South Shore Estuary Reserve Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

October 4th, 2022, 10:00am – 11:30am
Zoom Meeting

In attendance:

South Shore Estuary Reserve (SSER) Office:
Jeremy Campbell
Sally Kellogg

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Members:
Tara Schneider-Moran, TAC Chair, Town of Hempstead
Kathleen Fallon, TAC Vice Chair, New York Sea Grant

Michael Bilecki, National Parks Service (NPS)
Elizabeth Cole, Long Island Regional Planning Council (LIRPC)
Maureen Dolan-Murphy, Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Maureen Dunn, Seatuck Environmental Association
E. Christa Farmer, Hofstra University
Michele Golden, Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP)
Rich Groh, Town of Babylon
Corey Humphrey, Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District
Artie Kopelman, Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI)
Julia Socrates, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
Steve Schott, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County
Lane Smith, New York Sea Grant
Adam Starke, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Tom Wilson, Stony Brook University SOMAS

Guests
Jim Browne, Town of Hempstead
Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Greg Gaxiola, Town of Babylon
Emily Hall, Seatuck Environmental Association
Sarah Healy, Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP)
Brad Peterson, Stony Brook University SOMAS
Anthony Valentino, Town of Babylon
Karolina Vera, Town of Hempstead

Meeting called to order at 10:04am.

Approval of August 2nd, 2022 Meeting Minutes
MOTION (R. Groh): pass June meeting minutes. Seconded (A. Kopelman). Approved.

Presentation: SSER LAG Project: Salt March Inundation Trends Baseline, Jim Browne, PhD, and Karolina Vera, Town of Hempstead

Data from Onset pressure sensors were collected from 8 locations throughout the Town of Hempstead marshlands. These data were used to provide flooding period observations for the critical vegetation zones as they exist at this time. Data from the local tide gauges were obtained and calibrated to match the times and datum of the loggers. Finally, modeling of flooding periods was started using Python coding. As the project intended to provide data for planning salt marsh management, these baseline flooding periods associated with simultaneous vegetation positions for the local conditions are critical for designing salt marsh restoration projects. The vegetation zones are known to shift with long term changes in sea-level. Therefore, calibrating the existing zonation to local tide gauge readings is critical for understanding vertical filling targets for successful marsh restorations.

SSER Eelgrass Project –Steve Schott and Chris Pickerell, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

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. Sites range from Town of Hempstead to Shinnecock Bay.
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. Site selection is key to productive restoration efforts.
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.

Question: Have you thought to include southern species?
Answer: It is preferable to identify/explore local heat tolerant genotypes before considering bringing anything from out of the region.
Comment: National Parks Service has policies about bringing in genotypes, but this is being examined considering climate change.
Answer: There is a lot of interest globally in this issue, especially for the US east coast where water temperatures are rising twice the global average. The general answer seems to be assisted migration with the first step looking at identifying local warm weather seeds. Additional discussions are still in progress.

SSER Updates: Council Meeting update - Jeremy Campbell, SSER/NYSDOS; SSER CAC updates
J. Campbell announced the adoption of the 2022 CMP by the SSER Council, recapped the September press event and identified next steps which include putting together an action agenda for the SSER.

M. Murphy reviewed previous CAC topics including Town of Babylon implementation projects and AMSEAS efforts. She also highlighted the formation of the subcommittee which will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the SSER. She encouraged members to join the subcommittee and/or promote events. Interested parties should reach out to Maureen and/or Sally.

Discussion on SSER TAC summary document and list of priority projects – Tara Schneider-Moran, Town of Hempstead, Jeremy Campbell, SSER/NYSDOS, Kathleen M. Fallon, NY Sea Grant
T. Schneider-Moran described the purpose of a summary document to help raise awareness of the SSER program. She also encouraged collaboration through the CAC to apply for funding or even support members when asking for funding. A. Esposito noted that a list of future projects and a list of success stories is needed. Also, Citizens Campaign for the Environment is holding a legislative breakfast in the future which will help to inform legislators of the program. J Campbell asked for members to submit potential projects to SSER staff to show a need for funding, additionally the projects could potentially be used in a future action plan. M. Murphy asserted it is critical to demonstrate need when securing funding. Volunteers to help create the document were Maureen Murphy and Adrienne Esposito, anyone interested should contact Sally and/or Tara. A solicitation for projects will be sent to the TAC, CAC, and Council.

Other Business: Partner Updates and Ideas for Future Meetings
J. Campbell, SSER: The next Council meeting will be on October 25, 2022 in person.

M. Bilecki, FINS: Noted that there is an opportunity for someone to put together a lessons learned or outcomes from the 10 year anniversary of Sandy. His last day will be December 26, 2022. A new FINS representative to the TAC has not yet been identified.

E. Hall, Seatuck: Nassau County culvert analysis is complete and can present in the future.

T. Schneider-Moran, Hempstead: There is a feasibility study for aquaculture leasing in the Town of Hempstead for shellfish or kelp. This is at the very beginning stages and a shellfish inventory is the first step. Funding is from LIRPC.

Meeting adjourned at 11:46am.