

Long Island Sound Stewardship Work Group Meeting
April 29, 2008
11 a.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Nissequogue River State Park
Nature Center
Kings Park, NY

MINUTES

Present

Karen Chytalo, NYS DEC
Sarah Deonarine, NYS DEC
Larissa Graham, New York Sea Grant
Tom Halavik, US FWS
Louise Harrison, US FWS Liaison to the Long Island Sound Office
Dave Kozak, CT DEP
Jeff Main, Westchester County Parks
Guest: Art Glowka, “stakeholders”

(See attached agenda for item numbers, below.)

1-4. Louise welcomed the committee, asked people to introduce themselves, and briefly explained the agenda. Attendees reviewed the agenda and it was agreed that because of the low attendance, a timekeeper would not be needed. Larissa offered to take notes (thank you, Larissa).

5. The minutes from the 1/29/08 meeting were accepted.

6. Louise introduced the draft Nissequogue River Watershed Stewardship Action Plan, prepared by the Regional Plan Association and a large steering committee, now available for public review. Karen stated it would make a good model for other stewardship areas.

7. The advisory committee required under the 2006 Long Island Sound Stewardship Act (LISSA) needs to be set up as an official Federal Advisory Committee. The Long Island Sound Office (LISO) is going through the steps necessary to do so. In addition, staff is working on a delegation of authority to confer the responsibilities and authority LISSA gives the EPA Administrator upon LISO’s Director. Such a delegation of authority is expected to make implementation of LISSA simpler than if the powers remained solely with the Administrator.

It is unclear whether the current stewardship initiative work group should dissolve upon creation of the Federal Advisory Committee or whether there should be two groups – one to oversee the entire stewardship initiative and the other to focus only on implementation of the LISSA.

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8. Louise handed out the funding proposals made on behalf of the work group for FY08 and explained the LISS Management Committee's April 24th funding decisions. New York and Connecticut each will receive \$650,000 for open space acquisitions and NEIWPC will receive just over \$256,000 for a stewardship enhancement grant they will manage. The grant will allow NEIWPC to release a request for proposals this fall for consulting services to create a systematic stewardship site selection process and an adaptive management framework required under LISSA.

9. Acquisition updates:

Connecticut: Barn Island acquisition moving along; in good shape. Menunketesuck acquisition will require interagency agreement to complete. Long Beach and Pleasure Beach acquisitions would take a long time; an innovative approach for gradual acquisition interest is being examined by Department of Justice. If projects fall through, the extra funds would stay in the state grant; stewardship work group would work with state to agree on use. LISS Management Committee decided the funding would not be used for restoration activities in 2008, since there exist other sources of restoration funding. The funds should go toward acquisition projects that are ready to go.

New York: Bird Homestead requires contract with City of Rye to transfer funds to the City for purchase of property. Such a contract could take NYS DEC up to a year to arrange. We should examine feasibility of transferring funding to US FWS through an interagency agreement. Diocese property is a watershed protection parcel; no offers have yet been made on it. Fidao property is not of interest to NYS DEC because of an existing building; SUNY Stony Brook may be interested because of their co-ownership of adjoining Flax Pond tidal wetland.

Altogether the parcels identified to the Management Committee as potential acquisition sites provide significant matches – about \$15 million for the investment of less than \$2 million.

10. If sites are not available or if situations for acquisitions change, the stewardship initiative work group will work with the states to determine other acquisition targets. Should be accomplished this year. NYS DEC will check with its three regional offices and with municipalities to see if other parcels are ready and require matches. Their small coastal parcels analysis, nearly completed, also may reveal additional sites with potential.

We need a process to deal with changes. We have a short time frame to accomplish acquisitions this year. We should set timelines for projects to meet certain benchmarks; if not, reallocate funds for projects that are more feasible in the short run. Decision to try this schedule:

- By June 13, need to hear about Dept. of Justice decision. If not available, we cannot proceed with Long Beach/Pleasure Beach
- By June 13, need to have outstanding questions about transfer of funding for Bird Homestead acquisition sewn up.
- By June 19, have presentation on NYS DEC's small coastal parcels analysis to see if there are project alternatives that arise from it. We then would try to go through the review process and have new parcels targeted by July 18th

[N.B. In the next few days following the stewardship work group meeting, the Long Island Sound Office received information on the Long Beach/Pleasure Beach, Menunketesuck, and Bird Homestead acquisitions that required changes to the approach and time frames outlined by the stewardship work group under item 10, above. See notes at end of minutes.]

