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Rebuild by Design  
Meadowlands Project  
Citizen Outreach Plan  
Final

June 17, 2016

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The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) is committed to a robust community and stakeholder outreach process throughout the course of what will be a multi-year effort to plan, design and implement the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - selected Rebuild by Design (RBD) Meadowlands project located in Little Ferry, Moonachie, Carlstadt, Teterboro, and South Hackensack, New Jersey. This area is referred to as the Phase 1 Pilot Area. HUD awarded \$150 million in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds to the State of New Jersey for the project, specifically for the Phase 1 Pilot Area.

Because the State of New Jersey, Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is the grantee receiving these and other CDBG-DR funds, DCA has an existing, detailed Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) in place. The CPP can be found on the DCA website at [http://www.renewjerseystronger.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CITIZEN\\_PARTICIPATION\\_PLAN\\_3-13-13.pdf](http://www.renewjerseystronger.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CITIZEN_PARTICIPATION_PLAN_3-13-13.pdf). The CPP requires that a Citizen Outreach Plan (COP) specific to the RBD Meadowlands project be developed to serve as a supplement to DCA's existing CPP. The primary goal of this project-specific COP is to provide a transparent and inclusive community outreach and public participation plan allowing all citizens and stakeholders in the project area the opportunity to participate in the planning, design and implementation of the project. More information about the RBD New Meadowlands project concept is available on the NJDEP website at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov).

Community stakeholders will be engaged during all phases of the project. These phases include feasibility/environmental review (planning), design, and implementation (construction). In developing the New Meadowlands COP, the NJDEP complied with all HUD citizen participation plan requirements described in Section VI of Federal Register Notice FR-5696-N-11 and will comply with the public involvement requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 40 CFR Part 1506.6, Public Involvement, as well as DCA's [Language Access Plan \(LAP\)](#), which is available at [www.renewjerseystronger.org](http://www.renewjerseystronger.org).

The goal of the RBD Meadowlands COP is to engage and collaborate with the general public, including vulnerable and underserved populations, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons with limited English proficiency, municipal officials, community organizations, the business community and the academic community, in the RBD planning, design and implementation processes. The purpose is to solicit relevant input and provide timely information throughout all phases of the project.

The RBD Meadowlands COP guides the engagement of stakeholders in the Meadowlands region and solicits their input on the proposed project through a multi-faceted public participation process that includes: the establishment of an Executive Steering Committee; Outreach Subcommittee; Citizen Advisory Group; Public Meetings; dedicated websites, an email listserv, a citizen complaint procedure, and press releases. The outreach strategies and techniques specific to the New Meadowlands project are further described below.

#### **Executive Steering Committee (ESC)**

The RBD Meadowlands project has an Executive Steering Committee (ESC). The role of the ESC is to collaborate, exchange information and offer a forum for ESC members to provide input to the NJDEP throughout all phases of the New Meadowlands project. The ESC will discuss the direction of the project, project schedule, project related policy issues and any concerns raised to the Mayors and the NJDEP by the public.

The ESC will be chaired by the NJDEP Commissioner and/or his delegates and will also include representatives from HUD, the NJDEP RBD Project Team members, the Meadowlands Commission, and most importantly the mayors and/or their designees from the municipalities affected by the project. Other entities may be incorporated into the ESC as needed.

The ESC is an advisory board. All final project decisions will rest with the Commissioner of NJDEP as the sub-recipient of CDBG-DR/RBD funds and the agency responsible for implementation of the RBD project.

#### **Outreach Sub-Committee (OSC)**

The Executive Steering Committee will establish an Outreach Sub-committee (OSC) consisting of one appointee from each municipality affected by the project and representatives of the NJDEP RBD Project Team. The OSC will identify stakeholders in their communities that represent vulnerable underserved populations, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons with limited English proficiency, and community and business organizations. The OSC

will report to the ESC through the RBD Project Team. The OSC will be tasked initially with establishing a comprehensive communication plan that describes how stakeholders will be engaged in the project development. The OSC will be expected to significantly leverage the knowledge of local government officials or representatives who are best positioned to identify the stakeholders, neighborhood leaders and vulnerable populations in their area, and the most effective way to engage these stakeholders in the project development. Once these tasks are accomplished, the OSC will disband.

