

**NH Estuary Restoration Partners organizational meeting
September 27, 2007**

Participants

Peter Wellenberger, Kathy Mills (GBNERR); Ted Diers, Kevin Lucey (NHCP); Jennifer Hunter (NHEP); Ray Konisky, Mark Zankel (TNC); Eric Williams, Sally Soule (NHDES); Dave Burdick (UNH/JEL); Jody Walker (USDA NRCS); Eric Derleth, Joe McKeon, Jed Brown (USFWS)

Agenda

- 1:30 Welcome and Introductions
- 1:45 Review of estuarine roundtable discussions (R Konisky)
 - eelgrass, salt marsh, diadromous fish, shellfish
 - see attachment
- 2:15 Proposed organizational charter and structure (J Hunter)
 - mission and objectives
 - potential language for memorandums
- 3:00 Next steps and action items (R Konisky)
- 3:30 Adjourn

Minutes

I. Review of Estuarine Roundtable Discussions

R Konisky reported on the results of four focus group discussions held this summer. A document, detailing focus group participants and elements of discussion, was distributed via email prior to the meeting. For each of the four focus areas, a general statement of current habitat condition, major threats, and recommendations for restoration objectives were summarized. Ray concluded by identifying five consensus points common to the groups: 1) these estuarine habitats are degraded and are not likely to recover on their own, 2) we may be at a tipping point in terms of further degradation and ability to recover, 3) a multi-faceted, ecosystem-based solution is needed, 4) partnerships will be critically important in future restoration success, and 5) a pilot project at a sub-watershed scale should be investigated to demonstrate capacity and ability to scale-up.

J Hunter asked about the generalized nature of restoration goals resulting from the roundtables, and Ray responded that the groups had very different points of focus that produced a broader-than-expected set of preliminary restoration objectives (i.e., reestablish eelgrass corridors, increase ecosystem services from bivalves, control invasive plants, etc.). A discussion ensued about the value and need for baseline elevation

datasets from high-resolution LiDAR sources. T Diers and J Walker described their respective agency's involvement in LiDAR acquisition and E Derleth voiced interest in extending coverage to the 100-yr flood elevation. M Zankel and K Mills requested that R Konisky follow up with UNH, NRCS, and others, to identify seacoast LiDAR activity and provide background for a possible partnership request for regional coverage.

II. Partnership Organization and Structure

J Hunter distributed a draft "charter" that identified the purpose, vision, functions, and structure of the proposed partnership. Meeting participants discussed many aspects of the draft document and generally agreed on the premise of a partnership to be run by a Steering Committee and based on a Memorandum of Understanding (i.e., no fiduciary responsibility). Membership of the Steering Committee was discussed, and recommended to be made up of one voting member from the ten agencies at this initial meeting (NOAA and NFF&G reps were invited but unable to attend), plus up to 3 ad hoc/community-based members at the discretion of the SC as suggested by T. Diers. It was discussed that the MOU should have a fairly longer-term timeframe (i.e. 5-6 years) to accommodate multiple cycles of work-plans and P Wellenberger cautioned to keep the document as simple and concise as possible. E Derleth, J McKeon and others spoke to the need to 'build a story' with the creation of the partnership, and all noted that a MOU would be valuable for showing commitment for fund-raising. J Hunter asked participants to send her examples of MOUs already in place that can be used as templates moving forward.

K Lucey, E Williams and S Soule asked that watersheds be specifically added to the vision statement. J Walker and others asked about the section concerning media relations and communications, with the proposed charter to specify a separate communications guidelines document. In addition, D Burdick noted that a separate peer review process for proposal approval was noted in the charter and would need to be developed as another supporting document.

III. Next Steps and Action Items

1. R Konisky will follow-up on sharing of LiDAR activity and data and prepare a summary for the next meeting.
2. Agency participants will forward to J Hunter examples of MOU language.
3. J Hunter will re-draft a proposed partnership charter with edits as suggested in the meeting and distribute to partners along with proposed MOU language.
4. Meeting participants are asked to review proposed MOU language and charter with their respective agency authorities and share comments and issues with the group via email. The intent is to finalize common MOU and charter language at the next meeting.
5. Next meeting is set for Wednesday, November 28th from 1:30-3:30pm at Pease office.