Lunch Break: The group took a walk in light rain along the Nissequogue River to view its mouth near Short Beach.

11. We may proceed with developing a request for proposals (RFP) for the NEIWPCCC enhancement grant that will result in a systematic site selection process and an adaptive management framework for use by the future LISSA Federal Advisory Committee. Louise handed out the enhancement grant proposal approved by the LISS Management Committee. The group decided to hear from the US FWS on its inventory work leading to the 33 inaugural stewardship areas, the Peconic Estuary Program or The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on the Peconic's Critical Lands Protection Strategy, NYS DEC on its small coastal parcels analysis, and CT DEP on its coastal lands acquisition program prior to developing the RFP, which would be released this fall or winter. Invitations for presentations to the stewardship work group will go out, with hopes for such presentations to be made this summer. We want to develop a rigorous process that is reasonable, repeatable, and transparent for identifying projects. Stewardship project decisions will require documentation and sound rationales.

We also have a need to develop fact sheets on stewardship sites already identified in the 33 inaugural stewardship areas. These sheets can help promote stewardship activities in the already designated areas.

We expect our consultant will work closely with the work group over a period of at least a couple of years. We have a huge base of information already. A consultant will help us refine what we have and obtain and organize what we yet need. A GIS-based system for selecting future projects would pull data together from all our sources and tailor a process to meet our specific LIS stewardship needs. We are not looking for an engineering firm but rather a university-based or other organization that can take a long view and understands our mission.

After the presentations from US FWS, TNC, NYS DEC, and CT DEP, Louise will work with a subcommittee of the stewardship work group to develop an RFP for the enhancement grant.

12. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Despite the hard work by the work group at the April 29th meeting to develop time frames for upcoming work, there were new developments in the following days that required changes in plans.

- The Trust for Public Land withdrew its nomination of Menunketesuck for acquisition funding.

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- It became apparent that because of the time frames involved in approving LISS grants to the states, the work group would not be able to wait for a decision from the Justice Department on whether partial acquisitions of Long Beach and Pleasure Beach could take place. Long Beach and Pleasure Beach, therefore, were removed from consideration for FY08 LISS funding. This implies no prejudice toward those acquisitions for future funding.
- It will not be possible to transfer LISS funds to the City of Rye through an interagency agreement (IAG) with the US FWS this year. A new IAG would need to be created, and our tight time frames for acquisition this year would not allow for this. In addition, there would be additional fees incurred that were not considered by the Management Committee. This means that funds for the Bird Homestead property would need to reach the City of Rye through New York State's (NYS DEC's) LIS grant. The NYS DEC would need to develop a contract with the City to transfer the funds. This process appears to jeopardize the ability of the state to move quickly in assisting with the acquisition of the property.

Attachment

Attachment

Long Island Sound Stewardship Work Group Meeting

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

11 a.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Nature Center
Nissequogue River State Park
Kings Park, NY

AGENDA

Item	Topic	Leader(s)	Time Frame (min.)	✓
1	Welcome and introductions	Louise Harrison	1	
2	Review agenda	All	2	
3	Select timekeeper	All (please volunteer)	<1	
4	Select note-taker (to draft the minutes)	All (please volunteer)	<1	
5	Review and approve minutes from 1/29/08	All	5	
6	Nissequogue River Watershed Study	Louise	1	
7	Update on LISSA implementation – Advisory Committee	Louise	4	
8	FY 2008 Budget Request results	Louise	10	
9	Updates on proposed acquisition projects, if any	Anyone/all	15	
10	Next steps on proposed acquisitions for US FWS, NY, CT, and Stewardship Initiative work group	Louise, all	20	
	LUNCH BREAK – A walk along the Nissequogue River	All	60	
11	Site selection criteria & adaptive management framework - Preparation of enhancement grant RFP – What’s next	Louise	5	
11A	-What we need a consultant to do -for the Stewardship Initiative work group and/or -for the LISSA Advisory Committee	All	25	
11B	- What we already have in hand	All	30	
11	Next steps	Louise, All	15	
12	Adjourn <i>Thanks for coming!</i>			

Tasks	Volunteers	When Ready

The next sit-down meeting of the Stewardship Initiative work group will be on **July 29, 2008** (time and place to be announced).

Additional 2008 meeting date: **October 28, 2008**