### Citizen Advisory Group (CAG)

The New Meadowlands project will have a regional Citizen Advisory Group (CAG). The purpose of the CAG is to provide a forum for exchange of information between the NJDEP project team and key citizens and citizen groups representative of the community. CAG members will be responsible for bringing issues and concerns to the attention of the project team as well as sharing information presented to the CAG through their networks to their constituents, including members from vulnerable populations. The CAG members will represent a variety of communities within the project area. The CAG will be composed of representatives appointed by both the municipalities participating on the ESC and the NJDEP RBD Project Team. The NJDEP RBD Project Team will also work to incorporate CAG members that represent regional interests.

The CAG will communicate with the NJDEP RBD project team, who will in turn bring issues and information to the larger ESC. CAG members will supplement the knowledge of local government officials about the project areas and provide input as the project develops and is implemented.

Specifically, CAG members will be expected to:

- Share information about the project goals and objectives with their constituents;
- Share the processes and procedures that will be followed in implementing the project
- Determine what community priorities or concerns exist about the project as it develops
- Bring the priorities, issues and concerns of the larger community to the attention of the project team
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The role of the NJDEP will be to provide project updates, explain processes and procedures on the various phases of the project, solicit input from stakeholders and the public, and answer questions during major milestone CAG meetings.

The role of the Mayors will be to host the CAG and general public meetings, and work with the RBD Project Team on the logistics and scheduling of meetings.

The CAG will meet at important milestones to conduct the necessary public outreach to keep affected communities apprised, and to ensure public input into each phase of the project as it moves forward. The CAG may choose to meet more frequently as determined by the members.

The NJDEP will provide notice for all regional CAG meetings via email to the members who provide an email address, and via phone call to the members who only provide a phone number.

If any member of the public wishes to be part of the CAG, they may contact their Mayor's office or contact the NJDEP Project Team at [rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov](mailto:rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov).

### Environmental Impact Statement Outreach

Outreach efforts associated with the New Meadowlands project and the New Meadowlands COP will be coordinated with the public engagement requirements found in 24 CFR Part 58 (Environmental Review Procedures for Entities Assuming HUD Environmental Responsibilities) for Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). The EIS process is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the NEPA. NEPA is a procedural act aimed at ensuring that, for Federal actions having potential to result in significant environmental effects, information on potential environmental impacts is made available to the public and public officials before decisions are made and actions are undertaken. Public participation is a requirement of the NEPA process.

While public outreach is integral throughout the entire life of the project, there are two distinct points in the NEPA process where public participation is most heavily focused: (1) Scoping and (2) Publication of the Draft EIS.

- **Scoping.** Scoping occurs early in the environmental review process and is meant to focus the NEPA analysis on specific alternatives, issues, concerns, and methods of analysis. During scoping, the draft plan for the environmental review is issued. This plan is commonly referred to as the Draft Scoping Document. The Draft Scoping Document is prepared to facilitate public review and focus early public input in a meaningful way. The public and all relevant agencies are invited to offer comments on this Draft Scoping Document, both orally at the publicized scoping meeting and via written submittal of comments during the 30-day formal scoping process. The Draft Scoping Document describes the Project purpose and need, identifies a preliminary range of alternatives to be considered, sets forth the range of anticipated impacts to be analyzed, and outlines the methodologies to be employed to assess impacts.
- **Publication of the Draft EIS.** When the environmental analysis is nearing completion, a Draft EIS is published for public and agency review. Review comments can be provided orally at publicized hearings and via written submittals during the Draft EIS 45-day review period. Following completion of the comment period, a Final EIS, which responds to substantive comments on the Draft EIS, is published and made available for public and agency review for a 30-day review period.

The Scoping, Draft EIS, and Final EIS review stages are formally announced via notifications in the *Federal Register*, [www.federalregister.gov](http://www.federalregister.gov), and advertisements in local newspapers. Public scoping is announced in local newspaper notices and on the project website over a 30-day period. A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS is issued prior to initiation of the scoping process and announces public scoping meeting dates and locations.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) announces the publication of the Draft EIS, initiates the 45-day public comment period on the Draft EIS, and announces public hearing dates and locations, as well

as how comments on the Draft EIS may be submitted. All public meetings will be scheduled in or near the project area at convenient locations and times.

Other public participation techniques are used during the NEPA process to gather and disperse important information. *Federal Register* notices announcing the scoping meeting, Draft EIS public hearing, and formal comment periods can be supplemented by media releases, newspaper advertisements, flyers, newsletters, website announcements, and other public notifications. Following scoping, the public and agencies can be provided with opportunities to offer input into the alternatives development and analysis steps through such means as public open houses and advisory or other committees. Information about the status of the NEPA process can be dispersed through newsletters and the project website found at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov).

