

Hampton-Seabrook Estuary (HSE) Collaborative Meeting

December 11, 2024

11:00AM – 12:30PM

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Liz Durfee, Interim Coordinator for the HSE Collaborative, welcomed everyone to the meeting, provided an overview of the agenda, and asked Steering Committee Members to introduce themselves:
 - Rayann Dionne, Executive Director and Project Lead, Seabrook-Hamptons Estuary Alliance
 - Trevor Mattera, Habitat and Water Quality Program Manager, Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership
 - Jay Diener, Seabrook-Hamptons Estuary Alliance
 - Kevin Lucy, Habitat Coordinator, NHDES Coastal Program
 - Cory Riley, NH Fish & Game and National Estuarine Research Reserve
 - Steve Couture, NHDES Coastal Program
 - Kate Swails, NOAA's Office for Coastal Management
 - Erik Beck, US EPA Region I

2. Hampton Harbor Bridge Update, Denis Switzer, Contract Administrator, NH Department of Transportation

- A recording of Denis's presentation and Q&A is available [here](#).

3. Seacoast Greenway Update, Scott Bogle, Principal Transportation Planner, Rockingham Planning Commission

- A recording of Scott's presentation and Q&A is available [here](#).

4. Steering Committee Updates

- Kate Swails, NOAA, shared funding opportunity updates: [Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience](#) opportunity. Opened last Friday through April 16. Informational webinars are coming up in the next few months. [Tribal Fish Passage](#) and [Fish Passage](#) are both open through February.
- Trevor Mattera, PREP, shared that the [PREPA grants](#) are open. The deadline is March 31, projects run \$5k-\$25k in scope and there will be an informational webinar on January 15th.
- Kevin Lucy, Coastal Program, shared an update about the salt marsh parcel investigation project. Coastal Program is working with the Rockingham Planning Commission and has hired a deed title specialist to try to identify parcel ownership. There are about 1,250 parcels in the marsh, which speaks to the historical agricultural use. Since then, there isn't an incentive to identify boundaries. Not knowing ownership impacts the ability to study the marsh and do projects to restore it. Of the ~4,000 acres in the marsh, 880 acres unresolved as of July. The grant ends March 31, 2025. The Coastal Program has some additional funding from CZM to continue

working with RPC to continue to work with communities and experts to deal with this issue. In some situations, we know there is a deed, but we don't know the boundaries. We'll have more next steps in a few months.

- Bonnie Turek, (for Chris Meaney), USFWS Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, shared that the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program received 200k in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for controlling invasives species (Pepperweed and non-native phragmites) in MA, NH, and southern Maine saltmarshes. Chris will connect with partners to identify a path forward for obligating funds. These funds are likely going to go fast and Chris is interested in ways to leverage them if possible and align them with existing restoration efforts. Please reach out if you have ideas. Christopher_meaney@fws.gov.
 - Liz invited Collaborative members to reach out if anyone is interested in this.
 - Kevin mentioned that Pepperweed has been an issue because it is low cost, but we need boots on the ground to find it. We have a good relationship with NHDA to fund removal. I've had a problem identifying where money can be spent. There are probably hot spots all over the marsh associated with eh infamous 10,000 stem site. We could do a coordination call in the spring.
 - Liz invited Collaborative members to reach out to her if they are interested.
 - Kate Bashline asked if this would be an opportunity for sand dune invasive effort. Sand dune has a lot of bittersweet that we need to remove as the dune is restored.
 - Bonnie did not think that the species were limited to Pepperweed and phragmites and suggested reaching out to Chris.
- Kevin Lucy, NH Coastal Program, shared that USDA NRCS is working with SPNHF and Audubon Society to look at salt marsh holdings in the estuary and looking at advancing restoration planning there.
- Erik Beck, EPA, asked about a water main break.

5. Project & Other Updates from Collaborative Members

- Cory Riley, GBNERR shared that she is working on marsh prioritization work and created a viewer. She is putting together a report of where priority marsh migration pathways are so that you can cite them in grant applications.
- GBNERR is also working on grant applications now.
- Adrienne Kovach, UNH, shared an update on salt marsh sparrow monitoring. Presentation and slides are available [here](#).
- Rayann Dionne, SHEA, shared an update about conservation commission activities. Hampton finished it's Natural Resources Inventory recently. Hampton Falls also secured a PREPA grant to do an NRI . Seabrook is also going to be doing an NRI.

