

Dear Recreation Task Force,

It was great having you at the first of two Harbor Recreation Task Force meeting on February 8, 2010 at MWA's office. Thank you to our co-chairs for their leadership and helping to facilitate the discussion. And thank you all for providing your expertise and input. We welcome any and all feedback, so please be in touch with Emily Egginton at [egginton@waterfrontalliance.org](mailto:egginton@waterfrontalliance.org) if you have any questions or suggestions.

We are including all the information from this meeting on a dedicated [Harbor Recreation Task Force](#) page on our website. On this page you will also find the [Recreation White Papers](#), the meeting agenda and meeting presentation. You can navigate to this page by searching "Recreation Task Force" on our website or by clicking on this link: <http://www.waterfrontalliance.org/projects/taskforces/recreation>.

Bookmark this page and stay updated on upcoming meetings when we will discuss the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan a document that will help define and influence decisions for the coming years.

### **February 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting Summary**

In this section we provide a summary of the discussion for the February 8, 2010 meeting. The meeting consisted of three major discussions:

1. What updates are needed to MWA's [Waterfront Action Agenda](#) and [Recreation White Paper](#)?
2. What indicators or metrics are more important for the Waterfront Recreation Score Card?
3. How can we collectively overcome impediments to regional waterfront funding?

A summary of the discussion and what we accomplished at the meeting follows:

#### **1. Updates**

What updates are needed to the [Waterfront Action Agenda](#) and the [Recreation White Paper](#)?

##### *Public Access and the Waterfront*

The demand for programs and waterfront access opportunities is high, especially in New Jersey. The demand for programs is high because schools don't budget for large venues so they are turning to organizations like the Hackensack River Keeper to fulfill their environmental education requirements.

##### *Information*

Local communities would benefit from a database of construction and design options for providing for waterfront access. Better infrastructure and coordination of design and construction would allow communities to tailor projects to their specific edge and community needs. Already databases like [Logical Lasting Launches](#), from the National Parks Department, are providing nation-wide, if not yet region-specific, information.

##### *Creative Partnerships*

Creative partnerships between civic groups and government organizations can help to share responsibility over a project and provide greater access to public funding. The

Harlem River Park organization's partnership with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Transportation Alternatives helped them increase access to their park by augmenting nearby state-owned ramps to facilitate park accessibility.

### *Beaches*

Small beaches deserve more attention for their potential as natural launch locations. Beach characteristics provide the ideal launch facility for small boats and recreation, and would require minimal maintenance.

### *Insurance*

Insurance must be addressed in the [Recreation White Paper](#). Insurance also needs to be addressed at a legislative level. Liability issues deter schools and educational groups from accessing the water or running programs.

### *Education*

Environmental and waterfront education needs to be addressed at a state level. We need to engage the Department of Education (DOE) to create a water education curriculum. Until then New York City schools need to be provided with resources so that they can adapt their programs on an individual level, while still maintaining New York State education standards. Any programs authorized and standardized by the DOE could then also be implemented by community boat houses and nonprofit organizations.

Environmental groups and civic organizations can partner with local schools to increase awareness for water education. The Harlem River Park has set up a partnership with the Fredrick Douglas School and created programming that includes learning about the Harlem River through student-interactive river monitoring.

Finally, waterfront access provides great opportunities for children's physical education as well as different educational settings.

### *Arts*

Greater community involvement with the waterfront and Harbor can bring local arts and culture programs with the water. The Harlem River Task Force has held events that attract both culture and community to their neighborhood waterfront.

## **2. Score Card**

To help our region measure progress and keep ourselves accountable for the change we want to see on the waterfront, MWA is working with the Task Forces to develop a Waterfront Scorecard. The scorecard will consist of the highlights of the indicators we develop at MWA task force meetings. At each task force meeting, participants brainstorm ways of measuring progress on the waterfront and ways of providing a snapshot of what needs to change. At the Recreation Task Force meeting we brainstormed many indicators, some of which apply to different topic areas. Below you will find the list of brainstormed indicators. Please let us know if you suggest any changes to these indicators or have any additions.

At this point in the Task Force meeting we discussed and developed metrics for the Recreation Score Card:

Indicator/Performance Metric	Method	Target Value
<b>Active Water Use</b>		
# of people who get out on the water	Survey	
# of water programs	Research	
Amount of program fees	Research	
# of program/water-activity members	Survey	
# of program/water-activity employees/volunteers	Survey	
<b>NYC Dept. of Parks Survey</b>		
# of plants/trees/flowers tracked by NYC Dept. of Parks	Research	
# of visitors visiting major parks	Survey	
PlaNYC metrics for each district	Research	
# of floatables removed	Research	
<b>Working Waterfront</b>		
# of "environmental leaders" trained - Clearwater	Survey	
# of people working in waterfront maritime business	Research	
<b>Permitting</b>		
# of delayed-incomplete applications	Research	
# of delayed-complete applications	Research	
Total issued permits for NY/NJ	Research	
% compared to NJ	Research	
<b>Waterway Utility</b>		
# of people accessing neighborhood via water	Survey	
Amount of waterfront access /linear ft OR /person	Research	
# of street ends that open to water access	Research	
# of Water Trail stops	Research	
Average distance between waterfront parks (access gaps)	Research	
# of people living outside access "buffer" zone	Research	
<b>Harbor Education (all ages)</b>		
# of children with water experience in NYC over last year	Survey	
# of children involved in water safety/swimming lessons	Survey	

### 3. Funding

The discussion continued to follow up on the ideas of the [Waterfront Action Agenda](#), [Recreation White Paper](#) and the Recreation Score Card by highlighting and addressing some of the impediments to regional funding of the waterfront.

