

HR&SWG Meeting Minutes  
Bridgeport City Hall  
May 11, 2016

**Attending (\* by phone):**

Patrick Comins, Audubon	Kevin O'Brien, CTDEEP
* Robert Doscher, Westchester County	* Amanda Pachomski, Audubon
* Tessa Getchis, CT Sea Grant	* Suzanne Paton, USFWS
David Gumbart, The Nature Conservancy	Ron Rozsa
Ellen K. Hartig, NYC Parks	Jim Turek, NOAA Restoration Center
David Kozak, CTDEEP	Barry Udelson, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Jeff Main, Westchester County Parks	* Alison Verkade, NOAA
Jennifer Mattei, Sacred Heart University	Harry Yamalis, CTDEEP

**Agenda item: Discussion and vote on proposed modification to the Work Group's mission statement**

The proposed modification to the Work Groups (WGs) mission statement to include promoting 'sustainable uses' of coastal habitats was not supported by a vote of WG members. Reasons for not supporting the amendment included a lack of clarity of the definition of what sustainable uses might include, concerns that some sustainable uses may not necessarily be compatible with the WHG's mission, expanding the scope of the WG beyond its core competencies, and subsuming the prerogatives of state natural resource management agencies responsible for the management of the Sound's living resources. There are also several references to sustainable uses already in the CCMP, and in the proper context as well.

**Agenda item: LISS Management Committee directive to define habitat restoration and protection goals and parameters to set grant funding priorities**

Four general categories of resource management concerns that would benefit from setting funding priorities were identified: (1) Protection; (2) Management; (3) Research; (4) Restoration. A WG sub-committee should be charged with developing priority goals/parameters (more generally referred to as 'guidelines'?) to assist funding sources make grant funded project awards. To the extent that existing resource conservation/restoration plans exist, they should be used to set guidelines.

It was suggested that the existing publication [LISS Habitat Restoration Initiative Guidelines](#)<sup>1</sup> (February 2015) be reviewed/summarized to help set general restoration project priorities, existing resource conservation plans (e.g., state WAPs, CELCP plans, etc.) and LIS symposia proceedings be consulted to identify priorities. To the extent possible, guidelines should be general to cover the broad range of resource management concerns but coupled with specific examples to provide greater direction, as appropriate, for each class of resource or management concern. Ron Rozsa suggested that LISS require grant funding applicants include in their proposals the specific plan (or plans) that list priorities supporting their projects. These include the Long Island Sound Study's CCMP, regional plans, state level management and action plans, and other similar documents. It was suggested that the WG carefully consider whether or

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<sup>1</sup> The guidance document is more about helping applicants determine if they are ready to apply for a grant; if their site really needs restoration; helps them figure out if they have done enough background research; and help determine if their applications are complete. It also includes permitting information. The list of parameters that we are working on now is to help reviewers rank submitted proposals based on what is determined to be higher priority for LIS resources. Rather than re-write the *Guidelines*, or chop it up and add it to a newer (larger) document, it would be best if the *Guidelines* document was linked to or referenced in a new document containing the list of parameters. Harry and Vicky will review the Guidelines document prior to the end of 2016, and update as necessary.

not it should promote resource management planning guidance limited to LIS Stewardship sites or whether more general thematic management planning guidance should be provided (e.g., which habitats/resources are management plan/management prescription priorities). A list of potential subcommittee chairs for each of the 4 general categories for which guidance will be developed will be provided based upon interest expressed at the WG's February 2016 meeting.

#### **Agenda item: Future of LIS Stewardship System**

After a review of the history and goals of the Stewardship system and the process used to designate Stewardship sites/areas was presented, suggestions were offered on improving/expanding the site/area process. Suggestions included:

1. More clearly defining the distinction between a Stewardship site vs. Stewardship area and prominently conveying this distinction on the EPA LIS web pages.
2. Reviewing the list of Stewardship sites/areas to identify significant gaps in priority habitats not represented in the existing Stewardship system including subtidal resource areas and coastal forests.
3. Requesting direction and funding from the LIS office to engage the academic community in helping to establish a system for identifying new Stewardship areas/sites.
4. Using LIS Ecological Sites Update database created by CT Sea Grant to identify new sites
5. Provide additional links within the existing LIS Stewardship web pages to new sources of information about Stewardship sites by sending requests to those known to have such information (e.g., Barn Island WMA web pages)

#### **Agenda Item: Update on establishing a CT NERR**

Kevin O'Brien of the CT DEEP's Office of Long Island Sound Programs gave an overview of the status of CT's proposed NERR. To the extent that this effort complements existing LIS Stewardship System enhancement efforts, the information gained through this initiative should be used to update the Stewardship web pages and any efforts to add to the existing system of Stewardship sites.

#### **Agenda Item: Barn Island WMA Assessment Report**

Ron Rozsa provided an overview of the assessment report prepared for the Barn Island Stewardship area. It included an in-depth discussion of the changes at Barn Island's tidal marshes including a historic retrospective on how marsh ditching has affected the marshes and what might be done to modify those ditches to restore tidal creek levee high marsh.