



Meeting Summary
MWA Recreation Task Force Meeting
November 8, 2011; 6-8pm
Hudson River Foundation's offices

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Greetings from *Roland Lewis, President and CEO, MWA*
- The purpose of this task force meeting was to: (1) discuss criteria and suitable locations for Eco Docks; (2) identify ways to improve public access to the waterfront; and (3) assess how MWA should hold the City accountable for implementation of goals found in the *NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan* and the *NYC Waterfront Action Agenda*.

2. Community Eco Docks and other Public Access Improvements

2A. Developing Criteria and Gather Data for Prioritizing Dock Sites

Attendees participated in an exercise where they prioritized criteria to be used in dock site selection. The exercise revealed the following priorities:

Most Important

- Community Support
- Community Need
- Boat Storage
- Proximity to mass transit
- Proximity to public restrooms
- Strength of current/ Wave and wake action
- Suitability for human powered boats and historic boats (water depth)

Very Important

- Proximity to bike network/greenway
- Parking facilities/On street parking
- Proximity to parks
- Quality of land access
- Vision 2020 (CWP) projects underway in area
- Affordability

Important

- Street connections
- Presence of upland destination
- Proximity to Parks & Rec maintenance facilities

- Proximity to schools
- Density of local population
- Emergency Evacuation
- Proximity to CSOs
- Local business support
- Existing use

MWA explained that the two primary criteria for all sites are the availability of funding and the location of a site on Parks Department land. Additional criteria were suggested based on the proposed list and questions were asked about the proposed criteria. Questions and suggestions were as follows:

- A participant asked, “What does upland destination mean?” Sometimes upland destinations are blocked (for example by thickets between landing and nearest street). (Steve Blumling, Yonkers Paddling and Rowing Club).
- One criteria to consider is if it’s affordable to dock at a particular site? There can be problems with docking fees. (Mary Habstritt, LILAC Preservation Project)
- It is important to consider that there are efforts to bring new technology schools to NYC. Right now Roosevelt Island is at the bottom of the priority list, but if Stanford or Cornell builds a campus there, will that change the interest in having a dock there? (Sharon Bermon, Waterfront Advocate for Roosevelt Island)
- We must include storage space as a consideration for a dock site.

2B. Identifying and Discussing Future Eco Dock sites

The Exercise: MWA presented its top Eco Dock sites and asked for comments on those sites and ideas for new sites. The following comments and suggestions for Eco Dock sites were discussed:

Brooklyn Dock Site Comments

- Coney Island Creek and Leon Kaiser Park, Brooklyn are good potential locations. Beachfront there would be ideal (the creek is underutilized for recreational activities).
- India St Pier, Brooklyn: This is a great potential location because there is existing infrastructure. The dock at the new Greenpoint Boat House will only be designed for human powered boaters (Dewey Thompson, North Brooklyn Boat Club).
- If the Brooklyn Bridge Park piers plan to accommodate large vessels, there need to be gates in the fence (Mary Habstritt, LILAC Preservation Project).
- MWA explained that Brooklyn Bridge Park isn’t on the list because the money is going towards retrofitting the existing piers and they’re building a human-powered launch.
- DOE site at Denise Wharf: it could be possible to extend the barge to be an eco dock. MWA explained that, currently, only Parks Department sites are under consideration.

Manhattan Dock Site Comments

- Roosevelt Island under the Queensborough Bridge is a potential site (it is bulkhead)

- The new south side park on Roosevelt Island would be a great dock site.
- A great dock site would be between the UN and the Triborough Bridge on the East River (Karen Lee, Lee & Associates Architects PLLC).
- Dyckman St. is great. There are no locations for boats to land on the west side of Manhattan besides the 79th Street Marina.
- West Harlem Piers Park could be utilized for a boating program if necessary retrofits are made; a spud barge attached to the existing fixed pier would accommodate more vessels (Nina Sander, Clearwater).
- Swindler Cove is a potential site (Katie Wheeler, Harlem Community Rowing).
- Stuyvesant Cove would be a nice place for a dock; there is an annual swim in the area, it is densely populated, and there is boat storage opportunity.
- Harlem River Park has potential for boat storage for a dock. If there were 20x40 feet available, a shipping cargo storage container could be used.

