

South Shore Estuary Reserve Council Meeting

October 25, 2022, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
West Sayville Golf Course
200 Montauk Highway, West Sayville, NY

Final Minutes

Attending:

South Shore Estuary Reserve Office:

Jeremy Campbell, representing NY Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez
Sally Kellogg

Council Members:

James Browne, representing Town of Hempstead Supervisor, Don Clavin
Dorian Dale, representing Suffolk County Executive, Steven Bellone
Eric J. DeGrottolo, Representing Town of Islip Supervisor, Angie Carpenter
Joe Febrizio, representing City of Long Beach Acting Manager, Donna M. Gayden
Peter Fontaine, representing Town of Brookhaven Supervisor, Edward Romaine
Dan Fucci, representing Nassau County Executive, Bruce Blakeman
Rich Groh, representing Town of Babylon Supervisor, Richard H. Schaffer
Robert Grover, representing Great South Bay Audubon
Maureen Dolan Murphy, representing Reserve Council Citizens Advisory Committee
Tara Schneider-Moran representing Reserve Council Technical Advisory Committee
Marty Shea, representing Town of Southampton Supervisor, Jay Schneiderman

Guests/Other Interested Parties:

Judi Bird, Brookhaven League of Women Voters
Alexandra Caputo, Town of Babylon
Adrienne Esposito, representing Reserve Council Citizens Advisory Committee
Kathleen Fallon, New York Sea Grant
Greg Gaxiola, Town of Babylon
Corey Humphrey, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District
Bob Mozer, Adopt a Pond Project/resident
Enrico Nardone, Seatuck Environmental Association
Sue Van Patten, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Anthony Valentino, Town of Babylon

Presenters:

Barbara Kendall , NYS Department of State, Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure
Steve Schott, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

Welcome and Introductions

1:07 pm Meeting called to order.

J. Campbell thanked Suffolk County for hosting. Introductions were made.

Approval of Minutes from Meeting on July 26, 2022 & August 9, 2022

Motion by R. Groh to approve the July 26, 2022 & August 9, 2022 Council Meeting Minutes; seconded by P. Fontaine; carried.

South Shore Estuary Reserve Office Report

J. Campbell addressed SSER accomplishments including the approval of the updated CMP and the press event at Babylon Cedar Beach marina in September 2022. The next step will be the creation of an action plan which will include priority projects put forward by Council members. An SSER job posting was released on October 17 to hire a replacement for Rachel Neville with the expectation for hiring to be complete by early 2023. 2023 will be the 30th Anniversary of the passing of the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Act and the CAC has created a subcommittee to identify potential ideas on how we will celebrate this important anniversary. Additionally, educational materials will be created to elevate the presence of the SSER, outlining what the SSER is, what has been done, and why the valuable resources of the SSER are important to the state. He then provided a funding update. Since 2012 the SSER office has committed more than \$12 million for projects to assist with implementation of the CMP and to provide staffing of the SSER office. Implementation projects include but are not limited to the Blue Carbon Seagrass Restoration, the SSER Local Assistance Grants, Coordinated Water Resource Monitoring Strategy, Nassau County Back Bays match, etc.

A. Esposito asked for a complete list of the 2017 awarded local assistance grants.

Blue Carbon Seagrass Restoration

S. Schott noted this project will address some of the points detailed in the draft Seagrass Action Plan developed by the SSER TAC and will allow for better management and restoration of seagrass. The project goals were outlined:

1. Estuary-wide environmental monitoring. The parameters of interest are water temperature, light availability, sediment characteristics and macroalgae cover/competition. Other suggestions are welcome. There will be a review of sites that had supported eelgrass but no longer do, with a focus on the above characteristics.
2. Development of a restoration Site Suitability Index (SSI) for the SSER to direct future restoration activities. A hierarchical SSI model will be developed for the SSER using existing data (e.g., bathymetry) as well as incorporating the data collected by the environmental monitoring conducted. Primary parameters include water temperature, light availability (% surface or Kd), water depth, sediment characteristics and secondary parameters include distance to inlet, shellfish closure areas, proximity to channels/mooring fields, distance from hardened shorelines, and areas of high human use.
3. Seagrass (eelgrass) restoration: small-scale to test SSI and large-scale at established, successful sites. The restoration greenhouse is being replaced which is critical to project success, the original was built 21 years ago. The greenhouse contains the flowing seawater tanks used to hold eelgrass shoots and seeds.
4. Education and Outreach efforts to improve understanding of the resource and build community support for protection and restoration. Methods to be used include in-school curricula and workshops, and Library Programming, virtual and/or prerecorded lessons, site field trips at CCE's Tiana Bayside Facility, DEI and Bi-lingual education initiative, and a blue carbon social media campaign.

D. Dale asked if there was funding to quantify local carbon sequestration rates? S. Schott replied that NY Sea Grant is funding a project with Brad Peterson from SoMAS that will address that issue.

M. Shea asked if widgeon grass is being researched as a future species? S. Schott noted that while that species is more temperature and salt tolerant it is an annual and is tricky to use for restoration projects. Additionally, it is not a true seagrass, but more information is needed on this topic.

