

**MEETING SUMMARY OF THE
ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION COUNCIL
NOAA Headquarters
1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD
May 13, 2011**

The meeting convened at 1:30p.m., with the following members and representatives present:

- **Mr. Eric C. Schwaab**, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Chair;
- **Ms. Ann Mills**, Deputy Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- **Ms. Tamara McCandless**, Chief, Branch of Habitat Restoration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS);
- **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).

I. Status of Previously Funded Projects

At the May 2010 Council Meeting, the Council directed the Work Group to provide a status update of ERA funded projects to date and include a discussion of how long the projects have been in progress and how much money they have received thus far. Ellen Cummings (USACE), an ERA Work Group member, walked the Council through the status of the Corps funded projects. Julia Royster (NOAA) similarly provided an update for the NOAA funded projects.

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

II. Review of New Habitat Restoration Project Proposals

Chris Eng (FWS), a Work Group member, gave an overview of the estuary habitat restoration project solicitation process and the requirements of proposal applications. Thirty four proposals were received, requesting \$38,500,000; these were from 16 different states.

Ms. Noemi Mercado (EPA), a Work Group member, then gave a brief overview of the top twelve ranked projects the Work Group recommended for consideration of funding based on the availability of funds. At the time of the meeting neither the Corps nor NOAA knew the exact amount of FY 2011 funds that would be available for new projects.

Paul Cough noted and the other Council members concurred that the project summaries should contain a discussion of how the projects address climate change and resiliency.

A table providing a *Summary of Recommended ERA Habitat Restoration Proposals for Funding* is attached to this meeting summary (Attachment B).

DECISION: The Council approved the list of 12 projects recommended by the Work Group in rank order.

ACTION: The Council Chair will send the Council's recommendation to the Secretary of the Army with a request that the projects be approved for funding to the extent funds are available and also that projects be delegated for implementation as proposed.

ACTION: The Work Group will ensure that future project summaries include a discussion of the projects' resiliency in the face of climate change.

III. Presentation on National Estuarine Research Reserve Reference Monitoring Study Results

In 2007, the NOAA Restoration Center and NOAA Ocean Service Estuarine Reserve Division awarded ERA funds to five Reserves in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS). By using Reserve sites as reference marshes, investigators evaluated the success of several salt marsh restoration projects. The study also hoped to address which monitoring techniques might be the most useful for hydrologic and excavation types of projects. The Reserves involved in this partnership include the Chesapeake Bay NERR in Virginia, the Wells NERR in Maine, the Narragansett NERR in Rhode Island, the North Carolina NEER, and the South Slough NERR in Oregon.

Michele Dionne (Wells NERR) has been an integral part in the NOAA-NERRS partnership and provided a snapshot of the analytical methods being used and highlighted some preliminary results on some of the parameters measured, including percent cover, species richness, pore water salinity, and the restoration performance index. Projects were categorized into two primary restoration types: hydrologic versus excavation. Multiple reference sites were used as required depending on the nature of the project and monitoring parameters involved. Initial findings suggest that excavation sites perform well for salinity and vegetation and that hydrologic sites exhibit constraints for salinity as it is rarely possible to fully restore the natural hydrologic regime. Overall using the reserves as reference sites has proved useful. In the future a parameter that measures carbon storage may be added to the research effort.

IV. Update on the National Ocean Policy

Jenni Wallace (NOAA), a Work Group member, gave a short presentation updating the Council and public on the National Ocean Policy. The presentation outline included: history and description of the Executive Order, function of the National Ocean Council, identification of nine priority objectives, and next steps in the development of Strategic Action Plans. After various opportunities for public comment, the goal is to finalize the nine Strategic Action Plans in early 2012.

This presentation was given to help set the stage for the subsequent discussion on the Revised Estuary Habitat Restoration Strategy.

V. Estuary Habitat Restoration Strategy Discussion

Jenni Wallace (NOAA) gave a short presentation to set the stage for the discussion on how to move the Strategy forward. Topics included: Why Revise the Strategy, Required Strategy Elements, What's in the Draft Revised Strategy, Draft Revised Strategy Objectives, Strategy Revision Process, Stakeholder Comments, The Challenge, Discussion Objective, and Options for Moving the Strategy Forward.

Council members discussed three possible options for moving the strategy forward, as well as a continuum in between. One option would be for the Council to revise the Strategy to clarify sections that comments indicated were confusing. Council activities would remain focused on the annual funding of restoration projects and basic activities required under the Act.

A second option builds on the first option and would have the Council engage in a targeted effort to guide estuarine habitat restoration policy. The Council would develop and encourage the use of various standard monitoring protocols by the Council agencies for all estuary restoration projects and also encourage other Federal agencies to adopt the same standards. Additional effort would also be placed on having data for all estuarine restoration projects included in the National Estuaries Restoration Inventory. This, in addition to work such as is being done currently at the NERRs discussed above, would facilitate analysis of effective restoration techniques and monitoring protocols.

A third option involves having the Council embrace the challenge received from estuarine partners and serve as THE coordinating body of federal estuary restoration efforts.

The Council discussed what each of the options might entail. Paul Cough (EPA) commented that the second option would be providing tools to support project implementation, including enhanced monitoring, tracking and performance metrics. Mr. Cough expressed that the third option had a strong ocean governance dimension. Eric Schwaab (NOAA) liked the idea of building on the existing projects with monitoring and tracking. Ann Mills (USDA) commented that much of the work of the ERA Council also ties into America's Great Outdoors Initiative and that the Council may want to consider a place based initiative. Ms. Mills also expressed some concern that the third option would compete with existing regional efforts that are making their own decisions. Tamara McCandless wanted to ensure that the second option would also include socio-economics and restoration research of techniques. It was also expressed that given the current budgetary climate and the multiple administration initiatives that the option selected should be achievable.

