



May 21, 2018

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Zack Greenberg (Pew Charitable Trusts), Bill Schultz (Raritan Riverkeeper), Daniel Cohen (LRWP), Nicholas Tufaro (Middlesex County Office of Planning), Alex Zakrewsky (Middlesex County Office of Planning), Allie Oross (LRWP), Jeanine Kopec-Zanghi (Middlesex County Office of Planning), Heather Fenyk (LRWP)

Minutes recorded by: Allie Oross

- I. LRWP Project Program Updates
 - a. Civic Science/ Visual Habitat Assessments- due to fewer volunteers, we will conduct these in June, July and August this year
 - The LRWP needs to decide whether we will create our own database and/or whether we will add data to a national registry
 - b. Community Cleanups: Mile Run Brook, Highland Park High School
 - Both cleanups were a success
 - Mile Run Brook- about 150 people showed up for our multisite cleanup with about 2 tons of trash being removed from Mile Run Brook!
 - We hope to expand this “Multi-site” model to other communities in the future
 - The LRWP needs to decide how to calculate trash gathered, and how to record the number of large items found (i.e. tires, couches, beds, etc.). We do not have a comprehensive site that allows for the tracking of our cleanups over the years (and would also be accessible to the public)
 - Nick and Bill suggest models to base our database off in the future
 - i. Clean Ocean Action
 - ii. Central Jersey Stream Team- they don't have tracking of their cleanups, but we have worked with them in the past. We may want to jointly develop an approach to tracking trash collected.
 - c. State of the Lower Raritan Watershed Report – the goal is to complete this by the end of the summer

- The EPA report only goes up to 2014 with some parts of the report dating back to the 90's- things like pH, Dissolved Oxygen, Salinity, Ammonia, etc. are all measured
 - Currently the LRWP is interested in compiling a historic collection of watershed data to observe broad patterns in water quality and possible improvements or deteriorations

d. #lookfortheriver

- NOAA Workshop Part II – the goal would be to inform local communities and Rutgers staff and students on the process of instituting green infrastructure
- Proposal from NOAA as to the agenda of the event is already available but it takes time to plan these workshops, so the date of the event is possibly November or even sometime in 2019

II. Special Presentation: Zack Greenberg, Senior Associate, The PEW Charitable Trusts “Little Fish, Big Deal: When Little Fish Disappear, Big Dish (and the rest of us) are in Big Trouble”

- Magnusson- Stevens Act- the primary law that governs the management of marine fisheries and is responsible for the rebuilding of 43 previously overfished populations since 2000. Though this law continues to be a significant step towards sustainable management practices, it is constantly targeted by politicians attempting to weaken the guidelines that limit overfishing and the punitive measures taken when someone violates these guidelines. While the goal of the MSA is to prevent overfishing while achieving optimum yield, it focuses on individual species and treats their population numbers as mutually exclusive from each other.
- Forage Fish and EBFM- Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management or EBFM seeks to remediate the oversight of exclusively protecting individual species by looking at the different marine species as interlocked pieces in the puzzle that is marine conservation. EBFM seeks to protect the deceptively insignificant forage fish that are actually the foundations for a thriving aquatic habitat.
 - Forage fish include species like salmon, trout, herring, shad, alewives, menhaden, and so on.
 - Forage fish make up an important trophic level as a food source for many keystone species like sharks, marine mammals, sea birds, and sportfish
 - i. Many of these high trophic level larger species that feed off of forage fish also make up human economies on land
 - ii. Without forage fish, coastal communities would lose tourism if they couldn't provide visitors with opportunities such as fishing, boating, whale watching, and/or diving.
 - iii. The protection of these forage fish is not currently covered under the MSA, which leaves them very vulnerable.
- Shad and Herring – Forage fish in our riverine ecosystems

- Multiple forage fish species, including alewives, shad, and herring, are anadromous, meaning they migrate from the sea to freshwater rivers in order to spawn.
 - i. These species are also suffering from radically low populations due to marine bycatch preventing adults from ever reaching their spawning destinations and successfully propagating the species.
 - ii. Along with bycatch, river damming also frequently impedes many fish from migrating upriver to spawn.
 - iii. Many river-focused attempts at repopulating forage fish species have been relatively unsuccessful due to the marine based causes of population decline (bycatch, overfishing, habitat degradation, etc.).

Actions LRWP members can take against overfishing-

The public has until June 25 at 5 PM to provide comment to the New England Fishery Management Council on a “control rule” for Atlantic Herring fishing in New England. Pew is rallying signatures/letters in support of the Council creating a 50-mile coastal buffer from herring trawling and implementing a science-based control rule. Please consider signing Pew’s Action Alert or send an email to the New England Fisheries Management Council to let them know that you care about New England’s coastal ecosystem and economy, and that you want them to extend a buffer zone to 50 miles offshore year-round in which midwater trawl fishing would not be allowed to operate. (more information on the LRWP website also)

III. Upcoming Events

- a. June 23-24: Sidewalk painting at New Brunswick’s Lord Stirling School (Habitat Connectivity)
- b. June 18, 9-noon: NJDEP “Mapping Municipal Stormwater Infrastructure” Workshop

IV. Adjourn