



**A REPORT FROM THE**

**HUDSON RIVER**

**WATERSHED ALLIANCE**

***LEGACY SAIL***

**ABOARD SLOOP CLEARWATER**

**OCTOBER 12, 2007**

On October 12, the Hudson River Watershed Alliance hosted a brainstorming session aboard the sloop *Clearwater* to identify regional initiatives that will encourage collaboration and advance watershed protection in the Hudson River basin. The specific purpose of the Legacy Sail was to raise the profile of the Watershed Alliance and frame legacy projects for the 2009 Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Commemoration.

After weeklong forecasts of rain and potential Nor'easter storms, the skies cleared at the last minute as participants boarded the Sloop. In attendance for the sail were key members of state and regional government, the mid-Hudson representative from Governor Spitzer's office, and representatives from regional organizations, small watershed groups, educational institutions, research institutions, and individuals working in the water resources field.

The motivating concept behind the Legacy Sail was to bring a group of incredibly talented individuals into the same room (or, in this case, onto the same vessel), giving each of them the opportunity to share their expertise, knowledge, and, most importantly, their concerns and vision for the Hudson River watershed. During the sail, participants networked and discussed their ideas for improving water policy and regulations in the region. Near the end of the Sail, the whole group reconvened to bring forth ideas discussed throughout the day.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SPEAKERS**

Katy Dunlap, HRWA Coordinator and Clearwater's Environmental Associate, gave the background and history of the Hudson River Watershed Alliance. Simon Gruber, HRWA Steering Committee Member and Environmental Consultant, then described various regional HRWA projects planned for 2008-2009. A high priority project for the HRWA is the development of a regional online, user-friendly GIS and data visualization capacity, aimed at enabling local planning boards, decision-makers, and other stakeholders to easily access and use maps, aerial imagery, and other data on a watershed scale. Two related uses of this GIS system could include 1) a user-friendly regional pollution map that incorporates a wide range of data for use by municipal officials and planners; and 2) a map of riverfront properties delineating sensitive shoreline resources to prioritize areas for preservation and conservation.

Mr. Gruber also described other HRWA proposed projects, including: development and promotion of a comprehensive plan for improving the monitoring of water resources in the Hudson River basin; development of a sustainable sediment management strategy that includes measures to control erosion and downstream flow of sediment in the Hudson River watershed; and working toward integration of regional energy needs, water resources and climate change adaptation.

Janet Burnet, HRWA Steering Committee Member and Executive Director of the Ramapo River Intermunicipal Council, remarked that this is a historical moment when allies, representing an impressive collective skill set and extensive watershed experience, have joined together to brainstorm and capitalize on this opportunity to work together to improve the health of the Hudson River watershed. Ms. Burnet asked participants for their viewpoint, posing the following questions: (1) How can the HRWA work with all of you? (2) How can HRWA be helpful to regional work? and (3) What is the best role for HRWA in advancing a regional plan for watershed protection? Ms. Burnet then introduced James Tierney, Fran Dunwell, Theodore Eisenman, Jeff Rumpf, and William Shaw.

James Tierney, previously the NYC Watershed Inspector General and now the Assistant Commissioner for NYS DEC's Office of Water Resources, talked about living watersheds and his experience organizing around watershed concepts. While growing up in Dutchess County, Mr. Tierney witnessed the sludge problem in Fish Kill Creek during the 1970s first-hand. In his role as Assistant Commissioner of Water Resources, Mr. Tierney's vision for protection includes the entire watershed, incorporating Lake Tear of the Clouds and the Mohawk River. Particular concerns include non-point sources of pollution draining from our landscape into our water bodies; improving wastewater and sewage treatment plant infrastructure; combined sewer overflows; ensuring biodiversity; and improving enforcement of environmental laws and regulations.