The completion of the NEPA process does not end the public engagement component of the project. The public will continue to be informed of progress through the project website.

### Vulnerable Populations

Federal Register Notice, Docket No. FR-5696-N-11 (Oct. 16, 2014) requires grantees to “take steps to ensure that vulnerable and underserved populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons with limited English proficiency, are involved in the planning and decision making processes throughout the RBD Project.”

The New Meadowlands COP includes transparent and inclusive outreach to community groups that serve vulnerable and underserved populations, including racial and ethnic minority populations, persons with limited English proficiency, and persons with disabilities. Representatives from these communities will be part of the New Meadowlands CAG and will assist the RBD Project Team in identifying the communication networks that reach the broader underserved and vulnerable population. All outreach to these populations will be in accordance with 24 CFR Part 570 (HUD Community Development Block Grants) and the Voluntary Compliance Agreement and Conciliation Agreement between HUD, the Latino Action Network, Fair Share Housing Center, the NJ State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the State of New Jersey and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, available at [www.lep.gov/resources/HUD\\_NJ\\_Agreement\\_5-30-14.pdf](http://www.lep.gov/resources/HUD_NJ_Agreement_5-30-14.pdf).

Information will be made available in forms accessible to persons with disabilities and persons of limited English proficiency (LEP) at public hearings. This will include the use of the multi-language identification cards or “I Speak” cards when engaging in direct contact with the public, and use of the toll-free interpretation service when someone identifies him/herself as an LEP individual. All written materials requesting input and participation from the public, legal notices and Citizen Participation notices will be translated into Spanish and Korean, and upon request, made available in the other languages listed in DCA’s Language Access Plan (LAP). A “language disclaimer,” which lists the 11 languages (Spanish + 10 others) spoken in the nine counties most impacted by Sandy for which DCA provides language access services, will be included on all printed materials intended for public outreach, consistent with the LAP.

Notices of public hearings will be translated into Spanish and Korean. Notices will be made available in the other languages identified in the LAP, upon request. Notices of public hearings

will also indicate that interpreters can be made available upon request to attend the public hearings to provide interpretation services to attendees.

In addition, the NJDEP will coordinate with the Office of Environmental Justice for additional opportunities for outreach to vulnerable populations.

### Community Meetings/Listening Sessions

The NJDEP and its partners will provide opportunities for input, comment, and participation through community meetings and listening sessions. These meetings will take place at key project milestones or at the request of ESC members. These meetings will not be formal public hearings. Instead, these forums will serve as an informal exchange of information between the public and the RBD Project Team. RBD Project Team members and/or consultants will give status updates and presentations. At these meetings, the public will be given an opportunity to comment, provide feedback, ask questions, and voice concerns.

Some of the information that will be shared at these meetings may include:

- Project goals and objectives
- Explanation of the process and procedures that will be followed in implementing the project
- Explanation of the design options and the merits and challenges of each design
- Open discussion and Q&A

### Ongoing Outreach

The NJDEP is committed to keeping the public informed of progress on the development and implementation of the RBD project. Accordingly, the NJDEP has established an Office of Flood Hazard Risk Reduction Measures (OFHRRM) webpage which can be found at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov). The website will provide outreach material and notifications regarding public meetings in English, Spanish and Korean.

Additional ongoing outreach may include:

- Press releases at key project milestones
- An electronic email (listserv) for citizens and stakeholders to sign-up and receive information and notification of status updates
- Fact Sheets and Newsletters
- Social Media
- Public Meeting Announcements and Project Flyers

An extensive mailing list of stakeholder groups has been developed and will continue to be updated throughout the life of the project. This list will be used to maintain ongoing contact with the community, transfer information, and publicize public meeting opportunities via meeting flyers and email notices. Please refer to Appendix A for a list of stakeholder groups.

### Action Plan Amendment



After the completion of the DEIS, the State will develop an Action Plan Amendment (APA) in accordance with the requirements of Federal Register Notice, Docket No. FR-5696-N-11 (Oct. 16, 2014), and specifically Section VI.6.b of that notice. In accordance therewith, the APA will detail an RBD Project that comports with the selected RBD proposal to the greatest extent practicable and appropriate, and complies with all notice requirements, including those pertaining to Benefit-Cost Analysis and certifications. As required by HUD, the APA will be posted for public comment on DCA's website at [www.nj.gov/dca](http://www.nj.gov/dca). The APA will be posted in English, Spanish and Korean for at least 30 days. The DEIS public hearing may also serve as the required hearing for the APA. Comments from the public hearing will be incorporated into the APA prior to submittal to HUD. HUD then will have 60 days to approve the APA. The EIS process may proceed while the APA is under review by HUD.