6. HSE Baseline Assessment

- Rayann Dionne, SHEA, shared an update about the baseline assessment. The assessment is set to launch in Spring 2025. This important initiative is funded through SHEA's 3-year Congressional Direct Spending request that will be administered by NOAA. This funding runs from April 2025 through March 2028. The goal of this Baseline Assessment is to compile and analyze both historical and newly collected data to quantify and better understand the current health of the Hampton-Seabrook Estuary. We hope that the resulting baseline assessment will help support the work of our collaborative members. Along with providing the foundation for a complementary phase of this project, which involves developing long-term monitoring protocols to track changes in the estuary's health over time. To support this effort, we will be establishing a Technical Assistance Committee over the winter. This group will provide guidance and input to the hired Baseline Assessment consultant as they evaluate indicators of estuary health, data analysis tools, and findings. This Committee will also assist in shaping the development of long-term monitoring protocols. If you're interested in joining, please let Liz or me know. Over the winter, we plan to release an RFP seeking the Baseline Assessment consultant and ideally have them onboard by early April. As this timeline firms up, we'll share updates, including the final RFP, and we look forward to having the hired consult provide updates at future collaborative meetings.
- Liz Durfee, Collaborative Coordinator, shared a whiteboard and asked Collaborative members to share comments and add their name if they are interested in playing a supportive role for any of the focus areas or tasks that are part of the assessment.
 - o *Refer to attached slides for input collected.*

7. Next Steps

- Meetings for 2025 will be scheduled soon. Please reach out with any questions, comments, or to connect with other Collaborative members. The HSE funding database is available at [HSE Project Tracker 2.0 and grant opportunities list](#).

Click on the sticky note tool and drag a note to the column/frame. Double click on the note to type your comments and ideas. Add your name if you are interested in supporting data collection for a specific focus area.

FOCUS AREAS

Frame 1	Frame 2	Frame 3	Frame 4	Frame 5	Frame 6	Frame 7
Water Quality	Water Level Analysis	High-Resolution Elevation Model	Plant Community	Beaches (and dunes?)	Avian	Fish & Shellfish
Compile and analyze: - Temperature - Dissolved oxygen - pH - Turbidity - Salinity - Suspended solids - Nitrogen - Total coliform Have you considered emerging pollutants (pfas, microplastics, etc.)? ~Hanna Mogensen (MVPC, MassBays) Matt Wood, NHDES Assessment Program Coordinator,. Happy to help PREP interested	- Compile and analyze data from: - Hampton Harbor Gage - Low cost sensors - Use hydrodynamic model and water level to determine tidal datums for various marsh units NERACOOS	Create a high-resolution Digital Elevation Model (DEM) referenced to NAVD 88 of the HSE from available lidar and bathymetry GBNERR is interested in your approach- we are doing some drone LiDAR in the area so wwant to coordinate	Spatial analysis: - Unvegetated to vegetated ratio - High marsh low marsh ratio - Tidal wetland change analysis 2013-2023 - Invasive species - Dune vegetation health (diversity, rare/endangered, invasives) GBNERR is interested in helping out here	Incorporate existing/ ongoing results from beach profiling efforts NHDES Coastal Program/NH Sea Grant -Chris Williams NHDES/ Allyson EE NH Sea Grant David B (UNH JEL) and Alyson E (NHSG) have dune profile data for multiple years	Incorporate existing/ ongoing results from studies on avian species (i.e. Saltmarsh sparrow) ↑ Pam Hunt; Sparrows are covered, but keep me (NH Audubon) in the loop re: shorebirds UNH - Kovach lab working with Burdock and Moore to incorporate avian monitoring with SHARP protocols	Compile and analyze existing studies on fish and shellfish PREP interested NHFG may be able to help here Alyson E (NHSG) has data on salt marsh fish comm from grad work in sites not currently monitored

TASKS

Click on the sticky note tool and drag a note to the column/frame. Double click on the note to type your comments and ideas. Add your name if you are interested in supporting supporting monitoring efforts.

Frame 1

Protocol Development

When possible, use existing protocols and adapt to HSE

Frame 2

Sentinnel Monitoring

2 Seasons

- Install 4 permanent monitoring transects throughout HSE
- Evaluate vegetation, soil, salt marsh condition, and salt marsh migration

Frame 3

Saltmarsh Sparrow Monitoring

2-3 Seasons

Re-survey HSE for imperiled Saltmarsh Sparrow

Frame 4

Threatened and Engangered Plants

2-3 Seasons

Survey of threatened and endangered plants

Frame 5

Community-Based Monitoring

1-2 Seasons

Support Community-based monitorin initiatives - i.e. rapid assessment, picture posts, field surveys (i.e. Green/fiddler crabs)

For chrabs, you can coordinate with efforts being done with SeaGrant and GBNERR