

**South Shore Estuary Reserve Council  
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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**MEETING MINUTES**

May 13, 2008

Long Island Maritime Museum, West Sayville, New York

Chair: Maureen Dolan Murphy

Vice-Chair: Allan Aronoff

**CAC Members Present:** Allan Aronoff (Brookhaven League of Women Voters); Phil Blindenhofer (Association of Marine Industries); Pam Burford (Fire Island Association); Hank Dam (Suffolk Alliance of Sportsmen); Ed Davis (Great South Bay Audubon); Maureen Dolan Murphy (Citizens Campaign for the Environment); Linda Freilich (Sierra Club); Lesley Kane (Islip Town Leaseholders Association); Kevin McAllister (Peconic Baykeeper); Wendy Murbach (South Shore Audubon Society); Dorothy Rainer (for Bob DeBona, Mastic Beach Property Owners Association); Dave Schaper (NY Seafood Council); Ben Sohm (South Shore Bayhouse Owners Association and South Shore Waterfowlers); Florence Sharkey (Brookhaven Baymen's Association); and, Dave Thompson (Trout Unlimited).

**CAC Members Absent:** Students for Environmental Quality; South Bay Cruising Club; Operation SPLASH; and, Joe Kayal.

**South Shore Estuary Reserve Staff Present:** Lou Siegel (Science Coordinator); Patrice Benneward (Program Implementation Specialist); and, Clare O'Reilly (Program Implementation Specialist).

**Guests Present:** Gil Kelley (Association of Marine Industries); Chris Clapp (The Nature Conservancy); Kim Petersen (Cornell Cooperative Extension); William Wise (Stony Brook University); Nancy Kearney (Town of Oyster Bay); Dennis Meigel (Mastic Beach Property Owner's Association); Kris Almskog, Marty O'Connell; and, Bob Cizek.

**1. Introductions**

M. Dolan Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m. CAC members and guests introduced themselves. M. Dolan Murphy distributed two handouts: an article about reptiles on Fire Island, and a letter to NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis regarding protection of the Dwarf Eastern Hognose Snake's habitat in the Reserve.

**2. Approval of CAC Meeting Minutes**

A. Aronoff motioned to approve the March 11, 2008 meeting minutes. B. Sohm seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**3. Reports**

**SSER Office Report**

C. O'Reilly updated the CAC on Reserve Office activities since the last meeting:

- Reserve Office staff attended the Oceans and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council meeting on April 1<sup>st</sup> in Albany, the Ecosystem-based Management Geographic Information Systems data needs workshop in Albany and a workshop on establishing a science research and monitoring priorities at Stony Brook on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Reserve Office staff also attended the Oceans Working Group meetings on April 7<sup>th</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup> in Albany. The Great South Bay Ecosystem-based Management Demonstration Project steering committee is currently reviewing the draft demonstration plan prepared by The Nature Conservancy. A public review of the plan is anticipated for later in the summer/early fall.
- Reserve Office staff attended the Regional Open Space Advisory committee meeting to discuss revisions to New York State Open Space Conservation Plan.
- Reserve Office staff attended a meeting organized by The Nature Conservancy on a new planning tool they are developing with partners to address impacts of sea level rise and coastal hazards.
- Reserve Office staff are continuing to work with Seatuck Environmental Association on the annual Alewife Monitoring Survey. A training session was held at the Long Island Maritime Museum at the end of March. Monitoring will continue through May. This year, volunteers are entering data via a new data collection system, Google Docs, which is also used by the sSELF program.
- The Carmans River fish ladder is fully installed. A press event was held on March 31<sup>st</sup> announcing installation of the ladder. Alewives have been documented in the ladder and above the dam in the river, indicating that alewives are using the ladder to reach freshwater spawning habitat. Pictures of the ladder are available on the Reserve Council website.
- Recently, NYS Department of Transportation installed step pools to allow fish passage on Penataquit Creek as part of a culvert retrofit project on Montauk Highway.
- Reserve Office staff continue to work with technical consultants and an advisory committee on the Beaver Dam Creek Watershed Management Plan. A draft characterization section is expected to be completed shortly for review by advisory committee.
- Staff from Nelson Pope and Voorhis have returned to the field to collect additional data to include in the Barrier Assessment report. They will be revising the report with new data collected in the field.