### Municipal Outreach Goals and Strategies

Per DCA's APA Number 12 (Section 4: Outreach and Public Comment for RBD Projects), the OSC (described above) is made up of state and local officials who will develop an outreach plan that will be specific and unique to their communities. The OSC is expected to leverage the knowledge of officials, stakeholders and vulnerable populations to identify the most effective strategies to engage the public in the project's development and implementation. This section represents the work of the OSC in completing that directive.

#### Borough of Little Ferry

##### Goal:

To establish a communication network within Little Ferry for ongoing dialogue and input by key stakeholders and stakeholder groups on issues, concerns and information-sharing related to the various stages of development of the RBD project.

##### Key Stakeholders:

- Waterfront Property Owners, Residents, Tenants, Senior Citizens
- Businesses
- Local schools
- Churches (St. Margaret, Evangel Christian Church, Dongsan Alliance Church)
- Youth Sports Groups
- Fire Companies
- First Aid Squad
- Emergency Management
- Latino/Hispanic Community
- Korean/Asian Community

##### Outreach Methods:

- Borough Website

- Borough Facebook
- Local Papers – News articles and notices (The Gazette and Little Ferry Local of Bergen Record)
- School Flyers
- Church Bulletins
- Email
- Ads/Articles in Ethnic Newspapers
- Targeted mailings/flyers to affected property owners, residents and business tenants
- Senior Citizen Club meetings
- Youth Sports Groups flyers
- Translated Flyers
- Flyers at H-Mart (Large Korean/Asian food mart located close to waterfront)

CAG meetings and outreach to constituent groups to occur as needed as the proposed project moves along and at key project milestones such as feasibility, design and construction. Input will be sought through the outreach methods described above. To the extent possible and feasible, the Borough will provide bi-lingual employees or volunteers to receive input from residents and businesses who are not able to communicate adequately in English.

### Borough of Moonachie

#### Goal:

The Borough of Moonachie will establish a communication network for ongoing dialogue and input by key stakeholders and stakeholder groups on issues concerns and information sharing related to the various stages of development of the RBD project.

#### Key Stakeholders:

- Residents
- Manufactured housing communities
- Businesses
- Local schools
- Fire Department/EMS
- Audubon Society
- South Bergen Rotary Club (which serves both Little Ferry and Moonachie)
- Moonachie Senior Citizens Club
- Hispanic community
- Port Authority of New York and New Jersey

#### Outreach Methods:

- Borough Website



- Social Media (Borough Facebook, Fire Department Facebook, EMS Facebook, Police Department Facebook, the Robert L Craig School Facebook, South Bergen Rotary Facebook)
- Municipal newsletter (published every three months)
- Twitter account (to be established)
- Local Project Facebook Page (to be established)
- Email
- Flyers sent home through the school to the students/families
- Attendance at Senior Citizen Club meetings
- Flyers posted at the two manufactured housing community boards
- First Presbyterian Church newsletter/bulletin

Successful communication is a two-way street. Our Facebook outreach will capture all comments and catalog them. Social media will be used to encourage our constituents to respond with concerns and suggestions. A small, business-oriented working lunch might be instituted to bring business owners who are concerned together to share ideas and strategies. Attendance of a CAG member at a PTO meeting, a Senior Club meeting, and a discussion night at the Civic Center are possibilities at this time.

The frequency and timing of the meetings will be decided by the CAG members. Some members might be more inclined to meet during the day; some at night. All meetings will be announced on Facebook to promote attendance to the fullest extent possible.

Once a critical mass of input is collected from stakeholders it will be summarized and presented to the RBD Project Team. The timing of the presentation will depend on the progress of the project.

### [Borough of Teterboro](#)

#### Goal:

To establish a communication network within the Borough of Teterboro for ongoing dialogue and input by key stakeholders and stakeholder groups on issues, concerns and information sharing related to the various stages of development of the RBD project.

