



New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council

TO: NY Ocean and Great Lakes Community

FROM: Pete Grannis, NYS Commissioner of Environmental Conservation
Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, NYS Secretary of State

DATE: August 9, 2007

SUBJECT: New York Ocean and Great Lakes Council Update

We are pleased to announce that a meeting of the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council (OGLECC) will be held on **September 19, 2007**. This meeting will be from 10 a.m. - Noon in the Blue Room (Room 250) of the State Capitol in Albany, New York.

The September 19 meeting will open with an address from Leon Panetta, co-chair of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and former chair of the Pew Oceans Commission. Mr. Panetta and Council members will discuss how other state, regional, and national efforts on ecosystem-based management can help inform the NY Council's work. Council Executive Director George Stafford will present accomplishments to date and recommendations on advancing the charge of the Council.

The Council consists of the following nine members: the Commissioners of Agriculture and Markets, Patrick Hooker; Economic Development, Daniel Gundersen; Environmental Conservation, Pete Grannis; General Services, John Egan; Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Carol Ash; and Transportation, Astrid Glynn; the Secretary of State, Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez; the President of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, Paul Tonko; and the Interim Chancellor of the State University of New York, John Clark.

Meeting materials including the agenda, resolutions, and report to the Council will be posted on the following web site before the meeting: <http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/index.asp>

Please see the following update for an overview of the Council's charge and ongoing work.

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New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council

UPDATE ON COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act (ECL Article 14 attached) established the Council to conserve, maintain and restore New York's coastal ecosystems through the application of ecosystem-based management (EBM). The Council is charged with charting a course for New York State to achieve healthy, productive and resilient coastal ecosystems by coordinating State agencies and programs in implementing EBM. This course will be laid out in the report required to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by November 2008. The Council is looking to engage stakeholders in developing a visionary approach to EBM in New York.

Forming a Strong Council Structure

The Council has received \$7 million in Environmental Protection Funds and eight staff positions to date. Council staff, under the guidance of the Council's Agency Steering Committee, have crafted a framework to guide EBM in New York State. Council staff will present the framework and recommendations for EBM implementation to the Council at the September meeting.

Taking Action in Demonstration Projects

To formulate an effective approach for all ocean and Great Lakes watersheds, the Council has initiated two EBM demonstration projects, one in the Great South Bay on Long Island and the other in the Sandy Creeks Watershed on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. The Nature Conservancy, NYS Department of State, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, NYS South Shore Estuary Reserve, and the NYS Tug Hill Commission are partnering with the Council in developing EBM plans and conducting implementation activities, as described below:

Great South Bay Project: Conservation Successes

- *EBM Plan Development.* As the regional partner to the Ocean and Great Lakes Council, the NYS Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve will host stakeholder meetings on the draft EBM plan this Fall. The Nature Conservancy has conducted extensive analysis on threats and possible ecosystem objectives for the Great South Bay.
- *Hard Clam Restoration.* To date, The Nature Conservancy has stocked over 2.1 million hard clams in the Great South Bay. For this project, almost 400,000 clams were released in spawner sanctuaries. Monitoring work has shown that spawning and growth of clams was successful in 2006.

- *Sea Grass Restoration.* Over 35,000 eelgrass seeds were planted in the Great South Bay last Fall. Growth and viability of the restored eelgrass are being monitored this Spring and Summer to inform future restoration efforts.

Sandy Creeks Watershed Project: Conservation Successes

- *EBM Plan Development.* The NYS Tug Hill Commission, as the regional partner to the Ocean and Great Lakes Council, initiated stakeholder meetings this Summer for EBM planning in the Sandy Creeks Watershed. Project partners are planning on releasing a baseline conditions report on the Sandy Creeks ecosystem and a draft EBM strategy for the full plan development by the end of the year.
- *Invasive Species Control.* Last Summer, over 160 acres were treated to control invasive swallowwort and 25 landowners were engaged in this project. Scientifically tested bio-control agents, including 45,000 beetles and 1,800 root weevils, were released in Spring 2006 to control the invasive purple loosestrife.
- *Forestry Workshops.* Two workshops were held to educate foresters, loggers and forest landowners on best management practices for wetlands and streams in the forests of the watershed. Attendees built five portable skidder bridges that are now being used to cross streams during harvesting.

Increasing Access to Data through the Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas

The Council is constructing a state-of-the-art Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas to provide data and mapping tools to the public and decision makers. Over 200 data-sets have been assembled, and Council staff is now focused on filling data gaps. A Technical Advisory Group of GIS experts from NYS agencies are in the final stages of preparing a beta-version of the Atlas for public release.

Establishing Science Priorities in the Research and Monitoring Agenda

Because the best available science is needed to accomplish EBM, the Council is tackling this charge by identifying priorities in a New York Ocean and Great Lakes Research and Monitoring Agenda. In 2006, New York Sea Grant tested a process to guide the state-wide plan development in the Council's two EBM demonstration areas. In their role as scientific experts on the Council, the State University of New York (SUNY) will be leading the development of the state-wide Research and Monitoring Agenda under the guidance of a Science Advisory Group to the Council. SUNY will hold a series of workshop in the next year to gather input on research and monitoring priorities.

Continuing Critical Stakeholder Engagement

The Council strives to engage stakeholders and the public in applying EBM in New York. A series of state-wide dialogues with over 500 stakeholders was held in Fall 2006, and the Council is planning on holding another series in Fall 2007. A Council web site will be launched to host the Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas and other innovative tools to encourage public participation.