

Jamaica Bay Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, February 16th 2005
6:00 – 8:30pm
Floyd Bennett Field
Ryan Visitors Center
Brooklyn, NY

Minutes

Eugenia Flatow (NYC Soil and Water Conservation District) called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Jamaica Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project

Bobbi Jo McClain and Len Houston, US Army Corps of Engineers

History of the JBERP

At the beginning of the project, 50 sites were identified. The sites that have been planned for are a sampling of the original 50. Because of the common belief that the islands in the middle of the bay were not in need of restoration, the focus of the study was moved to the perimeter. The islands in the middle of the bay could be another central marsh island project.

After preliminary evaluations, 8 sites were looked at for construction and planning. This presentation is the recommended planning for those 8 sites.

The 8 sites are: Dead Horse Bay, Paerdegat Basin, Fresh Creek, Spring Creek, Hawtree Point, Bayswater State Park, Dubos Point, and Brant Point

Dead Horse Bay

The existing conditions of this area are characterized by lots of invasives, mostly *Phragmites*. Historically, this area was marsh and tidal creeks.

Restoration efforts will remove the invasive species, and restructure the area to be tidal (2 acres) and marsh habitat (42 acres) in the north. In the southern section of the bay, the area will be stabilized, and restoration will create 41 acres dune and 49 acres maritime forest.

This site is owned by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

Paerdegat Basin

The issue of most concern in Paerdegat Basin is its water quality including anoxic conditions for much of the year and a lack of benthic macroinvertebrates. A major contributor to the poor water quality is the combined sewer outfall (CSO) located in the Basin. To mitigate the runoff and problems associated with the CSO, New York City Department of Environmental Protection has plans to install a large holding tank where water would be held instead of being released into the basin. Another contributor to the poor water quality is the lack of tidal exchange in the basin. The basin was deepened in

the past, and a sill of sediment left at the mouth, which decreases the movement of water in and out of the basin.

Restoration efforts will remove invasives, creating coastal shrub habitat and marsh habitat. Restoration efforts may also include regrading this site, dredging and replacing with clean sand in order to encourage better tidal exchange in the basin. This site is owned by NYC DPR. The Department of City Planning is also considering the addition of an ecology park to the site, 2.5 acres are currently set aside for this project.

Fresh Creek

Historically this was a small tidal creek, but since the area was deeply dredged, the area is characterized by low tidal flush with a sediment mound. There is also a CSO at the head of the creek, contributing to poor water quality.

Restoration efforts will replace the dredged area with a shrub habitat. A tidal marsh will help clean the water that is released from the CSO. Maritime forest in the --- will protect the area from erosion. This site is owned by NYC DPR.

Spring Creek

Historically this site was filled and is now dominated by invasive species. Restoration efforts will remove invasives by creating marsh and dune habitat. Maritime forest will also be created in this area. This area is owned by the National Parks Service (NPS).

Hawtree Point

This area has an existing park, which poses the problem of erosion and compaction due to motor vehicle use in the park and marsh area. In order to stop degradation due to vehicle use, a barrier will be installed so the area is accessible to pedestrian traffic, but traffic from ATVs and automobiles will be blocked.

Bayswater State Park

This site possesses a lot of existing good habitat, and the most pressing issue is the erosion occurring due to wave force. In order to mitigate the effect of the erosion, rock points will be put in to protect the habitat, tidal areas and tidal marsh. This site is owned by New York State.

Dubos Point

This site currently has a great deal of marsh existent. Because of the wet marshy areas, and a number of deep tidal pools that only flush in very high tides, there is a mosquito problem at the site. Also, the current erosion control efforts are failing.

Restoration efforts will remove invasives, put in tidal creeks, and replace what has eroded with something that will last in order, to protect the existing good habitat, and open up pre-existing tidal creeks. This site is owned by NYC DPR.

Brant Point

This site currently is characterized by invasives, with some existing good marsh habitat, which is currently being threatened by erosion. The beached barge off the site has protected the habitat.

Proposed restoration includes rubble mounds to further protect the area and lesson erosion. On site, grassland, low marsh and maritime forest would be planted. This site is owned by NYC DPR.