#### Key Stakeholders:

- Residents
- Businesses
- Housing Authority
- Port Authority of New York and New Jersey

#### Outreach Methods:

- Borough Website
- Social Media
- Community Meetings

- Online and print surveys
- Email
- Flyers
- Swift Reach Communication System

Teterboro will establish quarterly Town Hall meetings inviting Teterboro residents and businesses to participate in providing their input to the CAG members. Minutes of the meetings will be distributed through e-mail. The CAG will meet as needed throughout the year.

### Township of South Hackensack

#### Goal:

The Township of South Hackensack would like to establish a communication network for ongoing dialogue and input by key stakeholders and stakeholder groups on issues, concerns and information sharing related to the various stages of development of the RBD project.

#### Key Stakeholders:

- Residents
- Businesses
- Memorial School community
- South Hackensack Senior Citizens Club
- Hispanic community
- Township Officials/OEM Coordinator

#### Outreach Methods:

- Social Media
- Local Project Facebook Page (to be established)
- Email
- Flyers sent home through the school to the students
- Attendance at Senior Citizens Club meetings
- Flyers available at the Town Hall
- Documentation/handouts at Town Celebrations: tree lighting, field day

Successful communication is a two-way street. Social media will be used to encourage constituents to respond with concerns and suggestions. A small, business-oriented working lunch might be instituted to bring business owners who are concerned together to share ideas and strategies. Attendance of a CAG member at a PTO meeting, a Senior Club meeting, and a discussion night at the Town Hall are possibilities at this time. The annual mailing to taxpayers will include pertinent information about meetings, outcomes, and how to be part of the CAG.

The frequency and timing of the meetings will be decided by the CAG members. Some members might be more inclined to meet during the day; some at night. The timing of the presentation will depend on the progress of the project.

## Borough of Carlstadt

### Goal:

To establish a communication network within Carlstadt for ongoing dialogue and input by key stakeholders and stakeholder groups on issues, concerns and information sharing related to the stages of development of the RBD Flood Control project.

### Key Stakeholders:

- Residents
- Churches/Religious Groups
- Businesses and Chamber of Commerce
- Local Schools
- Housing Authority
- Municipal Officials

### Outreach Methods:

- Borough Website
- Social Media (Facebook, Nixel, Borough website)
- Community Meetings
- Email
- Flyers

Meetings may be held regularly. Outreach will consist of all the outlets mentioned above.

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## Appendix A: Stakeholders

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An extensive mailing list of stakeholder groups has been developed and will continue to be updated throughout the life of the project. This list will be used to maintain ongoing contact with the community, transfer information, and publicize public meeting opportunities via meeting flyers and email notices. Presently, identified project stakeholders include the following:

- American Littoral Society
- Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions
- Bergen County Audubon Society
- Bergen County Continuum of Care
- Bergen County Department of Human Services
- Bergen County Division of Community Development
- Bergen County Division of Disabilities
- Bergen County Division of Senior Services
- Bergen County Health Department
- Bergen County Office for Children
- Bergen County VOAD Hurricane Sandy LTRC
- Bergen County Volunteer Center
- Bergen Special Child Health Services
- Bergen Veterans Service Division
- Borough of Little Ferry
- Borough of Moonachie
- Borough of Teterboro
- Borough of Carlstadt
- Evergreen Environmental, LLC
- Fair Share Housing
- Family Success Center
- FEMA
- Hackensack Riverkeeper
- Housing and Community Development
- HUD
- Hudson River Foundation
- Hudsonia Ltd.
- Human Services Advisory Council
- Jacques Cousteau Society
- Little Ferry VFW
- Long Term Recovery Center (Little Ferry)
- Mayor, Borough of Teterboro
- Mayor, Carlstadt Borough
- Mayor, Borough of Moonachie
- Mayor, South Hackensack
- Mayor, Little Ferry
- Meadowlands Chamber of Commerce
- Meadowlands Conservation Trust
- Metropolitan Mobile Home Park
- New Jersey Assemblyman Gary Schaer
- New Jersey Assemblywoman Marlene Caride
- New Jersey Future
- New Jersey Governor's Office of Recovery and Rebuilding
- New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority/Meadowlands Commission
- New Jersey Resiliency Network (Sustainable Jersey)
- New Jersey Senator Paul Sarlo
- New Jersey Turnpike Authority
- New Meadowlands Coalition
- NOAA-NMFS
- North Jersey Sierra Club
- North Jersey Public Policy Network
- North Jersey Transportation Authority
- NY/NJ Baykeeper
- NY/NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
- Port Authority of NY/NJ
- Rebuilding Together Bergen County
- Rutgers University/Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability
- Save the Watershed Action Network (SWAN)
- State Historic Preservation Officer
- South Bergen Rotary Club
- The Nature Conservancy
- Together North Jersey
- Township of South Hackensack
- USACE

