

South Shore Estuary Reserve Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

February 7th, 2023, 10:00am – 11:30am
Zoom Meeting

In attendance:

South Shore Estuary Reserve (SSER) Office:

Jeremy Campbell
Sally Kellogg
Jackie DeFede

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Members:

Tara Schneider-Moran, TAC Chair, Town of Hempstead
Kathleen Fallon, TAC Vice Chair, New York Sea Grant
Cassie Bauer, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
Derek Betts, Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation
Elizabeth Cole, Long Island Regional Planning Council (LIRPC)
Maureen Dunn, Seatuck Environmental Association
Rich Groh, Town of Babylon
Josh Halsey, Peconic Land Trust (PLT)
Sarah Healy, Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP)
Corey Humphrey, Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District
Mike Jensen, Suffolk County Department of Health Services
Artie Kopelman, Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI)
Maureen Murphy, Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Brendan Newell, National Park Service (NPS)
Steve Raciti, Hofstra University
Brian Schneider, US Geological Survey
Steve Schott, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County
Shavonne Smith, Shinnecock Environmental Department Shinnecock Nation
Adam Starke, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Tom Wilson, Stony Brook University SOMAS

Guests

Jim Browne, Town of Hempstead
Merry Camhi, Wildlife Conservation Society
Alex Caputo, Town of Babylon
Adam Duckworth, Town of Brookhaven
Greg Gaxiola, Town of Babylon
Emily Hadzopoulos, Seatuck Environmental Association
Amanda Kiernan, Town of Brookhaven
Stephen Naham, Town of Hempstead
Bradley Peterson, Stony Brook University SOMAS
Jordan Raphael, National Park Service (NPS)
Kate Robb, Town of Hempstead

Alex Romero, National Park Service (NPS)
Marian Russo, Village of Patchogue
Arielle Santos, Seatuck Environmental Association
Camilo Salazar, Suffolk County
Robyn Silvestri, Save The Great South Bay
Lane Smith, NY Sea Grant
Chris Schubert, USGS
Carlos Vargas, VHB
Don Walter, USGS

Meeting called to order at 10:02am.

Approval of December 6th, 2022 Meeting Minutes

MOTION (Artie Kopelman): pass December meeting minutes. Seconded (Rich Groh).
Approved.

Review Survey Results – Sally Kellogg, SSER

The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the previous year of the TAC. The survey was circulated in December 2022 to all TAC members. There were eleven questions in the survey. Six members submitted feedback. The survey revealed an interest in creating a new subcommittee focused on threatened and endangered species in the SSER, suggested to add AMSEAS as a new member and indicated a preference to proceed with meeting via Zoom at this time.

Presentation: SSER LAG Project: Hempstead Community Oyster Restoration Effort project/Living Shoreline/Oyster Reef project – Steve Naham, Town of Hempstead

The Long Meadow Island Living Shoreline project was one of two SSER grants awarded in 2018. The purpose of the project was to mitigate erosion and enhance biodiversity by establishing oyster reef habitat. It was designed as a creative application for the Town of Hempstead's shellfish hatchery facility. The project was outlined, and the proposed methodology was described. Initial baseline field surveys were completed, spat collector survey was completed, and over 1,600 bags of shell were assembled. Due to delays in the permitting process, this project was unable to be seen to completion before the contract end date and funding had to be returned. The Community Oyster Restoration Effort (CORE) project was an effort to bring community groups together. The goal was to establish a volunteer network, to establish a shell collection program, and to install an oyster bed at Long Beach High School for educational purposes. This project was intended to link to the Long Meadow Island Living Shoreline project as a way of providing the shell material required to create spat on shell sills. In May of 2018, a regular shell collection schedule was initiated in conjunction with local Nassau County seafood businesses. Volunteers assisted in preparing the material for use. The oyster bed at Long Beach High School was completed during the 2018-2019 school year, with the assistance of students and staff, and is still maintained. Neighboring Wantagh School District became interested in working to do something similar on their campus and a second oyster bed was created. The shell collection program is ongoing. Presentation will be shared with TAC members.

Q: R Groh: Are the sanctuaries or living shoreline in uncertified waters and are there any problems with illegal harvesting?

S. Naham: The sanctuaries are in uncertified waters and the living shoreline was proposed in a conditional area. There have not been any problems to date. The areas are monitored regularly.

The two campuses are fenced off and have security. Following requirements by NYS Shell Fisheries Bureau, there are also security cameras on site.

Q: M. Murphy: Did the living shorelines project have to be abandoned after having to return the funding? Did you have to return all the funding? Were you able to get any of the project done? Was it DEC permits that held up the project?

S. Naham: Some funds were utilized for baseline surveys that were completed prior to permitting issues with NYS DEC and Army Corps. Since the proper permits were not in place, the living shoreline could not be installed. Still going to continue with the permitting process, but in the meantime, work has been suspended.

Q: S. Smith: How long does the permitting process take? When working on a timeline and with funding constraints, is there a way for the process to be streamlined?

J. Browne- For the original oyster permit, the permit application began before funding was approved. He shared an anecdote that it can take quite a long time. Another grant was recently lost as well. NYS DEC is required to treat all permits the same.

Q: A. Kopelman: In your diagrams, where did mean sea level date come from and how far back did you look?

S. Naham: Used data from USGS tide gauge located in Point Lookout, in the Town of Hempstead's east marina. The data set goes back over 20 years.

Q: R. Groh: Was there any push back from NYS DEC to locate sanctuaries and living shorelines in uncertified waters? If so, how was that addressed?