*What are some of the impediments to funding existing waterfront recreation programs, initiatives and plans? How can the Alliance work together to overcome these impediments through creative or alternative funding mechanisms? Is there Federal, State or local funding that exists to improve waterfront recreation?*

- The political process is complicated and dedicated resources are needed to work within the political process to obtain funding.
- We need to build a sense of ownership among elected officials. Legislators are not connected to the waterfront because of the size of their districts and the inaccessibility of the waterfront.
- Long term projects switch legislators frequently so we need political connections that are involved through the process. Likewise, developing a constituency of electeds with a voice for funding and waterfront issues will insure political members are involved in waterfront areas throughout their careers.
- Money may be the road block when funds become diverted; the funded project may not reach the intended goal.
- It is essential to properly identify the right sources of money when developing requests for funding through legislative sources.

*Funding Opportunities:*

- Transportation Bill
- Environmental Reparation funds and mitigation plans
  - Mitigation money is a source of funds. A list of mitigation sites is not a good idea since it may play a role in money being taken out of areas where the impacts occur.
- There may be funds available for the region to respond to Climate Change. The need is great at the waterfront and related to CSOs.
- Program initiatives can piggyback funds on larger waterfront development projects, such as adding minor construction of a kayak launch at a preexisting ferry launch.
- Corporate Sponsorships may be a source of funding by selling space for logo/signs/brands on docks, trashcans, etc.
- The “Friends of \_\_\_\_\_” model can be beneficial for unfunded projects, like a developed park that lacks funding, where community support can be raised by the “Friend of” group to fill the funding gaps for maintenance and operations of the park.
- A way to communicate about how funds can be best spent on the waterfront is to identify which businesses are improving because of the waterfront improvements, parks, and projects. Private waterfront development also profits from public investments which drive up land value. This will help show how funds can be a driver for the economy.
- “No Child Left Inside” legislation is now incorporated in Obama’s 2011 Budget Proposal as a part of an environmental literacy effort. This legislation proposes to boost environmental education in the classroom and providing children with more opportunities to learn about the natural world”.

*Funding is needed for:*

- Boating Infrastructure
- Better utility improvements and investments at waterfront parks (could also be source of funds)
- Park Improvement Districts – Addressed by RPA (See APPENDIX A)

### **Suggested Harbor Recreation Goals for MWA**

- MWA should assess where waterfront funding has historically come from: DEC, Parks, DOS, EPA, and DOT in order to champion legislators to pursuing future funding opportunities.
- Acquire or create a map of cultural, residential, business and commercial uses of waterfront property. Determine which businesses profit from being on the waterfront and if there a mechanism for them to contribute to waterfront revitalization.
- MWA should bring all waterfront interests together to create a prioritized hierarchy regarding funding goals. By channeling interests through a central office, funding can be appropriated where it is needed most. This has been previously accomplished through Scott Stringer’s office.
- Transportation Alternatives completed a “rough study” to prod agencies to implement the Greenway campaign. It took 10 years but they were ultimately successful.
- MWA can act as a resource for community boards who are challenged by waterfront issues. MWA can facilitate discussions between planners and people with various waterfront perspectives.
- MWA should serve as a liaison between the community and agencies on large EDC or Parks projects.
- MWA should begin long term planning on a large scale to prepare for climate change and sea level rise.
- Gather foundation money to distribute among small grassroots organizations for specific projects:
  - Following example of Stonybrook Millstand Watershed Institute in NJ.

### **APPENDIX A**

RPA’s 2007 “[On the Verge: Caring for New York City’s Emerging Waterfront Parks and Public Spaces](#)” advises maintaining the emerging perimeter park through the use of Park Improvement Districts (PID). “On the Verge” states that it is well documented that well-maintained park property will raise adjoining property value, and poorly-maintained park property will decrease said value.

New York City’s current Business Improvement Districts, in areas like Union Square, Bryant Park, and Battery Park City, all serve as case studies of mechanisms for capturing windfall of local business benefits do to park proximity. Batter Park City in particular includes park management in the common area maintenance fee. “The structure of these districts must address the natural tension between those who pay into district assessments and those who benefit from improved management.” It needs to be clearly delineated who controls the funds and for what areas and purposes.

While residential units are likely to drive the largest value increase limited assessment fees could also be charged to any retail or commercial establishment that profits from park proximity. Rent-controlled or legally affordable housing should be exempt. Although the PID structure is not suitable for every waterfront neighborhood, it is evident that it can be greatly beneficial in neighborhoods with new construction, high percentage of owner-occupied property and the financial capability to absorb additional fees. Three areas that are already have or are being considered to include PID management structures are Battery Park City, Riverside South and the Hudson Yards.

New development, particularly when accompanied by rezoning, can be a political moment to establish such fees. A way to address the inherent inequality of such terms would be extend the benefits of the PID to other neighborhoods by designating districts in areas that span across diverse income levels and land uses.

RPA also intends to maintain the working seaport and strives to find solutions and innovations that will allow NY Harbor to accommodate post-Panamax ships. Once the Panama Canal is reengineered, ships will be able to come to New Jersey, but the cargo will be in heavy competition with other east coast ports that are already capable of accommodating them. Since dredging is not a realistic option in revitalizing the Harbor, new facilities will be required, likely east of Kill Van Kull, which will avoid the shallow depths and low-hanging Bayonne Bridge, or possibly in South Brooklyn or Bayonne. Without port expansion, NY Harbor will be unable to harness the job and economic opportunities that are being realized in other ports like Norfolk and Baltimore.