*Assistant Commissioner Tierney encouraged communication and collaboration between non-governmental organizations and government entities.*

Photo by George Potanovic

Fran Dunwell, Hudson River Estuary Program Director, discussed connecting what happens in the landscape to what happens in the water. Ms. Dunwell expressed concern about the lack of attention being placed on a combined sewer overflow (CSO) abatement program to protect water quality. Ms. Dunwell encouraged participants to take the watershed concept to the next level. By connecting individual stories to our watersheds, we can begin to look at the big picture and put into practice watershed protection principles.

Theodore Eisenman, HRWA Steering Committee Member and Director of the NYS Highlands Coalition, discussed the idea of replicating the Chesapeake Bay Agreement here in the Hudson River watershed. Mr. Eisenman suggested that we already possess the foundation and content for a watershed-wide agreement. However, we are lacking the acknowledgement from governing entities that they share the responsibility of managing natural resources. Until our resources are managed in a coordinated way, we will continue to have fragmented ecosystems. Mr. Eisenman suggested that the HRWA work with stakeholders to galvanize political support around the concept of a watershed-wide agreement, with a signing event to take place during the Hudson-Fulton-Quadricentennial-Commission.

Jeff Rumpf, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater's Executive Director, explained that Clearwater is pleased to be administering the HRWA and Clearwater is supportive of watershed work in general. Mr. Rumpf stressed that point sources of pollution are by and large being addressed, and seconded Mr. Tierney's assessment that it is time to focus on the non-point sources of pollution draining from our land surfaces into our water bodies.

William Shaw, President of the Hudson River Environmental Society, discussed creating an inventory of different water users to improve communication and collaboration. Mr. Shaw suggested that those who use water on a regular basis (for recreation or otherwise) could give water resource managers early warning signs of problems.



*Raising the Throat*  
Photo by George Potanovic

The brainstorming session resulted in a number of very important and exciting ideas, detailed below.

The common thread among the ideas was that we must all work together to identify problems and create solutions.



*Raising the Peak*  
Photo by George Potanovic

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES RAISED DURING THE SAIL**

As we reconvened, Russell Urban-Mead, HRWA Steering Committee Member and Hydrogeologist with The Chazen Companies, facilitated the wrap-up session. Ideas and concerns about the state of the Hudson River watershed raised during the Sail are summarized below.

*First.* Of utmost importance, there is a need to recognize that we live in a home rule state where local government has the ability to create tighter regulations to protect our natural resources. Unfortunately, the home-rule pattern often perpetuates fragmentation of our natural resources as well as assignment of blame and responsibility for inconsistent management practices. Real enforceable performance parameters on a watershed basis that create joint inter-municipal responsibility for water quality and quantity are needed to further inter-municipal planning and cooperation. Funding is required at the individual watershed level to support inter-municipal coordination efforts and to help management agencies meet such requirements.

*Second.* The uses of water from or within the Hudson River and its watershed should be inventoried. This database would help policy makers decide how to best allocate our water resources and encourage collaboration and communication among users.

*Third.* When working toward a Hudson River Watershed Agreement, we should look to existing models such as the Chesapeake Bay Agreement or the NYC Watershed Memorandum of Agreement. A Hudson River Watershed Agreement would serve as formal acknowledgement of shared responsibility for natural resources in the watershed.

*Fourth.* Manna Jo Greene, Environmental Director for Clearwater, suggested that all stakeholders need to work toward and agree on a shared vision of what our Hudson River waterfronts should look like in twenty, fifty, and a hundred years from now. This vision should then be implemented at the Town and County levels along the river.

*Fifth.* Assistant Commissioner Tierney reminded participants that enforcement of existing sediment control, impervious surface and point source regulations is very important and has been neglected for a long time. Additionally, more attention needs to be paid to combined sewer overflows. Significant effort (time and funding) is needed for these existing programs, which will significantly improve water quality if enforced. Combined sewer overflow cleanups and retrofits will cost millions of dollars.

*Sixth.* The focus of the Hudson River Watershed Alliance encompasses more than just water quality and quantity, but also about a wonderful geographic and cultural area with deep history, culture, biodiversity, art and aesthetic values.

*Seventh.* The Hudson River watershed stretches from Lake Tear of the Clouds to the New York Harbor and more attention needs to be given to the entire system. Concerted outreach efforts should focus on the Upper Hudson and the Mohawk River.