S. Naham: Certain requirements must be in place to operate in uncertified areas. The two oyster beds associated with the CORE project are on schoolgrounds, with security, cameras and are behind fences and gates. The living shoreline was located in a conditional area. The spat on shell and in bags is historically less attractive to poaching. The results from previous oyster bed projects in uncertified waters were referenced.

Comment: C. Bauer: The regional tidal wetlands staff are handling the permits. Division of Marine Resources cannot comment on why permits are being held up nor on the delays, but the issue will be discussed with regional staff members to identify issues and speed up the process in the future.

Comment: S. Schott: It was noted restoration projects should not be viewed in the same way as construction projects. In most cases, living shorelines are net neutral so that if they fail, they will not make the conditions worse. The overall result benefits the state-owned resource. He affirmed there is a need for a separate process for restorations vs. construction projects, and it needs to be streamlined to minimize risk of losing grants as well as interest from funders.

Patchogue Living Shoreline Project – Carlos Vargas, VHB

The Village of Patchogue is replacing a deteriorating 1,300-foot bulkhead with an innovative living shoreline at Shorefront Park. The project timeline and project phases were outlined. Historic aerial photos were shown displaying a glimpse of the environment in 1947, pre-bulkhead, which featured a natural coastline. Then as a comparison, a 2022 aerial was shown, showing the bulkhead and the erosion landward of it. Several alternative analyses were showcased, including breakwaters, bulkhead replacement, and a structure-free natural shoreline. The living shoreline design will feature a series of rock sills, a newly created salt marsh, transition zone, and bioretention basins. The living shoreline not only increases the resiliency of the shoreline but will also open new habitat for finfish and shellfish who will utilize

this area for breeding grounds and refuge areas. The project broke ground in January 2023 and is currently underway.

Q: C. Humphrey: Are any of the recreational activities of the park going to be compromised by addition of the living shoreline? Will there be any educational signage at the park?

C. Vargas: Park programming, including the Great South Bay music festival, will remain the same. The living shoreline project will be complete by June (Memorial Day), and phase 2, the upland/park improvements, will not begin until the fall of 2023. Part of phase 2 is to create educational signage and increase community involvement.

Q: A. Kopelman: Is water being pretreated before bio retention area?

C. Vargas: The vegetation is filtering out total suspended solids.

Q: S. Naham: How long was your permitting process? Overall budget?

The DEC permits took about 8 months, while the Army Corps permits took roughly 2 years and required multiple revisions with several preapplication meetings. The overall budget was ~\$4M.

Q: T. Schneider-Moran: What was the driving force behind the four revisions of the US Army Corps permits?

C. Vargas: The revisions were technical reviews.

Q: R. Groh: Was there a consideration for potential of sand over wash in placing the rock sills?

C. Vargas: Yes, Village was made aware and is prepared in the event of a large storm or accretion of sand, there is a need for ongoing management of the area. The Village must submit yearly reports to DEC and Army Corps to report on findings on the performance of the living shoreline.

Q: C. Salazar: With Little Creek being open and draining properly to the bay, is it expected that groundwater filtration into the watershed will be reduced with implementation of this project?

C. Vargas: A weir will be installed to help with this potential issue but Little Creek is a future phase of the project and we will be looking at the upper watershed at that time.

SSER Updates: Potential Project list update, SAV Action Plan Approval update, Saltmarsh subcommittee update, Council Meeting update - Jeremy Campbell, SSER/NYSDOS

J. Campbell reminded members that SSER is still collecting potential project lists from stakeholders to show the need for funding and to be prepared for any future funding opportunities. The Saltmarsh Subcommittee had its first kick off meeting last week. The goal is to prioritize a list of saltmarsh restoration projects. Next meeting will be in March. The SSER Council Meeting in January had great success. The Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez, the chair of the Council, was in attendance. Next Council Meeting is April 18th, 2023. SSER is actively looking for options regarding the Action Plan, to aid in the implementation of the CMP.

C. Schubert states USGS is looking to assist with developing an implementation strategy for the CMP, focusing on maximizing outcomes and guiding funding. The goal is to develop a process to detail the steps necessary to achieve the goals of the CMP. Also, to estimate costs of each phase of implementation. The process would use decision analysis to form complex decisions regarding natural resources management. The plan would be to hold workshops to identify stakeholder priorities, then to design a phased implementation strategy based on stakeholder priorities and net benefits. The outcome would be a draft implementation strategy to be

submitted to DOS to be published as one of their projects. The timeline is about 6 months-1 year. Chris or Jeremy can be contacted for more information.

Q: M. Murphy: Do you have any dates for the workshops? Will CAC and TAC be informed?

J. Campbell: No workshops have been scheduled yet, but everyone will be informed of the dates. Workshops may be in-person, zoom, or a combo of both to best increase participation.

M. Murphy gave an update on the SSER CAC. The governor's budget has been released and there is a slight increase in the SSER line item to \$1.55 M. The CAC has completed a sign on letter to request an increase to \$5M. That letter was sent out to assembly and senate leadership and was copied to many senate and assembly leaders on LI. The 2023 Stewardship Award was announced. Updates are in progress to streamline the nomination application with an online form. Additionally, members are encouraged to reach out to Maureen if they know of any high school or college students who are working on projects within the SSER that could present their research at future CAC/TAC meetings.

Other Business: Partner Updates and Ideas for Future Meetings

Next TAC Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 4th, 2023, at 10 am.

M. Dunn announced that registration is open for LI Natural History Conference on 4/28/23.

Registration link <https://seatuck.org/civicism/event/register/?id=2892&reset=1>.

Meeting adjourned at 11:44 am.