Staten Island Dock Site Comments

- Staten Island: Is there a good site on the south shore?
- Conference House Park is a potential site; there is already a water trail site here.
- Cromwell Center, Staten Island: They are already working on designating it as a water trail site.
- Snug Harbor Cultural Center would be a great potential site.
- Most of the Staten Island south shore parks are on beaches; would it be possible to build an eco dock from a beach? Might not be as feasible.

Queens Dock Site Comments

- There are two parks being developed on Jamaica Bay on former landfills. These could be opportunities to incorporate a dock (Tony Pignatello, Sebago Canoe Club).

Bronx Dock Site Comments

- Soundview Park; there is a new field house that could be used for storage and the site is on the greenway (Carlos Martinez, Partnership for Parks).

2C. Public Access Improvements

Discuss types of possible public access improvements

The Exercise: MWA asked participants what kinds of improvements (such as fenders, unlocking gates, etc.) can open up sites to new access to the water from a variety of vessels

Manhattan Public Access Suggestions

- West Harlem Piers Park: This is a potential public access site. If you make the existing floating dock larger it could accommodate more boats. Currently, the dock allows for 10 foot boats to dock but the boats that interested in docking are 15 ft. It was poorly designed. The dock exits directly on to the bike path; this is a dangerous arrangement and makes the site unusable in many ways (Becca Olinger, Village Community Boathouse). Maybe the gangway could be moved and that could solve the problem on the exit onto the bike path. Clearwater cut programs to the West Harlem Piers because they couldn't use the dock; if

you attach a spud barge to the existing dock it could accommodate Clearwater (Nina Sander, Clearwater).

- Hudson River Park's Pier 25- does not need improvements for human powered boaters because it is designated for historic vessels. It wasn't intended for kayak and canoe use (Nicolette Witcher, Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT)).
- Hudson River Park Pier 26- this is where the boathouse will be and it should accommodate kayaks and canoes.
- Comments on the fees for historical vessels at Pier 25 (Nicolette Witcher, HRPT).
 - Transient berths- there is currently no fee for visiting historic vessels. It is designated as a historic vessel pier (it has to provide some community benefit).
There is a long history of HRPT saying they want public access but the "free" public berths are not "free" because of utilities/capital costs (electrical and plumbing connections). The requirement for setting up utilities was in the Pier 25 RFP.
- Hudson River Park's Pier 40- there are only 40 mooring balls. There is opportunity to extend out floating docks (Kim O'Connell, United States Power Squadron).
 - The Power Squadron has reached out to Power Squadrons in New Jersey. They would come visit NY if there were more places to dock that were reasonably priced.
 - HRPT is moving towards expanding the mooring balls.
- If you are putting more boats in the Pier 40 area, it impedes logistics for human powered boating (Becca Olinger, Village Community Boathouse). Downtown Boathouse runs a program in the same area as the mooring field at Pier 40. It was brought to our attention that it can be challenging for human powered programs.
- At Pier 63, *John J Harvey* shared space for many years with human powered programs. All it takes is education (Huntley Gill, John J Harvey).
- We should allow for jet skis and jet ski programs in order to bring in younger generations (Gerry Blackstone, Yonkers Paddling and Rowing).
- Is there a place to put a dock near the asphalt park on the East River? No, there will be a new waste transfer station (Victoria Olson, LIC Boathouse).

Staten Island Public Access Sites

- Pier 1 on Staten Island, adjacent to Staten Island ferry maintenance facility was designed for passive recreation but it could accommodate docking. There are no cleats, no bollards, etc. Shore power, water, and sewer connections would be great to have as well (Mary Habstritt, LILAC Preservation Project).