Suffolk County Update

D. Dale summarized that a primary issue in Suffolk County is nitrogen loading. Barrier islands and wetlands are a primary defense against climate change and sea level rise. DEC estimated a loss of 18-36% of tidal wetlands in the Great South Bay from 1974 to 2001. In 2008 the SSER was declared an impaired waterbody. Grant applications have been submitted for habitat restoration work for several locations. To tackle the nitrogen inputs from septic systems, the subwastewater management plan was created and several innovative and alternative onsite wastewater treatment systems have been approved that treat nitrogen. The Fire Island to Montauk Point project predicts 4,000 homes will need to be elevated; 3,500 homes were already elevated with assistance from the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery. The Bergen Point sewage treatment facility is on the south shore and resiliency improvements were implemented to avoid potential weather/climate issues in the future.

B. Grover asked if managed retreat was being pursued to improve resiliency. D. Dale replied that it is a tool the County has.

Nassau County Update

D. Fucci noted that many County projects were spurred by Superstorm Sandy and then provided an update on the Western Bays Initiative. Bay Park has completed Level 1 BNR improvements which reduced nitrogen from 35mg/l to an effluent target of 13 mg/L. Sidestream treatments will remove more than 90% of ammonia-nitrogen and more than 80% removal of total nitrogen, this is complete with performance evaluations underway. The construction techniques for the Bay Park Conveyance project were reviewed. Construction is 40% complete with many projected completion dates in 2023.

The Long Beach Consolidation project is moving along. The bid opened in September 2022, construction should start in 2023 and be complete end of 2025. This project includes wetland restoration activities. The Point Lookout Sewer Collection project will replace Point Lookout's septic systems with a wastewater collection system that is connected to the nearby Nassau County Lido Beach Sewage Collection System. Project benefits include:

- Reduced potential for nitrogen leaks and septic overflow, as well as associated health impacts.
- Increased resilience in response to sea level rise and flooding after storms.
- Increased system reliability.
- Ability to meet future environmental and wastewater compliance limits.
- Ability to meet population growth needs.
- Increased property and recreation desirability.

Additional projects were also outlined. The County completed the SSER local assistance grant which removed invasive waterchestnut from Mill pond. A harvester was later purchased with partial funding from DEC to continue to remove this invasive, target areas are Mill Pond and Massapequa Lake. Seatuck submitted a grant application in late July for final design and construction funding for a fish passage at Mill Pond in Bellmore. An Alaskan Steep pass fishway was installed at Massapequa Lake. Drainage infrastructure mapping is being incorporated onto The Nassau County Geographic Information System and the Countywide nine element plan is forthcoming.

D. Fucci also noted that water reuse options are being pursued. There is the potential for water reuse to be used at Bay Park for industrial uses, and the practice is being used at golf courses for irrigation.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

B. Kendall described the origin and history of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). An LWRP is a comprehensive land and water use plan including an implementation strategy for community's waterfront area. The result is a shared vision for the long-term revitalization of the waterfront. An LWRP includes strategies for addressing critical waterfront issues like community resilience, enhancing public access, improving water quality, revitalizing underutilized waterfront areas, protecting natural and historic resources, and protecting open space and scenic resources. Benefits of developing an LWRP include:

- Increases ability to attract appropriate development – predictability
- Prioritize water-dependent uses
- Establishes long-term partnerships among local government, community- based organizations, and State agencies
- Increases chances to obtain public & private funding for projects

Eligible Activities (2022) for LWRP funding:

- Preparing or Updating an LWRP
- Updating an LWRP to Mitigate Physical Climate Risks
- Implementing an LWRP
- Preparing and Implementing an LWRP Component, including a Watershed Management Plan

A. Esposito asked if seagrass restoration could be an eligible project? B. Kendall said, potentially yes.

South Shore Estuary Reserve - Technical Advisory Committee Report

T. Schneider-Moran summarized accomplishments of 2022. There were 5 meetings in 2022 where the SSER funded local assistance grants have been highlighted at each meeting. Other presentations include an Ocean Acidification (OA) task force update and information on SSER Blue Carbon Project. The TAC has created two subcommittees, the SAV subcommittee and the Coastal Ocean Acidification subcommittee. The SAV Subcommittee developed a draft SAV Action Plan which should move forward for Council review soon. The Coastal Ocean Acidification subcommittee was formed in response to a request from the NYS OA Task Force for sentinel site recommendations for coastal Ocean Acidification monitoring in the SSER and a response was provided. Additionally, a request was made to TAC members to submit a list of priority projects, input on this from the Council is welcome. Lastly, the TAC is working with the CAC and the SSER office to create an SSER summary document.

South Shore Estuary Reserve – Citizens Advisory Committee Reports

M. Murphy announced the first meeting of the SSER 30th Anniversary subcommittee which will be Thursday, October 27 and invited Council members to participate. The Stewardship Award had been on hiatus because of COVID but will resume in 2023. Additionally, the CAC plans to push for increased funding for the SSER program. It was noted that while regional efforts are important, it is necessary to have a list specific local projects when asking for funding. The environmental bond act was also mentioned, and a future CAC presentation will be on boat bottom paints.

Council Member Updates and Roundtable Discussion

M. Shea described that the Community Preservation Fund (CPF) has been extremely successful in the Town of Southampton and encouraged other municipalities to implement their own version. He also recognized some of the challenges other groups might face when trying to create their own CPF.

R. Groh informed the Council of the posting of the previously created educational seagrass signs in various places in the Town of Babylon. Any Council members who would like to install the sign should reach out to him or Sally Kellogg.

J. Campbell noted that future Council meetings will only be in person.

The meeting adjourned at 3:48.