- USEPA
- USEPA, BCSA Regional Project Manager
- USFWS
- US Congressman Bill Pascrell
- US Senator Cory Booker
- US Senator Bob Menezes
- Vanguard Mobile Home Park



## Appendix B

### Executive Steering



The RBD Meadowlands Executive Steering Committee is chaired by the DEP Commissioner and/or his designee, and also includes the DEP RBD project team members and the Mayors and/or members of their staffs. Representatives of other stakeholders are periodically incorporated into this committee as needed.

The Executive Steering Committee is an advisory board. All final project decisions rest with the DEP as the recipient of the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG- DR) funds and the agency responsible for implementation of the RBD project.



# Response to Comments Document

## RESPONSE DOCUMENT:

The draft of this Citizen Outreach Plan (COP) proposal was published on the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) website on March 31, 2016, at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/floodhazard/docs/rbdm-cop.pdf>. In developing this COP, the State complied with all U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) citizen participation plan requirements described in Section VI of Federal Register Notice FR-5696-N-11 and will comply with the public involvement requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 40 CFR Sec. 1506.6 Public Involvement, and is responding to all comments below.

The following people provided comments on this COP during the public comment period:

### Number – Commenter Name – Affiliation

1. Andrea Leshak, NY/NJ Baykeeper and Hackensack Riverkeeper
2. Mark Renna, Evergreen Environmental, LLC
3. Sally Gellert, New Meadowland Coalition

Response to Comments follow:

### I. Public Comment Periods, Meetings, and Hearings

**Comment 1:** NJDEP should expand public comment periods beyond the minimum required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Draft COP provides that the public will have the opportunity to comment on the Draft Scoping Document during a 30-day formal comment period; that comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be accepted during a 45-day review period; and that the Final EIS will be available for public review during a 30-day review period. The proposed public comment periods are the minimum required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Our organizations have extensive experience under NEPA, and it has been our experience that the public often needs additional time beyond 30-day or 45-day comment periods to meaningfully review projects that may have significant impacts on the public and the environment. Thus, we recommend that NJDEP schedule 60-day or 90-day public comment periods and work these longer public comment periods into its project timeline. At the very least, NJDEP should anticipate that the public may need additional time and allow for extensions of public comment periods if the public or the Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) request more time.

**Response 1:** One of the challenges for all of the RBD projects nationwide is the aggressive schedule mandated by the authorizing Federal legislation. In order to retain Federal funding for this project, all funds must be obligated by September 2017. This means that the draft scoping document must be reviewed by the public, a final scoping document must be published, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be prepared in accordance with the final scoping document, the Draft EIS must be published and reviewed by the public, the preferred alternative must be selected and the Final EIS completed and published as soon as possible, in order to give the State enough time to prepare, submit and receive HUD approval by September 30, 2017 on an updated Action Plan Amendment. Whenever feasible, we give our CAG or ESC members advance copies of the documents or a pre-public release in order to allow an expanded timeframe for their review. When it comes to the mandated public review period, however, the federally mandated timelines in order to meet funding deadlines will limit our ability to provide an extension on the review periods.

**Comment 2: NJDEP should provide sufficient notice for public meetings and hearings.**

NJDEP should provide the public with at least a 30-day notice for all scheduled formal public meetings and hearings. A 30-day notice would allow CAG members to conduct outreach to residents and interested parties. Anything shorter than a 30-day notice would limit CAG members in their outreach, thereby potentially limiting public participation. Additionally, public meetings and hearings should not be scheduled immediately before or after holidays, or during times when people commonly take vacation time, such as late December/early January.

**Response 2:** The intent is to proceed as expeditiously as practical to complete each phase of the design and environmental review process, to implement the project, and meet all HUD timeline requirements. As per HUD regulations, a public notice will be posted in the local newspapers at least 15 calendar days prior to the dates of all these meetings and will also be posted on our project website.

Dates for public meetings and hearings will be selected in consultation with members of the ESC and CAG making efforts to avoid major holidays and other conflicts to an extent practicable (while keeping to the project timeframe). We cannot guarantee that an entire month (as suggested late December/January) could be avoided if it is determined that this would lead to major project delays.