The overall consensus was that the Council would move forward on the second option, creating a self-defined role to enhance coordination of restoration monitoring and tracking. The Strategy would be reshaped to address this new direction.

ACTION: The Council charged the Work Group to articulate a path forward including development of a clarified vision statement, a revised timeline and a revised Strategy based on the guidance from the Council.

VI. Public Comment

The public was given several opportunities to speak during the meeting as well as at the end of the meeting. Among those present that provided feedback were:

- Jeff Benoit and Chris Lyons, Restore America's Estuaries, who would like the Council to set the standards for coastal habitat restoration and move the needle of socio-economic analysis, and
- Storm Cunningham, Revitalitz, LLC, who provided several observations regarding the purpose of a vision statement and the need to revise the statement in the draft revised strategy.

The meeting ended at 3:30 p.m.

Attachment A—Status of Estuary Habitat Restoration Projects

Completed Projects

FY Funded	Project Name	ERA Funds	Status	Agency
2004	Alligator Creek Addition Restoration Project, FL	\$ 260,000	Ongoing monitoring	Corps
2004	Restoration of SAV on the Seaside of Virginia's Eastern Shore, VA	\$ 60,000	Ongoing monitoring	Corps
2007	Fort Sheridan Coastal Habitat Restoration Project, IL	\$ 371,000	Ongoing monitoring	Corps
2009	McAllis Point, TX	\$ 492,700	Ongoing monitoring	NOAA

Ongoing Projects

FY Funded	Project Name	ERA Funds	Status	Agency
2006	Pelican Island NWR/Indian River Lagoon, FL	\$ 103,000	Construction contract to be advertised	Corps
2006	Stewart's Creek, MA	\$ 645,000	Design	Corps
2006	Colorado Lagoon Restoration, CA	\$ 1,000,000	Being Reevaluated	Corps
2007	Old Place Creek Berm Removal Project, NY	\$ 660,000	Project Partnership Agreement being finalized	Corps
2007	Banana River Estuary Restoration Project, FL	\$ 124,000	Planning	Corps
2008	Half Moon Reef Restoration	\$ 840,000	Project Partnership Agreement to be signed in July	Corps
2010	Kent Island Restoration, Bolinas Lagoon, CA	\$ 527,000	Cooperative agreement to be signed in July	Corps
2010	Secret Harbor Estuary and Salt Marsh Restoration, WA	\$ 590,000	Cooperative agreement to be signed in June	Corps
2010	Thunder Bay Reef Habitat Restoration, MI	\$ 545,000	Cooperative agreement signed	Corps
2010	West Goleta Slough Restoration Projects, CA	\$ 623,000	Construction	Corps
2010	Deadman's Island Restoration Projects, FL	\$ 825,000	Cooperative agreement to be signed in June	Corps
2010	McDaniel Slough Tidal Restoration Expansion, CA	\$ 275,000	Construction	NOAA
2010	Damde Meadows Tidal Restoration - Phase II, MA	\$ 190,000	Construction	NOAA
2010	Molokai Fishpond and Fringing Reef Restoration Project, HI	\$ 100,000	Construction	NOAA
2010	Port Susan Bay Estuary Restoration Project, WA	\$ 1,000,000	Construction	NOAA
2010	Restoring Coastal Estuarine Habitat in Three North Carolina Estuaries	\$ 413,887	Permitting	Corps
2010	Jupiter Ridge Shoreline Restoration Project, FL	\$ 500,000	Terminated by sponsor	Corps

**Attachment B—Summary of Recommended ERA Habitat Restoration
Proposals for Funding**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Requested Funding</u>	<u>Recommended Funding Agency</u>
1	Riverside Ranch Restoration Project	CA	Ducks Unlimited	\$ 1,000,000.00	USACE
2	Sears Point Tidal Restoration Project	CA	Ducks Unlimited	\$ 1,000,000.00	USACE
3	St. Lucie River Oyster Reef Habitat Restoration Project	FL	Martin County Board of County Commissioners	\$ 212,038.00	NOAA
4	Little Creek Oyster Sanctuary	NC	North Carolina Department of Environment & Natural Resources	\$ 586,182.00	USACE
5	Elkhorn Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration: Building Resilience with the Beneficial Reuse of Sediment	CA	Elkhorn Slough Foundation	\$ 999,325.00	USACE
6	Humboldt Estuarine Complex Intertidal Habitat Restoration and Climate Change Adaptation	CA	Ducks Unlimited	\$ 200,138.00	USACE or NOAA
7	Habitat Restoration in Kaneohe Bay, HI	HI	State of Hawaii	\$ 286,358.00	NOAA
8	Salt Creek Estuary Reconnection	WA	North Olympic Salmon Coalition	\$ 771,881.00	USACE
9	Skokomish Estuary Restoration Phase 3	WA	Mason Conservation District	\$ 572,000.00	USACE
10	Green Gulch Creek Stream Restoration Project	CA	San Francisco Zen Center	\$ 200,000.00	NOAA
11	Scaling-Up Native Oyster Restoration for Ecosystem Services in New Hampshire	NH	The Nature Conservancy	\$ 414,184.00	USACE
12	Establishing an Aquatic Migratory Corridor to Address Climate Change Impacts on Estuarine Organisms	AL	The Nature Conservancy	\$ 951,919.00	USACE