L. Siegel reported on the following Reserve Office activities:

- Efforts are underway to implement several projects in the Western Bays in partnership with the Town of Hempstead and others. These projects are funded by the NYS Environmental Protection Fund.
- As part of the sSELF program, eight different groups with over 50 stewards have submitted data for nearly 200 separate outings. This number of outings represents a significant number of stewardship hours. Reserve Office staff thank CAC member Rich Troy who introduced Google Docs, which makes it easy to enter data that is instantly available to anyone on the internet.
- Over 200 “Preserve the Reserve” stewardship certificates have been issued thus far. Most recently certificates were presented to President Gaffney of Dowling College, former Superintendent Mike Reynolds of Fire Island National Seashore, many of the sSELF stewards, Alexandra Mancuso and Brianna Lind who wrote and illustrated the book “Great Blue’s Message,” and students at Islip High School who constructed a pond and natural planting area on the school grounds. A list of recipients is on the Reserve Council’s webpage.

- Reserve Office staff continue to work with the South Shore Promotion Committee, which is a group of partners focused on promoting visitation to the South Shore Estuary. The group is spearheaded by Karen Gaconnier of the Long Island Maritime Museum and Reserve Council member Captain Michael Eagan of the Lauren Kristy. For more information, please visit their website [www.exploretthesouthshore.org](http://www.exploretthesouthshore.org)
- On April 30<sup>th</sup>, Reserve Office staff participated in the Long Island Envirothon, where over 150 high school students competed in environmentally related events. The event is run by the Nassau and Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation districts, in cooperation with many partners.
- The Formal Education Committee is working on implementing items identified in the recently completed teachers survey, including modifying the Reserve Council webpage and looking for possible internships or other school sponsored video projects.
- Working with paddling stakeholders, the Town of Hempstead and Nassau County are partnering to create a south shore water trail in Nassau County.

L. Siegel introduced new Program Implementation Specialist Patrice Benneward, who reported on the following activities:

- Reserve Office staff have started compiling information for the next “Partners for Progress Implementation Status Report” covering Comprehensive Management Plan implementation actions in 2006-2008. CAC members and other implementation partners were sent a memo recently that the office is starting this process and will be receiving a more detailed letter shortly. Please contact Patrice with information to be included in the report.
- Reserve Office staff have been working with consultants on a brochure and website content as part of the Bayway Strategic Implementation and Marketing Plan. The Bayway Advisory Committee will meet in early June to discuss these products and provide comments on the draft plan and brochure.
- The Reserve outreach exhibit has been updated with new information about the Stewardship Award and fish ladder projects. The exhibit was displayed at Heckscher Spring Festival and the Town of Babylon Earth Day Fair.
- Reserve Office staff are working with the Town of Southampton to help design a new interpretive kiosk at Shinnecock Canal Maritime Center, which is a recognized Bayway Destination.

#### **4. Presentation - Eelgrass Ecology and Restoration**

Kim Petersen of Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) gave a presentation to CAC members about eelgrass, or *zostera marina*, a common type of seagrass found in the Reserve and other bays surrounding Long Island. The presentation covered the ecology and natural history of eelgrass, threats to its success, and research and restoration conducted by CCE and partners.

CAC members asked the following questions:

- Why are most restoration sites in Peconic Bay? K. Petersen explained that CCE’s research facilities are closest to Peconic Bay, and there is more historical information about locations of eelgrass beds in Peconic Bay than other bays around Long Island.
- What is the best depth for eelgrass to grow? K. Petersen replied that four to six foot depth is ideal for eelgrass, but that success is dependent on water clarity.

