

## **Minutes from NH Estuary Restoration Partners organizer's meeting on Jun 6, 2007**

Present: Peter Wellenberger, Kathy Mills (GBNERR); Ted Diers, Beth Lambert (NHCP); Jennifer Hunter (NHEP); Ray Konisky, Mark Zankel (TNC)

### I. Review of May 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting

In general, all agreed that the initial meeting was a positive first step, very well attended, and engaging for all present. Several significant issues and questions from meeting conversations included 1) concern about the scope of partnership focus (geographically and organizationally), 2) the sense that people want to help but are fully committed, 3) questions of funding in a time of steady or declining budgets, and 4) uncertainty of potential structure of partnership. There was also a strong sense of common ground on the need for restoration, and recognition that current efforts were good but insufficient to achieve meaningful ecological results. People appeared willing to 'think big' as a path toward future solutions.

### II. Barriers and Impediments

A summary of barriers from the meeting was presented, and all shared a concern that lack of capacity was the most immediate challenge. In addition, the need for an integrated, watershed-based approach to planning was discussed as a critical requirement, especially for linking science to management needs. Further, on-going impacts to the estuary associated with nutrient loading, disease (oyster and eelgrass), invasive species, and potential climate change were all noted as highly relevant issues that must be addressed by any approach. All recognized that estuarine habitat restoration is an inherently risky proposition with few realistic short-term results, and that we can only mitigate but not eliminate risk through strong collaboration and effective planning.

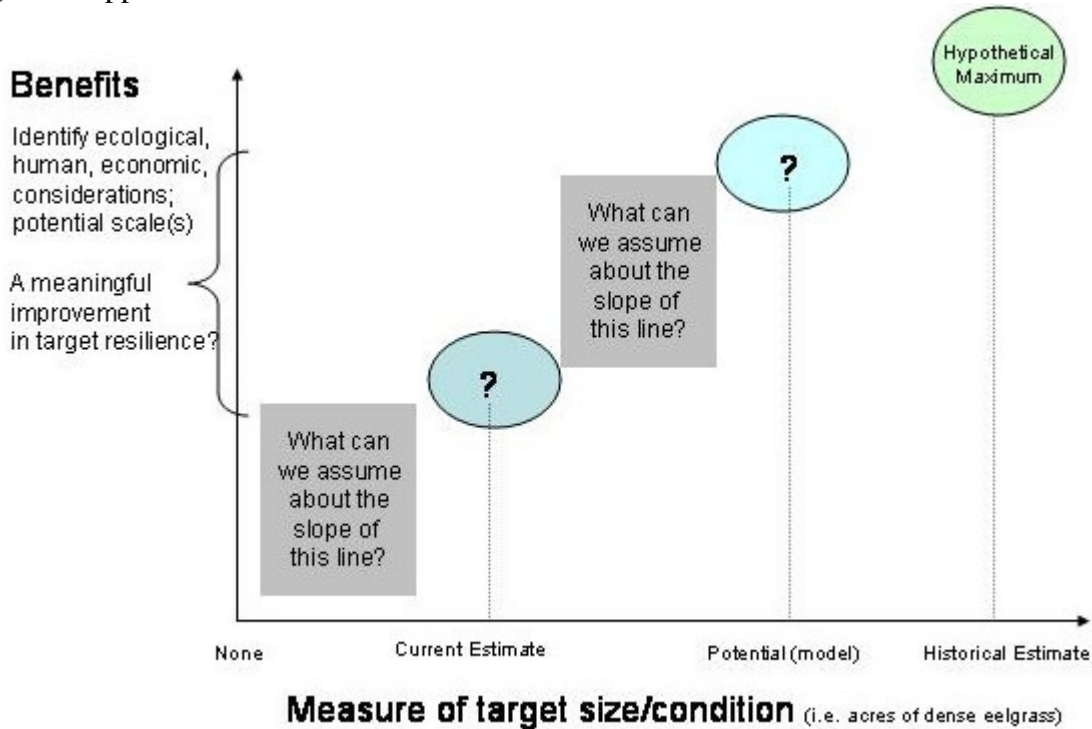
### III. Restoration Goal-Setting Approach

A first-order task of the partnership participants needs to be the process of goal-setting. Restoration goals should be developed with *expert input*, include *quantifiable* measures (i.e., X acres of healthy oyster beds), and be tied to *ecologically-meaningful* outcomes.

Six potential focus habitats were identified: 1) salt marsh, 2) diadromous fish habitat, 3) eelgrass beds, 4) shellfish beds (oyster reefs, soft-shell clam flats) 5) shorebird/waterfowl habitat and 6) macroinvertebrate habitat (lobsters/horseshoe crabs). Water quality was an additional focus area, and while not a specific habitat, the importance of water quality as an *enabling condition* was identified by the group as a critical target.

Led by the organizing committee, we will move forward to convene focus groups in the interest of launching the goal-setting process. Focus group members will self-select and be recruited from the participant list on May 16, and could be expanded to include additional experts. We will attempt to convene at a least a few focus groups by the end of August 2007, as schedules permit.

The task for focus sessions will be to conduct facilitated exercises that result in specific restoration goals. As a conceptual framework for goal-setting, experts will be asked to identify key benefits and target measures for each focus area. Relative estimates of current, potential, and historic measures will hopefully guide the process toward goals that would result in meaningful improvement. The following figure summarizes the general approach of the exercise.



#### IV. Action Items

1. Mark and Jennifer will prepare a draft of a vision statement for the partnership for review at the next organizer meeting (target mid/late August).
2. Mark, Jennifer, and Beth will draft a proposal for the potential organization of the partnership for the next organizer meeting.
3. The organizers will plan for a second meeting of all participants in September.
4. Ray will distribute final minutes of the June 6 organizer meeting to the participant list and request email replies for interest in focus groups. Ray, Kathy, and Phil Trowbridge will also develop lists of additional experts for the diadromous fish, shellfish, eelgrass, and salt marsh habitat focus groups. Ray will organize goal-setting sessions for these four habitat focus groups as soon as practicable.
5. **Please email Ray at [rkonisky@tnc.org](mailto:rkonisky@tnc.org) by June 29 to indicate your interest in one or more of the following target areas: 1) salt marsh, 2) diadromous fish habitat, 3) eelgrass beds, 4) shellfish beds, 5) shorebird/waterfowl habitat, 6) macroinvertebrate habitat, and 7) water quality.**