

**MEETING SUMMARY OF THE  
ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION COUNCIL  
NOAA Headquarters  
1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD  
November 7, 2012**

The meeting convened at 10:00 am, with the following members and participants:

**Council Members:**

- **Mr. Samuel Rauch**, Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Chair;
- **Mr. Paul Cough**, Director, Oceans and Coastal Protection Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and
- **Mr. Arnab Raychaudhuri**, , Special Assistant, Office of Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
- **Mr. Greg Kidd**, Land Stewardship Specialist for the Easement Program Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- **Mr. John Schmerfeld**, Acting Division Chief, Habitat and Resources Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS);

**Work Group Members:**

- Julia Royster, NOAA
- Ellen Cummings, U.S. Army Corps
- Noemi Mercado, EPA
- Chris Darnell, USFWS
- Gregory Kidd, USDA/NRCS

**Other Participants:**

- NOAA - Brian Pawlak, Perry Gayaldo, and Julie Nygard
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation - Mary Beth Charles
- Restore America's Estuaries – Diane Hoskins

**I. Status of Previously Funded Projects**

Ellen Cummings (USACE) provided a status update of Corps funded ERA projects, updating the group on the status of the projects including project terminations. Julia Royster (NOAA) provided a similar update for the NOAA funded projects. Sam Rauch noted that it was important for the Council to understand why projects are terminated so that they can consider those factors in selecting the most viable projects in the future. The group briefly discussed the status of the Sears Point project, which is in jeopardy of being terminated by the Corps due to Hazardous, Toxic, or Radioactive Waste (HTRW) and other issues. A member of the public (Diane Hoskins, Restore America's Estuaries) commented that they are concerned that the Sears Point grant recipient has made a significant investment in the project and that the threat of termination is disruptive to the organization and overall restoration goals. Ellen Cummings noted that the Corps does not fund cleanup of HTRW and will not support projects that involve HTRW cleanup in the future.

A table providing a summary of the Status of Estuary Habitat Restoration Projects is attached to this meeting summary (Attachment A).

## **II. ERA Federal Funding Opportunity Status Update**

Ellen Cummings (USACE) provided an update on the upcoming ERA Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) announcement. The FFO will be posted on or close to December 3, 2012. The solicitation will be open for 60 days and will be for approximately \$3.5 million of USACE funds. The review and selection period will last about two to three months. Paul Cough asked if we could plan on selecting projects at the May 2013 meeting. Ellen Cummings responded that is probably a realistic timeline.

## **III. Status Update on Congressional Report**

Julia Royster (NOAA) explained that the next Congressional Report will be completed in Spring 2013 and will cover the years 2009-2012. The group discussed the Council's role in finalizing the report. Ellen Cummings confirmed that approval and submission of the Report is the responsibility of the Corps with concurrence from the Council.

## **IV. Update on the National Ocean Policy**

Chris Darnell (USFWS) updated the Council and public on the National Ocean Policy. The presentation covered a brief review of the Policy and the Action and milestones related to ERA.

## **V. Estuary Habitat Restoration Strategy**

Noemi Mercado (EPA) presented the draft final revised Strategy and Action Plan. There was a brief discussion on performance measures for the Strategy including the million acres goal. The Work Group reminded the Council that based on previous direction from the Council, and input from the public, the revised Strategy moves away from the million acres goal and emphasizes a more strategic approach.

**DECISION: The Council approved the Strategy as written.**

## **VI. Minimum Monitoring Standards**

Greg Kidd (USDA) outlined the Work Group's progress on reviewing the existing minimum monitoring data standards and the development of new minimum monitoring data standards. The presentation focused on key questions the Work Group is resolving, a proposed framework for the new standards, and key questions for the Council. The Council reacted positively to the proposed framework and agreed to provide continued input and guidance through respective Work Group members. A member of the public (Diane Hoskins, Restore America's Estuaries) commented that they are glad to see the standards are shifting to focus on project quality and not only counting acres restored.

## **VI. Chair Election**

Sam Rauch led a discussion on the need to elect a new Council Chair. NOAA's chairmanship has expired. There was also discussion on the procedures for electing a chair. With many agency

positions currently filled in an Acting capacity, Chris Darnell proposed that NOAA serve as Chair until May 2013, at which time the Council would elect a Chair to serve the next three year term.

**DECISION: The Council elected NOAA as Chair until May 2013.**

**DECISION: The next election for Council Chair will be held in May 2013.**

**ACTION: The Work Group will review the election procedures to ensure they are clear on the election process.**

The meeting ended at 12:00 p.m.