

# CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO THE SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE COUNCIL

## **CAC Meeting Minutes**

September 12, 2023

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

Alexa Annunziata, Peconic Bay Keeper

Dorian Dale, Suffolk County

Alli DePerte, Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMSEAS)

Robert DiGiovanni, AMSEAS

Annabelle Dominguez, Peconic Bay Keeper

Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Sarah Healy, NYS DEC/LINAP

George Hoffman, Fire Island Association

Sally Kellogg, NYS DOS/Reserve Office

Arielle Santos, Seatuck Environmental Association

Lou Siegel, NYS Marine Education Association

Matt Sclafani, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

Robyn Silvestri, Save the Great South Bay

Lane Smith, New York Sea Grant

## **1. Introductions**

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

### **Meeting Minutes Approval**

January 10, 2023 Minutes

**Motion** by R. Weltner to approve; seconded by D. Dorian; carried.

May 9, 2023 Minutes

**Motion** by R. Weltner to approve; seconded by D. Dorian; carried.

## **2. SSER Horseshoe Crab Monitoring Network in the SSER**

**M. Sclaffani** provided an overview of Horseshoe Crab (HSC) history and biology. The HSC spawning process was described which occurs in May and June. Next, the benefits of HSCs were outlined. HSCs are harvested as bait for whelk and eels, there is no legal biomedical harvest in New York State. The HSC fishery was regulated starting in 1998 largely due to the birding community who pushed for HSC harvesting regulations. In the 2019 stock assessment, it was found that HSCs in NY were in poor status. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County's Marine Program and NYS DEC together have a citizen

science program called the [Horseshoe Crab Monitoring Network](#) that works with volunteers to monitor spawning activity of horseshoe crabs across Long Island. Trends in each estuary were described. A threat to HSCs is habitat loss.

Question: How many tags are returned?

Answer: There is generally a 7% return on tags which is considered good.

Question: Can you comment on the survival rate of HSCs harvested for biomedical purposes?

Answer: It may be 30% depending on how the organisms are treated after bleeding. However, effects can be sublethal and more research is needed to better understand.

### **3. Rob DiGiovanni, AMSeas Network in the SSER**

**R. DiGiovanni** described the whale strandings that occurred over the last 12 months and noted that there is a lot of variability from one year to the next. 2007 marked a notable increase in strandings. Humpback and Minke whales are the most commonly found species since 2017. Minke for biological reasons and humpback's due to vessel strikes. In 2021 there was a drop in strandings, but this is likely because there were less people out to call in reports. As of 2017 to September 12, 2023 there were 95 strandings. More sea turtle strandings have also occurred in recent years. This has had the effect of making people more aware that sea turtles are on Long Island.

Question: How will offshore wind platforms effect whales?

Answer: Sonar used by offshore wind does not appear to be in a whale's hearing range.

Question: Are there techniques to get whales to avoid shipping lanes? Like loud noises underwater?

Answer: Whales might not be cognizant of neighboring ships during feeding. The ocean is a noisy place, and it is unknown how much of the boats around them they may hear.

Comment: Shipping lanes of commercial goods also contribute to vessel strikes.

### **4. Dr. Artie Koppleman, CRESLI**

Rescheduled to November 2023 meeting.

### **5. Jeremy Campbell, South Shore Estuary Reserve Office**

**S. Kellogg** recapped that the last Council meeting was held in July with presentations from the Town of Southampton on CMP implementation efforts they've made, from DEC LINAP, and an update on the Blue Carbon Seagrass Restoration project from Cornell. Marine meadows workshops in conjunction with the Blue Carbon Seagrass Restoration will be scheduled in the fall. We will keep the CAC updated when dates are chosen. The next Council meeting is October 17 and will be at the Jones Beach Energy and Nature Center. A save the date will be coming out shortly. There will be a press event tomorrow in Patchogue, a ribbon cutting for the Living Shorelines project.

### **6. TAC Report**

The June TAC meeting was a hybrid format and was hosted by the Town of Hempstead's Department of Conservation and Waterways in Point Lookout. The Town discussed their work to inventory the shellfish in Hempstead Bay and assess the feasibility of an aquaculture lease program followed by an update

from Cornell Cooperative Extension on the Blue Carbon Seagrass Restoration Project. In August there were updates from LINAP and about the Ocean Acidification draft report.

## **7. Public Comment/Announcements**

**A. DePerte** announced the Beach Cleanup on September 16 at Lido Beach with Operation SPLASH and Citizens Campaign for the Environment. The last cleanup date will be on October 29.

**L. Siegel** noted that Rob Weltner from Operation SPLASH received an award from NYSMEA. Additionally, a beach clean up was held at Jones Beach on September 9 at Field 10 where 350 pounds of debris was collected.

**R. Sylvestri** reminded members that the State of the Bays series will be on October 20 at The View given by Dr. Chris Gobler. Additionally, on October 21 Save the Great South Bay is partnering with Town of Babylon for cleanup events at Gilgo, Overlook, and Cedar beaches.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27.