

Meeting Minutes

Herring River Restoration Committee (HRRC) Meeting
Cape Cod National Seashore Headquarters, Wellfleet, MA
Thursday, June 13, 2019, 9:30 am

Attending: HRRC members: Tim Smith, Steve Block (by phone), Steve Spear, Hunt Durey (by Phone), Eric Derleth, Hillary Greenberg-Lemos; Others attending: Beth Chapman, Christine Odiaga, Carole Ridley; Morning session: Jen Kramer, Tonna Marie Rogers, Stefanie Simpson, Scott Settlemyer, Kevin Kroeger, Meegan Gonnee, John Mulaney; Afternoon session: Brian Carlstrom, Liz Hennrikus (National Park Foundation) (1:30 to 2:30pm), Martha Craig, Helen Miranda Wilson.

Administration/Coordination:

-Draft Minutes of May 21, 2019 were discussed and approved by consensus following a clarifying edit proposed by Tim Smith.

-Schedule Next Meetings:

HRSG – June 19th at 6:00 pm at the Wellfleet Council on Aging

HRRC – Wednesday, July 24, 2019, 9:30 am

HRRC – Thursday, August 15, 2019, 9:30 am

Discussion & Updates:

Blue Carbon:

The morning began with a presentation by the *Bringing Wetlands to Market* project team. Tonna Marie Rogers talked about the role of Waquoit Bay Estuarine Research Reserve in working with various partners and stakeholders to evaluate the potential market value of blue carbon. The current phase of the project is nearing completion and will result in a report. There will be a capstone conference September 10-11. The team is now reaching out to stakeholders to preview analysis and get feedback. She also stressed that the market value of coastal restoration is one facet but that the ecological services of restoration are vitally important.

Stefanie Simpson from Restore America's Estuaries provided an overview of the carbon offset market for coastal restoration projects. The carbon offset market is voluntary. The voluntary market in 2017 sold 63 million tons of carbon offset credits for a market value of \$191 million. Typically companies purchase these credits to offset emissions. One carbon offset credit is equivalent to 1 ton of CO₂. One ton of methane is equivalent to 25 tons of CO₂. There are a number of pilot projects to test the feasibility of blue carbon projects that create carbon offset credits through various restoration projects. Herring River is one pilot project. The voluntary market has rigorous standards for validating and transacting credits.

Kevin Kroeger explained the basic science and talked about the technical approach used to determine the amount of carbon storage potential and methane emission offsets for the Herring River project. He pointed out that without the restoration there would be an increase in methane emissions over time. This is because rising sea level will increase groundwater levels and lead to a succession of plant species toward typha and Phragmites.

Since the Herring River was diked, emissions have been generated, equivalent to driving 122,000 average US cars for one year. The projected benefit of restoration through 2100 is 1.8 million metric tons of carbon storage plus additional methane offset, the equivalent of not driving 380,000 average US cars for one year. This considers full restoration, and the team will look at the effects of phase 1.

Scott Settelmyer described the market analysis undertaken for the Herring River project. The price for land-based carbon offsets is \$4-9 per ton, but could be higher. A forty-year credit estimates 54,000 to 210,000 tons of CO₂ equivalent storage created by the project. The feasibility study looked at credit prices of \$5, \$10 and \$15. Scott believes these market price estimates may be conservative. The analysis also considered the required amount of carbon that needs to be held back from offset sale as contingency (15%) and also costs of administration and monitoring. At a credit offset price of \$5 per ton, this generates -\$480,923, at \$10 per ton: \$142,446, and at \$15 per ton: \$2,400,000.

Groundwater Monitoring:

John Mulaney addressed questions about a recent proposal to continue groundwater monitoring in the Mill Creek sub-basin. The current contract is year two of monitoring and runs through the end of September. Monitoring under the current contract ends at the end of July. The current proposal would extend monitoring for another year.

There was discussion about reporting. The year one monitoring report is still under internal review at USGS. The year two contract includes delivery of a powerpoint summary of year two results. The general consensus is that it would be helpful to have some form of written summary for the year two findings, and also for year three findings. John will investigate reporting alternatives that are short of a full report, since that is very time consuming and more costly.

There was also discussion about the potential for the project to collect data in future years, but for the data to be used by USGS in analysis and reporting. John will investigate whether there are any steps that could be taken to facilitate USGS's use of data collected by the project team.

Steve Spear suggested monitoring of surface water near the 6th fairway, also monitoring the freshwater saltwater interface, and adding a rain gage. John may be able to move some equipment around to address these issues, and he will investigate these options, but it was agreed that if they involve considerable cost they would have to be part of a separate scope.

The HRRC consensus was to move forward with USGS groundwater monitoring for the third year, provided that reporting options were explored and that the potential for the project team to conduct the data collection would be explored. John said that the second year monitoring could proceed under the current contract. He will make every effort to get the requested information and provide a revised scope as soon as possible. Carole will brief Martha to make sure that she does not have any questions.

-Project Timeline and Fundraising

Brian Carlstrom introduced Liz Hennrikus of National Park Foundation. Carole and the project team provided an overview of Phase 1 of the project. Ms Hennrikus talked about the NPF's interest in the project and some of the different funding programs NPF works with.

Martha announced that, on the basis of the project's pre-proposal, the National Fisheries and Wildlife Foundation invited the Herring River Restoration project to submit a full grant proposal.

-Permitting

The status of the DRI application was discussed. Two pre-applications meetings were held with the Commission staff, and the effort is underway to complete the draft application. Comments from HRRC members have been incorporated. A number of outstanding questions and clarifications of language were discussed. Tim and Eric will provide proposed edits on the adaptive management section. The target date for submission is four to six weeks, depending on review by various parties.

Helen noted that the current Wellfleet representative to the Cape Cod Commission, Roger Putnam, is resigning and the Select Board will be looking to fill that position.

-Herring River Stakeholder Group (HRSG)

The HRSG is scheduled to meet on June 19th at 6 pm. Tim will address the HRSG about a potential role in the social factors elicitation for the adaptive management plan. Carole will provide a PowerPoint summary of the risk management approach. Draft slides and a question/answer document were circulated for comment by HRRC members.

-Herring River Executive Council

Draft MOU IV is still under discussion by the CCNS and Town of Wellfleet. It is anticipated that MOU IV will be on the Select Board's agenda on June 25th.

It was reported that the Town and CCNS were copied on a Massachusetts Open Meeting Law compliant that was based on a summary of a previous draft of MOU IV as reported in a Cape Cod Time's article. The Town and CCNS have written letters of response to the complaint.

Sediment Assessment-

Steve Block provided a brief update on the sediment assessment needed for 401 and 404 dredge/water quality certificates. There will be a pre-application meeting with MassDEP in early July to discuss the analysis and see if MassDEP requires additional analysis or refinements. Carole will work with other members of the project team to develop a summary statement about the analysis.

Tim reported that CCNS received a FOIA request for information on sediment testing. He will keep the HRRC updated on the disposition of that request.

-Adaptive Management Plan

Tim and Eric provided a brief update on the science elicitation website which is still in development. An update on timeline should be known after a call with consultants, which is scheduled for Friday June 14th.

- Status of Other Work Program Tasks:
 - Cultural resource assessment
 - CYCC golf course design work

Communications/Coordination with Friends of Herring River (FHR)

A second newsletter to all households in Truro and Wellfleet will be sent out some time in June.