*Eighth.* Although watershed organizations appreciate the gratitude expressed by regulators and politicians for the good work we are doing, there are few to no regulations and little to no funding for anything organized on a watershed basis. The Hudson River Estuary Program has been instrumental in supporting watershed organizations and offering grants for watershed work, but still more needs to be done. The acknowledgement of these missing elements leaves watershed organizations without legitimate partners or funding to continue to work toward improvement of the health of our watershed.

## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE**

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance Legacy Sail resulted in a brainstorming session where diverse stakeholders aboard the sloop *Clearwater* identified a range of regional priorities. The HRWA, working closely with its partners, will begin to prioritize these issues and initiatives to determine how to best improve water policy and regulations in the region. As we move forward, please investigate what role you or your organization can play in advancing the identified initiatives. Although the Sail afforded an excellent opportunity to expand the dialogue on partnering to improve watershed protection, these great ideas will only come to fruition with full participation and collaboration from all stakeholders.

## **LEGACY SAIL PARTICIPANTS**

CHRISTOPHER AMATO, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Natural Resources, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

EDWARD BARNETT, Watershed Coordinator, Putnam County

JANET BURNET, Executive Director, Ramapo River Intermunicipal Watershed Council, HRWA Steering Committee

SCOTT CHASE, Dutchess Co. Water and Wastewater Authority, HRWA Steering Committee

SCOTT CUPPETT, Watershed Program Coordinator, Hudson River Estuary Program

JOHN CREWS, Executive Director, Hudson Valley Regional Council

KATY DUNLAP, Hudson River Watershed Alliance Coordinator, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater

MICHAEL DUNNELL, Volunteer, Kinderhook Watershed Alliance

FRAN DUNWELL, Director, Hudson River Estuary Program

THEODORE EISENMAN, Director, NYS Committee of Highlands Coalition, HRWA Steering Committee

PHIL EHRENSAFT, Mid-Hudson Sierra Club, HRWA Steering Committee

BARBARA FRATIANNI, Deputy Executive Director, Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission

MANNA JO GREENE, Environmental Director, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater

SIMON GRUBER, Environmental Consultant, HRWA Steering Committee

WILLIAM HARDING, Executive Director, Watershed Protection & Partnership Council, NYS Department of State

LAURA HEADY, Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator, Hudson River Estuary Program

CHRISTINE KANE, Development Director, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater

GENE KELLY, Region 4 Director, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

GENEVIEVE KESSLER, Representative, Congressman John Hall's Office

ROY LAMBERTON, Onesquethaw-Coeymans Watershed Council, HRWA Steering Committee

JOHN LIPSCOMB, Boat Captain, Riverkeeper  
FRAN MARTINO, Coordinator, Kinderhook Watershed Alliance  
MARY MCNAMARA, Coordinator, Sawkill Watershed Alliance  
JOHN MICKELSON, Geospatial Consultant, Land Information Systems  
ASSEMBLYMAN MARCUS MOLINARO, New York State Assembly  
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TAYLOR PALMER, Representative, Congresswoman Nita Lowey's Office  
GEORGE POTANOVIC, JR., President, Stony Point Action Committee for the Environment, HRWA Steering Committee  
DOUG REED, Director, Hudson Basin River Watch, HRWA Steering Committee  
JEFF RUMPF, Executive Director, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater  
RIK SCARCE, Associate Professor of Sociology, Skidmore College  
WILLIAM SHAW, President, Hudson River Environmental Society  
TARA SULLIVAN, Mid-Hudson Representative to Governor Spitzer's Office  
JAMES TIERNEY, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Water Resources, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
JOHN TULLY, Deputy County Executive, Putnam County  
RUSSELL URBAN-MEAD, Hydrogeologist, The Chazen Companies, HRWA Steering Committee  
GEOFF WELCH, Watershed Keeper, Ramapo River Intermunicipal Watershed Council  
SUSAN ZIMET, Legislator, Ulster County Legislature