

LISS Habitat Restoration Workgroup Year in Review

Dear Habitat Restoration Workgroup Members,

We've had a full year! In 2012 when we asked what you wanted to see more of, you said meetings that allow for knowledge transfer between members and from outside experts regarding restoration best practices, challenges and successes. We heard you! Below are some gatherings we had in NY and CT over the past year.

Thanks for a great year- looking forward to 2014

Georgia Basso, Harry Yamalis and Victoria O'Neill
Habitat Restoration Workgroup Coordinators

June

Bringing back Grasslands: Techniques, challenges & lessons behind restoring 80 acres of natural habitat in NYC's urban jungle

We spent the day with NYC Parks Natural Resources Group learning about and touring the largest grassland restoration project in NYC. **Mike Feller, NYC Parks Chief Naturalist**, spoke about the technical aspects of native grassland restoration the most urban area of our country, how it fits into broader NYC habitat restoration goals and the long term vision for natural areas.



The Gerritsen Grassland Restoration provides beautiful native habitat and a quiet place for people to enjoy nature in busy Brooklyn, NY

HRWG member **Susan Paton (USFWS)** also lead a discussion on **Integrating Science into Habitat Restoration with a focus on salt marsh sparrow research in New England**

We heard from you that you are interested in **engaging citizens in habitat restoration**. NYC Parks has a vibrant Natural Area volunteers program for many of their sites and restoration work. **Brian Aucoin, the NYC Parks Natural Resources Group’s Director of Environmental Service and Training**, spoke about how this program is set up. We toured one of the six restoration projects actively managed by this certified volunteer force.



HRWG members and invited speakers in front of the grassland restoration site and White Island in the distance (left to right) Annie McIntyre (NY Parks), Suzanne Paton (USFWS) Georgia Basso (USFWS), Tim Wenskus (NYC Parks), . Mike Feller (NYC Parks), Jamie Ong (NYC Parks), Harry Yamalis (CT DEEP), Brian Aucoin (NYC Parks)

March

After our Dec 2012 meeting on Hurricane Sandy there was a lot of **interest among members regarding beach and dune restoration**. **Ralph Lewis (UConn)** presented on **Coastal Geology & Restoration**



“If beach & dune restoration is to be effective we need to understand the system”

“When we talk about dune restoration we typically look at beach grass planting when the real issue is sediment supply”

~ HRWG Members

In the wake of Sandy you had some important thoughts regarding actions for improved coastal restoration. Your take away messages are summarized below

- People living on dunes do not understand the benefits of dunes *to them*. For beach & dune protection it is important to **communicate the benefits dunes have for people**.
- We need to continue to work to **quantify the impacts on a landscape scale**. For example, it is difficult but important to quantify the benefits of restoring a 1,000 acres in VT on nonpoint source pollution in the LIS
- We need to frame projects in ways that people care about. People don't care about the salt marsh sparrow as much as they do flood protection and clean water. **Frame the message using terms that resonate with the public**.
- We need to improve communication to people about the **true risk of living in coastal areas** and not minimize or soften this risk. If it is lessened coastal development will continue. We should also use **site assessment tools**



Roseate terns took a hit from Sandy- **losing nesting habitat on important islands like Falkner**. HRWG member **Kris Vagos (USFWS)** brought this need to the attention of the Workgroup. Several of you offered suggestions and support.

In the spirit of green infrastructure and softer shorelines HRWG member **Juliana Barrett (CT Sea Grant)** demoed the new **Green Infrastructure Tool for Coastal Landowners**. It is a practical and artistically beautiful tool to help restoration managers and coastal landowners with green infrastructure. Check it out here <http://seagrants.uconn.edu/publications/magazines/wrackets/sprsummer13/ripariantool.pdf>

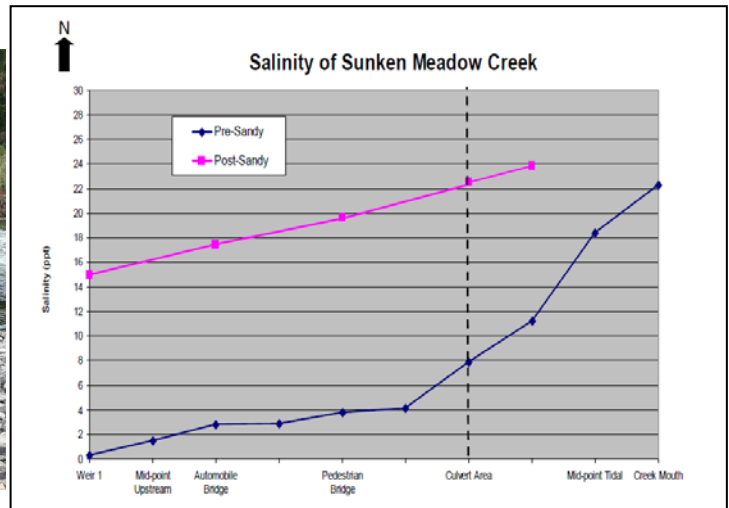


The tool contains colorful drawings on zone based native plantings for coastal areas

September

Post Sandy the HRWG team went to check out the newly breached Sunken Meadow site.

Arianna Newell, HRWG member & NYS Parks Biologist and Jeff Mason, Sunken Meadow State Park Manager, led members to the site of the breach and several locations along Sunken Meadow Creek where vegetation and topography are actively changing. We discussed restoration needs, human use balances in one of the state's most highly trafficked parks, and the change in wading birds due to newly emerging tidal mudflats. HRWG members from NY DEC, TNC, Save the Sound, NOAA and USFWS are collaborating to assess and work on restoration priorities at this site.



Clockwise from upper left- Water rushes through the breach site, increasing salinity and reducing phragmites, HRWG members listen to Jeff Mason, Sunken Meadow State Park Manager, talk about balancing human and habitat needs at one of NY States busiest parks, HRWG members gather as a group at the Sunken Meadow site

Thanks for all you do for the health and functioning of the Long Island Sound. Let your voice be heard in our Survey so that we can put more of your good ideas into action for our Workgroup in 2014!