

CT NERR Site Selection Team Check-in Notes
Conference call follow up to 6/30/2016 meeting
August 15, 2016

Attendees:

Dave Kozak (CTDEEP-OLISP), Kevin O'Brien (CTDEEP-OLISP), John Forbis (CT Audubon/RTP Estuary Center), Ralph Wood (CT Audubon/RTP Estuary Center), Ivar Babb (UCONN), Juliana Barrett (CT Sea Grant), Jamie Vaudrey (UCONN), Ron Rozsa, Mark Parker (CTDEEP-LISS), Patrick Comins (Audubon); Jim Ammerman (LISS), Chantal Collier (TNC), Shannon Kearney (CTDEEP-Wildlife), Diana Payne (CT SeaGrant)

Goals:

- Check-in/status update for group assignments (preliminary sites and typology;)
- Discuss Areas of concern/issues; opportunities for sharing for resources or information;
- Schedule assessment – more or less on track to begin evaluations mid-Sept?;

Discussion Summary:

Common themes: concern about amount of time required, quite a bit of data to asses/wade through.

- Best guidance to offer is try to focus on providing enough material to make informed decisions wrt the preliminary screening criteria (below) and to help assess on-site typology. If information is sparse or non-existent, it may be possible that other SST members can fill in voids when we meet. Alternatively, lack of info may be a viable reason to recommend against a site or sites.
 - *1. The site is a representative estuary in the biogeographic region or sub-region (i.e., Southern New England sub-region).*
 - *2. The proposed boundaries of the site include sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of the ecosystem.*
 - *3. The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands and/or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land use control to meet NERRS objectives.*
 - *4. The candidate site is accessible by normal modes of transportation.*
 - *5. The candidate site is suitable for research, monitoring, and resource protection activities.*
 - *6. The candidate site is suitable for education, training, and interpretation activities.*
 - *7. The candidate site is suitable to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues*

Summary of groups (west to east)

Sherwood Island, Great Meadows/Long Beach, Housatonic River, Silver Sands	
Jennifer Mattei	MatteiJ@sacredheart.edu
Patrick Comins	PCOMINS@audubon.org
Chantal Collier	ccollier@TNC.ORG

Other resources	Shimi Anisfeld (Yale) has done research in the tidal wetlands; Ron Rozsa is familiar with Sherwood Millpond - there is a study by Bob Jontos (CTDEEP should have a report) on hydrology; DEEP Parks may have management plans for Sherwood & Silver Sands; Roman Zajac / Peter Auster – submerged bottoms
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- Patrick has taken the lead thus far in assembling info (schedules for Jennifer and Chantal are opening up for them to assist soon.)
- Question about treating example preliminary sites as one entity – preference would be to try and describe each component to make it easier when/if adjustments need to happen to boundaries or multi-site assessments. But to make things as easy as possible, any shared areas that are common to all could be lumped (e.g., if the benthic habitat or the tidal wetlands are all basically the same in form and function.)
- Looking at a fairly wide swath of area from the Norwalk Islands to New Haven Harbor for a variety of linkages – ecological, administrative, etc.. Suggested that at least for open water areas to try and consider key areas (e.g., maybe not all hardbottom but certain areas.) Might make overall management efforts on preserving integrity of site easier.

Quinnipiac River, Farm River, Leetes Island (aka Great Harbor/Lost Lake/West Woods), East River	
Mark Parker	Mark.parker@ct.gov
Dave Kozak	David.Kozak@ct.gov
Chris Elphick	Chris.elphick@uconn.edu
Other resources	Shimi Anisfeld (Yale) has studied the wetland subsidence on the QR; Ken Metzler/Ron Rozsa (DEEP retired) have a paper on QR tidal marsh vegetation; Ron Rozsa has info on Leetes Island restoration; Roman Zajac – marsh knowledge; Roman Zajac / Peter Auster – submerged bottoms

- Focused primarily on East River site for now (perceived as most viable) due to time limitations. Other sites relatively well-known and there is concern that some (especially Q-river) are degraded/threatened to the point of being not an optimal example for a NERR. (NOTE: if there are viable, documentable reasons why a site shouldn't be considered (even as part of a multi-site approach) - e.g., not a great example of a resource, use conflicts, limited or no data available despite a reasonable look, etc. - then teams should feel empowered to suggest dropping them. Looking ahead at the detailed selection criteria that will be applied in the next phase may help here.
- Question on whether to include forests, and do forests meet what's described in the typology table? Answer is for now to consider any forest in appearance as a forest in fact (i.e., it's a wooded upland component of a site,) and to the extent possible describe it for inclusion.
- Note regarding non-State owned protected land – does not need to be part of a NERR site itself to be of value – if there is protected land adjacent/proximal to sites, they can serve as protective buffers to help maintain or support sites over time.