- In an eelgrass bed known as the Amityville Meadow, there are no snails present and an abundance of epiphytes. The epiphytes are believed to contribute to the eelgrass die-off that occurs in July. Is it possible to transplant snails to the Amityville Meadow to prevent epiphyte growth? K. Petersen replied that an abundance of epiphytes may be related to high nutrient levels in the water. CCE is currently investigating the possibility of moving snails to different meadows to slow epiphyte growth.
- Does brown tide affect eelgrass growth? K. Petersen replied that brown tide shades eelgrass meadows, therefore preventing light from reaching the bottom and stunting eelgrass growth.
- Why is it necessary to plant eelgrass on sandy bottom substrate rather than muddy bottom substrate? K. Petersen replied that planting restoration sites have not been as successful in muddy bottoms as they have been in sandy bottoms. However, there is a successful muddy bottom planting site near the Shinnecock Hills Golf Course.
- Are the planting site areas marked? K. Petersen replied that the planting sites are marked with buoys, but previous experience has shown that markings tend to attract people to the planting site who may introduce threats to the eelgrass.
- What has been the cause of the loss of eelgrass beds in New York City? K. Petersen replied that eelgrass beds have not been able to recover due to water quality issues. CCE is establishing their first restoration planting site in Jamaica Bay this summer.
- What is the relationship between snails and eelgrass? K. Petersen explained that snails feed on types of algae that grow on eelgrass. When eelgrass beds disappear, snails adapt to feed on different forms of algae.

CAC members discussed that many boaters are not aware that boating in eelgrass meadows can cause damage, and suggested that eelgrass education should be included in boating courses and boating safety information. C. Clapp added that this recommendation is included in the Great South Bay Ecosystem-based Management draft demonstration plan prepared by The Nature Conservancy.

More information about eelgrass can be found at [www.seagrassli.org](http://www.seagrassli.org).

## **5. Presentation - Ecosystem Based Management**

William Wise of Stony Brook University School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences gave a presentation about Ecosystem-based Management (EBM). He provided information about this emerging, integrative approach to resource management, including key elements of an EBM plan, and how EBM is currently being researched and applied by the New York State Oceans and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council.

CAC members asked the following questions:

- How will EBM differ from other resource management philosophies when fully in place? W. Wise replied that this remains to be seen, and encouraged CAC members to become involved in the EBM implementation process.
- What implication does EBM have on “home rule” in terms of how complex issues will be settled on the local level? W. Wise suggested that ecosystem boundaries do not coincide with local government boundaries, and that local governments will most likely need to work together in order to implement EBM.

CAC members discussed the need to adjust human behaviors in order for EBM to be successful, the impacts of favoring one species over another, and the role of science in decision making processes.

## **6. Public Portion/Announcements**

L. Kane announced that the Islip Town Environmental Council (ITEC) recently presented the Pulaski Award to Alexandra Mancuso and Brianna Lind, author and illustrator of *Great Blue's Message*, and students at Islip High School who constructed a pond and natural planting area on the school grounds.

The Long Island Maritime Museum is organizing paddle cruises this summer to Fire Island Lighthouse.

M. Dolan Murphy reminded CAC members that Stewardship Award nominations are due on June 15. CAC members discussed giving previous nominees Preserve the Reserve Stewardship Certificates in recognition of their efforts. The Stewardship Award Subcommittee will discuss this at their next meeting.

N. Kearney reminded CAC members that the Town of Oyster Bay's Marine Education Day will be June 6.

F. Sharkey informed CAC members that Fire Island National Seashore is developing a General Management Plan, and encouraged CAC members to be involved in the plan development process.

L. Kane announced that the Islip Town Leaseholder's Association recently held a shoreline cleanup of the Islip bay islands, which was well attend by 42 volunteers. Seven dumpsters of garbage were collected. L. Siegel suggested that she submit the volunteers' names for Preserve the Reserve Stewardship Certificates.

N. Kearney mentioned that the Town of Oyster Bay has placed storm drain markers south of Merrick Road, as well as door hangers alerting residents of the markers. The Town has received positive feedback on this education initiative.

L. Kane announced that there is a temporary kayak put-in at Captree State Park this week, and permanent access will be established there soon.

L. Freilich announced that there will be a "Kayakathon" on June 21 to raise money for Sierra Club, The Riverhead Foundation, and Peconic Baykeeper. Sierra Club is seeking recommendations for how the money raised should be spent.

D. Thompson distributed an herbicide alert from Massachusetts regarding an herbicide that is being considered for use in Upper and Lower Lake in the Carmans River to eradicate aquatic invasive species.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.