What Happens Next?

A Draft Feasibility Report is currently in progress, and will hopefully be available this spring. Once available, the Army Corps will ask for public review and commentary. After public review the report is finalized and there is another public review.

Following finalization, the report is then sent to chief's office. After all signatures are obtained, the report is submitted to Congress for authorization and funding. It is proposed that the projects outlined will cost \$75-100 million.

To submit commentary, or ask questions, please contact:

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Question and Answer Session

Community members inquired about Charles Park, where the east part is addressed, but not the west. Will the erosion of the west be addressed? B. McClain responded that the plan originally included a large area in the west end of the park, which was removed because of its proximity to JFK and security reasons.

Community members also suggested that Shellbank Basin should be considered as a site for restoration. L. Houston stated that it would be looked into. B. McClain stated that this should be brought up during the open comment period because although it is not in this study, this is a continuing project and could be considered as a new site.

Community members also asked why sand from the mouth of the dredged areas was not being used to fill and regrade. L. Houston stated the sediments will be reused, and only clean sand will be used in addition to the sand currently residing in this area.

Community members asked if this project based upon the WRDA.

L. Houston stated that yes, they are hoping to get into the WRDA this year but no construction has been authorized for this project yet. If the project was funded by WRDA this year, which would appropriate money for 2006 and it is most likely that construction would occur in 2007.

Review of the Jamaica Bay Guardian's Activities

Don Riepe

Jamaica Bay Clean Sweep

The Guardian is working with the Jamaica Bay Ecowatchers for this project. In 2004, they removed 40 boats in Jamaica Bay. These boats go to Pete McCarthy who uses them for offshore moorings. Next month we will be doing needs assessment.

Dan Mundy added that the program is very work intensive and requires a great deal of cooperation and hard work. The boat removal goes as follows; search parties go out and take survey of the boats to be removed. Then, before removal there is a workday that prepares the boats for removal. On the day of removal, a tugboat pulls the boat out and the boats are deposited at a mooring buoy, and tagged.

Restoration Projects

Dates for upcoming restoration projects: April 16th and 22nd

These restoration projects are in cooperation with Partnerships for Parks, Ecowatchers, Jamaica Bay Watershed Alliance, and others at Four Sparrows Marsh in Mill Basin. The 7 acres of this marsh are heavily impacted by large debris and other trash. These projects will remove debris and do some planting. A floating scrap boat will remove the boats and the garbage. There will not be a skimmer. The groups are in need of boats to ferry volunteers to the site as well as additional volunteers.

City parks are also involved and have done some *Spartina* restoration in another section of the marsh. NOAA will be providing additional funding. Port Authority has not been contacted about the Four Sparrows Marsh restoration.

Raptor Surveys

The Osprey banding program has shown that there is at least 8 pair of ospreys, and they are doing well.

Sampling Sites

This summer, George loaned us a grabber for bottom sampling at the restoration sites at Big Egg, Grassy Bay, and Norton basin. Mickey Cohen will ID the organisms that are found. There was no life found in some of these areas so Don would like to look at the sediment more intensely.

Jamaica Bay Watershed Alliance

Mike Steffens

Site Cleanups

There are 37 sites schedule for cleanup in April/May. Please see him if you are interested in participating, or have any ideas.

NYS DEC Restoration Update

Leigh Vogel

Planning is underway for a salt marsh restoration project at Bergen beach. The site will be located just north of the Riding Academy, and can be seen from the Belt Parkway. The restoration is on NYC DPR land. The goal of the project is to remove *Phragmites*, and regrade/revegetate the area mostly with *Spartina*. The design will be finalized within the next few months.

E. Flatow asked if there was any money left in the Jamaica Bay damages fund.

L. Vogel responded that there was and that bond act money is being used to do this project

The community asked what DEC would do if a bird's nest was found during the restoration. L. Vogel responded that we the restoration team would try to avoid the area.

Eugenia Flatow concluded the meeting with a few remarks.

E. Flatow adjourned the meeting at 8:30.