

# CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO THE SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE COUNCIL

## **CAC Meeting Minutes**

January 16, 2024

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

### Present:

Maureen Dolan Murphy, Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE)/Chair CAC  
Rob Weltner, Operation SPLASH/Vice-Chair CAC  
Jeremy Campbell, NYS DOS/Reserve Coordinator  
Sally Kellogg, NYS DOS/Reserve Office  
Alexa Annunziata, Peconic Bay Keeper  
Derek Betts, Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Judi Bird, League of Women Voters Brookhaven  
Alli DePerte, Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMSEAS)  
Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Sarah Healy, NYS DEC/LINAP  
George Hoffman, Fire Island Association  
Artie Kopelman, Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI)  
Kaitlin Mattei, Seatuck Environmental Association  
Andy Mirchel, Save the Great South Bay  
Bob Mozer, Citizens Learning Center  
Enrico Nardone, Seatuck Environmental Association  
Arielle Santos, Seatuck Environmental Association  
Lou Siegel, NYS Marine Education Association  
Robyn Silvestri, Save the Great South Bay  
Hayden Uresk, NYS Parks

### **1. Introductions**

M. Dolan Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Introductions were made.

### **2. Meeting Minutes Approval**

September 12, 2023 Minutes

**Motion** by R. Weltner to approve; seconded by A. Kopelman; carried.

November 21, 2023 Minutes

**Motion** by R. Weltner to approve; seconded by A. Kopelman; carried.

### **3. Kaitlin Mattei, Seatuck Environmental Association, Alewife Monitoring**

**K. Mattei** gave the 2023 alewife report. Background on diadromous fish was provided. The annual Long Island Volunteer River Herring & Eel Survey is one of Long Island's longest running community science projects. Started in 2006, the survey engages community volunteer scientists to monitor runs of migratory river herring and American eels in rivers and streams across Long Island. In 2023 there were 23 surveyors and they had 251 submissions from March 3 to May 15. Overall, in 2023 there was a decline in river herring and eel sightings. Potential reasons could be because of climate change, impassable barriers/habitat loss and bycatch. Climate change is causing shallower tributaries that dry out faster and waters could warm more quickly than normal. Impassable barriers and habitat loss are caused by dams. There is currently an active planning grant for a fish passage at Bellmore Creek and Carmans River has a fish ladder with a camera that a summer intern has used to count the number of fish using the passage. Bycatch across southern New England is not being monitored but is a potential cause for declining populations, more information about disappearing river herring can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uogSqDI0MW4>. [Register online](#) for the 2024 alewife survey and check out the other Community Science Long Island webinars.

Question: Was a fishway installed on the Mill River?

Answer: Yes and was funded by Governor's Office of Storm Recovery.

Question: Is anyone studying West Brook?

Answer: Seatuck has been observing the location.

Question: Have volunteer numbers been down?

Answer: Yes, I think because alewife populations have been down, the lack of observations has discouraged participants.

Comment: The observer program was cut during COVID.

Comment: DEC put out an ask for appropriate representation at the fisheries council.

#### **4. 2024 SSER Funding: Stakeholder & Municipal Sign on LTE**

**M. Dolan Murphy** said the Governor's budget was released on January 16<sup>th</sup> where EPF was fully funded at \$400 million and SSER will be funded at \$2 million. CCE sent a sign on letter to local representatives and government officials for SSER to be funded at \$5 million. There is still an opportunity to increase the SSER line item. Rich Groh and Town of Babylon Supervisor Schaffer had all five towns sign onto a letter advocating for \$5 million for SSER. Additionally, the clean water and Infrastructure funding was cut by about 50%.

Question: Was clean water and infrastructure funding cut because of the Environmental Bond Act?

Answer: No. When the Bond Act was advocated for it was clear that the Bond Act funding would be in addition to normal funding levels.

#### **5. South Shore Damage/Flooding Impact**

**R. Welter** provided an update on flooding and storm damage at Operation SPLASH, where 3-4 inches of water flooded the building. The building has flooded four times this year which is unusual. A. Kopelman noted that low tide in Shinnecock Bay is not as low as it has historically been, additionally, areas by the commercial dock that were recently replenished are now gone. H. Ursek said that NYS Parks blocked off the entrance to Gilgo beach last week. G. Hoffman noted that PSEG shut down the substation at Ocean

Beach due to flooding. A. DePerte commented that cold stunned sea turtles are still being found but historically sightings usually stopped around Christmastime.

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

**J. Campbell** said the SSER is working with NYS DOT to identify locations for watershed signs on appropriate state roads and any signs must adhere to regulations. Members were reminded that the next Council meeting will be January 31<sup>st</sup> in Massapequa at Marjorie Post Park with presentations from Cornell Cooperative Extension on the eelgrass restoration project and on status of Bay Park Conveyance Project.

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

**R. Silvestri** announced Save the Great South Bay will be starting a unified water study for the south shore bays that will mimic the Long Island Sound Study. Save the Great South Bay is looking for partners to sample.

**E. Nardone** said Seatuck will be hosting the Long Island Invasive Species Conference poster session in March.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12.