Hammonasset, Hammock River., Menunketesuck, Cromwell Meadows, River Highlands
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Juliana Barrett	Juliana.barrett@uconn.edu
Michael Whitney	Michael.whitney@uconn.edu
Kevin O'Brien**	Kevin.obrien@ct.gov
Other resources	DEEP may have material for Hammo NAP designation; Charley Roman thesis on Hammock River (Bill Neiring master's student); Roman Zajac / Peter Auster – submerged bottoms; RAMSAR designation report

- List should also include Wangunk WMA
- Hammo, Hammock, and Menunketesuck sites are reasonably complete. Others are underway but have considerably less info on them.
- Current suggestion is to have Hammo and Hammock sites as a multi-site unit. Current thought re: boundaries will include some offshore areas around Duck Island and Kelsey point breakwater. Looking to capture some diversity of sediments and topography.
- Cromwell Meadows, River Highlands, Wangunk likely not viable as NERR sites in and of themselves – would need to be wrapped up with other sites. Is there a need to expand Lower CT River? Not sure – will need to consider with CT River team and others.

Hurd Park, Salmon River, Chapman Pond, Selden Neck, Lord Cove, Lower CT River	
Ralph Wood	ralph.wood@me.com
John Forbis	johnforbis@aol.com
Mark Johnson / Dave Simpson	Mark.Johnson@ct.gov / David.Simpson@ct.gov
Diana Payne	diana.payne@uconn.edu
Other resources	Nels Barrett – plant communities at Lord Cove; Ron Rozsa/Ken Metzler/Nels Barrett/Juliana Barrett – general knowledge of lower CT river marshes; Roman Zajac / Peter Auster – submerged bottoms; RAMSAR designation report

- Focusing on series of sites as a lower CT River complex ranging from the mouth to roughly Hurd park. Rationale based on linkages with ecology and other factors (e.g., administrative entities, transportation corridors, etc.) The upper boundary is fairly fluid at this point and may adjust slightly based on a closer look at typology factors.
- Looking for additional data/info (e.g., RAMSAR nomination appendices) and help filling out typological aspects. (RR and KOB can assist as needed.)
- Noted Coastal Dynamic Response talk by USGS-Woods Hole that might be of use/interest (“Changing Climate and Our Changing Coasts,” by Dr. Robert Thielert, is scheduled for September 29th at 4:30PM, Old Lyme Town Hall.)

Rocky Neck, Harkness, Bluff Point, Poquetanuck Cove, Barn Island	
Jamie Vaudrey	Jamie.vaudrey@uconn.edu
Scott Warren	rswar@conncoll.edu

Susan Whalen	Susan.whalen@ct.gov
Other resources	Ron Rozsa – Rocky Neck, Bluff Point, Barn Island (tinyurl.com/barnisland); grassland assessment by William Neiring for NAP at Harkness; Roman Zajac / Peter Auster – submerged bottoms

- No substantive work yet (if needed, KOB can provide assistance.)

Typology of Neighboring NERRs	
Ron Rozsa	saltmarshmd@charter.net
Roman Zajac	rzajac@newhaven.edu
Peter Auster	peter.auster@uconn.edu or pauster@searesearch.org

- Ron is working through neighboring NERR sites focusing on upland components; Roman and Peter are looking at benthic aspects (and tidal wetlands)

Additional Resources:

Here are some of the items that were mentioned during the call or have been noted in subsequent conversations. Obviously this list not exhaustive and may not be relevant in all cases, but the items may help fill some holes.

- Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>) might help provide a sense of research conducted at/near a site or sites
- ERT (Environmental Review Team) web site (<http://www.ctert.org/>) may have reports that cover or include sites in question. Reports listed by date or searchable by town.
- I will post copies of the 1974 Niering/Warren Tidal Wetlands reports to the Google Shared Drive (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B5JvtMMeDBUJRzJKX1EtVkVicDA>)
- USGS and LIS Resource Center both have info on marine geology that may help with subtidal areas of LIS
 - LISRC - geologic mapping; <http://www.lisrc.uconn.edu>
 - USGS:
 - <https://coastalmap.marine.usgs.gov/regional/contusa/eastcoast/midatl/lis/data.html> or
 - <http://woodshole.er.usgs.gov/project-pages/longislandsound/>
- TNC LIS Ecological Assessment (<https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/edc/reportsdata/marine/lis/Pages/default.aspx>) may help with subtidal/off shore LIS info.
- Lower CT River resources:
 - Ramsar Report - https://nctc.fws.gov/resources/knowledge-resources/pubs5/ramsar/web_link/intro.htm

- News Barrett - Masters Thesis on vegetation of the lower CT River (if Ron can get me the hardcopy I can scan it and share via the shared Google drive folder.)
- Living Resources and Habitats of the Lower CT River
<http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1037&context=arbulletin>
[s](#)
- Woods Hole - Connecticut River Observatory:
<https://www.whoi.edu/page.do?pid=96769&tid=7342&cid=59775>