant
Rich Groh, Town of Brookhaven
Suzy Goldhirsch, Fire Island Association
Emily Hall, Seatuck Environmental Association
John Hall, Save the Great South Bay
Corey Humphrey, Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District
Lesley Kane, Islip Town Lease Holders Association
Sally Kellogg, NYS DOS/Reserve Office
Artie Kopelman, Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI)
Bob Mozer, Speonk Remsenburg Civic Association
Arielle Santos, Seatuck Environmental Association
Tara Schneider-Moran, Chair TAC/Town of Hempstead
Lane Smith, NY Sea Grant

1. Introductions

M. Dolan Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Introductions were made.

2. Meeting Minutes Approval

May 11, 2021 Minutes

Motion by J. Bird to approve; seconded by L. Kane; carried.

July 13, 2021 Minutes

Motion by M. Dunn to approve; seconded by J. Bird; carried.

September 14, 2021 Minutes

Motion by A. Kopelman to approve; seconded by J. Bird; carried.

November 9, 2021 Minutes

Motion by L. Kane to approve; seconded by G. Costa; carried.

January 11, 2022 Minutes

Motion by M. Dunn to approve; seconded by A. Kopelman; carried.

3. Funding Update – NYS Budget

SSER Line item. M. Dolan Murphy provided update on Governor's budget which had increased the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to \$400 million, \$100 million more than in previous years. However, the SSER line item stayed at the current level of funding, \$900,000. A letter was sent to the Senate and Assembly advocating for an increase to \$5 million. The Senate and Assembly budgets should be announced imminently and then a final budget must be reconciled by April 1st. At the current level for the SSER program there is no funding available for implementation projects.

Bond Act Funding. It is highly probable the \$4 billion dollar Bond Act will be on the ballot in November.

Question: How can we have access to the federal funding that the other estuary programs have?

Answer: SSER is not a national estuary program which is a requirement to receive funding from the national estuary program. Long Island Sound and Peconic Estuary are designated as national estuaries.

Comment: The SSER was not included in the national estuary program because 1-the national estuary program had reached its funding capacity when the SSER was formed and 2- the SSER stakeholders at the time were not interested in the additional procedures and oversight that would have been required to be undertaken if the SSER was included in the federal program.

Comment: There is federal funding available to the SSER and stakeholders but not through the national estuary program. Other federal funding is being used to better the SSER, for example, the Fire Island to Montauk Point project and many others, which is federal money.

4. TAC Seagrass Report

T. Schneider-Moran introduced herself as the new TAC chair and provided background on her work within the Town of Hempstead. She noted the first TAC meeting was in February where the draft Seagrass Action Plan document was presented.

C. Humphrey presented the Seagrass Report (draft Seagrass Action Plan) noting that seagrass was chosen as a focal topic because of it unified interests of the TAC members. He then noted the subcommittee members and thanked them for their contributions. The document identified the benefits of eelgrass as improving coastal resiliency, improving biodiversity and

habitat, contributes to the sequestration of carbon, contributes to the local economy and improves water quality. Threats to seagrass were also noted and include but are not limited to climate and change, sea level rise, poor water quality, loss of habitat, physical disturbances (like prop scars from boats), and biological threats. The current status of seagrass was also described in the plan and a summary of current efforts to improve seagrass proliferation. See slides for additional details.

Question: What are some of the success stories for eelgrass restoration?

Comment: The Town of Brookhaven completed an eelgrass restoration effort with grant funds received from SSER. That project was completed in December 2021 in Bellport Bay and Moriches Bay. Stony Brook University and Cornell Cooperative Extension are engaged in restoration projects, Shinnecock Bay has also had expansion in eelgrass meadows.

Comment: Tampa Bay used eelgrass as a measure of successes as they implemented water quality improvements and their eelgrass meadows have expanded.

Comment: Eelgrass is returning near the inlet.

5. SSER Updates

SSER Eelgrass Sign. R. Groh described eelgrass in Bellport Bay in the 1960s and 70s and contrasted with today. He noted the public is unfamiliar with eelgrass so there was an effort to create a sign to raise awareness. Town of Babylon and NYS DOS staff worked together to create the draft sign. The sign will be shown to the municipalities within the SSER and can be printed by sign shops for placement at appropriate places.

Comment: People don't know what "marine habitat" or "carbon sequestration" means

Comment: A trifold pamphlet could compliment this effort. Additionally, the post could be broken down into multiple social media posts and sent to members to share/post.

Seal Walks (CRESLI). A. Kopelman observed there has been an increase in seal disturbances in the 2021 to 2022 season, 12 out of 30 trips had visual disturbances with drones being particularly problematic. He also noted significant beach erosion which has been forcing seals to beach at different locations than in the past.

Dolphin/Whale Strandings (AMSeas). In 2022 there have been 17 whale strandings which is typical however in 2021 there were less strandings than compared to the last 3 or 4 years. Dolphin strandings have been steady through 2022 however there has been an increase in vessel strikes of sea turtles and whales. AMSeas is also offering first responder trainings, anyone interested in hosting a training session or joining one should contact Alli Deperte adeperte@amseas.org.

Alewife Monitoring (Seatuck). E. Hall provided information for Alewife survey. The training webinar is being held on March 9, 2022 at 5pm and registration is still open. Additional

information can be found here: : <https://seatuck.org/volunteer-river-herring-survey/>.
Additionally, fish projects are moving forward for the Mill River, Swan River and Carmans River.

Suffolk County Climate Resiliency Project. D. Dale described the new Suffolk County initiative which has the goal of finding realistic and implementable concepts and solutions that will make the County more resilient. This effort is funded at \$200,000.

6. Jeremy Campbell, South Shore Estuary Reserve Office

The SSER office is still addressing CMP comments. J. Campbell will be presenting at the Fire Island National Seashore science conference in April on the 2002-2018 Seagrass Change mapping project.

7. Public Comment/Announcements

Maureen Dolan Murphy – The 2022 May meeting may be in person.

John Hall – Save the Great South Bay has Creek Defender cleanups coming up this spring. See [website](#) for more details.

Lesley Kane – Islip Town Leaseholders Association will have clean up events on April 30th and May 1st.

Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District – Envirothon will be on April 27, 2022. Registration is open for students and winners will receive a \$500 scholarship. For more info: <https://www.longislandenvirothon.org>

Maureen Dunn – Penataquit Creek Clean up April 9th <https://seatuck.org/penataquit-creek/>

Tara Schneider-Moran - Look for and register to join upcoming beach cleanups: <https://hempsteadny.gov/366/Events> To register for the March 27 clean up: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/town-park-at-point-lookout-beach-cleanup-tickets-290812065717?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.