Bronx Public Access Sites

- There is a possible access improvement site north of Soundview Park on the Bronx River (Damian Griffin, Bronx River Alliance).
- Hutchinson River: There is an unofficial access point (only when requested) east of Pelham Parkway on the River that has been used by Bronx River Alliance and Hutchinson River Restoration Project (HRRP) for boating. Also, HRRP has used this site for its cleanups of the Thomas Pell Wildlife Sanctuary in Pelham Bay Park (Eleanor Rae, HRRP).

- There is zero public access on the Hutchinson River. HRRP has received a grant from HEP/NEIWPCC to research this issue. (Eleanor Rae, HRRP).
- Concrete Plant Park—there is an existing steep concrete boat ramp. The improvement is to change the grade or do something on the bulkhead to allow for a floating dock (Damian Griffin, Bronx River Alliance).

Queens Public Access Sites

- Hunters Point South would be a great opportunity to incorporate boating access.
- The park at Hunter’s Point South is under redevelopment. There is a launch plan but it doesn’t include a boathouse.
- Participants have expressed that Gantry State Park has always been off limits to boaters.
- We should consider access for swimming. There is the NYC triathlon and a new Iron Man on the upper Hudson.

2D. Dredging Issues

MWA asked participants to discuss the sites for which dredging would allow for new or improved access for human-powered boating

- Westchester Creek is used for industrial purposes. It needs to be dredged to make it more accessible.
- Eastchester Bay is a candidate for dredging.
- Anable Basin needs dredging (Dewey Thompson, North Brooklyn Boat Club).
- Kingsborough Community College (Sheepshead Bay): An unnatural beach has formed. Did the Army Corps do dredging?
- Mill Pond Park in the Bronx- the basin areas could be dredged out (Damian Griffin, Bronx River Alliance).

2E. Wakes/Rules of the Road Discussion

A discussion ensued about the problem of wakes and rules of the road:

- There are big wakes at World Financial Center Ferry Terminal.
- The problem with the water taxis and fast ferries is that they come in groups and create multiplied wake action. The ferry speeds cause unnecessary wakes.
- A typical wake is 4 feet. The boats in a group create a 7 ft wake (they are probably aware but they make good timing by doing it that way).
- The ferries usually don’t sound their horn when departing from a slip. If you’re in a small boat you don’t have any warning (Rob Buchanan, NYC Watertrail Association).

3. Discussion about Implementation of the NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan and the NYC Waterfront Action Agenda

MWA asked what is missing, what is good, what should be added from these documents?

- Bushwick Inlet is missing in the Action Agenda projects. The City is trying to acquire it. It is a rare safe harbor.
- One central issue is how much responsibility should boat houses have?
- High priority projects should be 6.2 in the CWP (“Clarify and enhance regulatory and organizational mechanisms to ensure safety of water recreation and reduce conflicts among users”).
- The recreational boating community needs to follow what regulatory mechanisms are being proposed
- How many of the 2011 projects have been implemented or started? It is important to communicate and publicize progress.
- There is plenty of room for everybody on the harbor while New York Harbor is the most conflicted waterway in the United States (Ed Kelly, Maritime Association of NY/NJ).

MWA asked about ideas about the role of the Waterfront Management Advisory Board (WMAB)

- No one on the WMAB board is from the human-powered community
- It is difficult to build at the bulkhead due to city regulations. We still don’t have a vehicle to address the difficulties in building at the bulkhead. These issues didn’t appear in the CWP/Action Agenda (Karen Lee, Lee & Associates Architects PLLC).
- WMAB should analyze new technologies that are put in water (example is the Verdant water turbines).
- There needs to be coordination among agencies. There were mixed and uncoordinated reactions after Hurricane Irene—HRPT told Lilac they were supposed to have someone on the ship. At the South Street Seaport the operators weren’t allowed to go near the ships. The answer should have been left to the expert crews (Mary Habstritt, LILAC Preservation Project).
- There is a lack of planning and coordination for emergency planning.
- The NY Times wrote that most of the new development on the waterfront is happening in hurricane evacuation zone A. Bloomberg’s priorities come into conflict with climate change issues; he is trying carry out both development and sustainability measures. WMAB can point this out to him (Rob Buchanan, NYC Watertrail Association).