**Comment 3: NJDEP should ensure adequate opportunities for public input by holding several public meetings and public hearings.**

The Draft COP references a “publicized scoping meeting” during the 30-day formal scoping process, “publicized hearings” during the Draft EIS 45-day review period, and public scoping meeting and hearing “dates and locations.” The Draft COP does not mention a public hearing on the Final EIS. It is not clear how many public scoping meetings and public hearings NJDEP plans to hold.

NJDEP should schedule multiple public meetings and hearings during the comment periods on the Draft Scoping Document, the Draft EIS, and the Final EIS. Our organizations recommend three public meetings during the Scoping Period, three public hearings during the public’s review of the Draft EIS, and two public hearings on the Final EIS. The public

meetings and hearings should be held in locations convenient to the communities that will be affected by the New Meadowlands project.

**Response 3:** Whereas the project schedule does not allow for additional public meetings, as suggested in the comment, NJDEP will voluntarily provide video recordings of major public meetings to be posted on our project website with the intent that any constituencies unable to attend the public meeting or hearings in person shall be provided this additional option to view the same content from the public meetings online in order to facilitate public comment. The CEQ regulations do not specifically establish a minimum time period for comments on an FEIS, but they do require at least 30 days between the FEIS and the ROD. Thus, as a practical matter, there is a period of at least 30 days within which agencies and the public may submit comments on an FEIS.

NJDEP will make every effort to hold public meetings and hearings in locations that are convenient to the communities affected by the project. To the extent possible, public events will be scheduled at convenient, accessible locations at attendee-friendly times to encourage maximum attendance.

**Comment 4: NJDEP should schedule separate hearings and non-overlapping comment periods for different documents.**

The Draft COP states that the Draft EIS public hearing may serve as the required hearing for the Action Plan Amendment (APA). Only offering one public hearing for two different, substantive documents will almost certainly limit the public's ability to review and comment on both documents. NJDEP should have multiple, separate public hearings for both the Draft EIS and the Action Plan Amendment. Additionally, the comment periods on the Draft EIS and the Action Plan Amendment should not overlap.

**Response 4:** The State will develop an Action Plan Amendment in accordance with the requirements of Federal Register Notice, Docket No. FR-5696-N-11 (Oct. 16, 2014), and specifically Section VI.6.b of that notice. In accordance therewith, the Action Plan Amendment will detail an RBD Project that comports with the selected RBD proposal to the greatest extent practicable and appropriate, and complies with all notice requirements including those pertaining to Benefit-Cost Analysis and certifications. As required by HUD, the Action Plan Amendment will be posted for public comment in English and Spanish for at least 30 days. Comments from the public hearing will be incorporated into the Action Plan Amendment prior to submittal to HUD. HUD then will have 45 days to approve the APA. The EIS process may proceed while the APA is under review by HUD.

**II. Role of the NJDEP, Executive Steering Committee, Outreach Sub-Committee, and Citizen Advisory Group**

**Comment 5: NJDEP's role should include encouraging and facilitating communication among the Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) members.**

The Draft COP provides that NJDEP's role in relation to the CAG will be "to provide project updates, explain processes and procedures on various phases of the project, solicit input from stakeholders and the public, and answer questions during the major milestone CAG meetings."

In addition to these important contributions, NJDEP should actively facilitate communication among the CAG members by setting up a communication platform – such as a listserv, google group, or other option – that will allow CAG members to communicate with each other and set up meetings in addition to the meetings organized by NJDEP.

**Response 5:** NJDEP recognizes that facilitating information sharing among CAG members will help advance the goals of transparency for the project. NJDEP will not act as the administrator of a google group or Facebook group but we will encourage CAG members to use these tools as they deem appropriate to help facilitate communication amongst citizens.

**Comment 6: NJDEP should promote direct communication between the Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) and the Executive Steering Committee (ESC), not just through the Outreach Sub-committee (OSC).**

The Draft COP provides that the CAG “will communicate with the OSC representatives, who will in turn bring issues and information to the larger ESC.” It would be more efficient and may allow for better, clearer communication if CAG members and ESC members communicated directly. NJDEP should consider whether direct communication between the CAG and ESC is feasible and ways to encourage such communication.

**Response 6:** The OSC is no longer an active subcommittee of the ESC since it completed its task of identifying members for the CAG). The NJDEP RBD project team attends both the CAG and ESC meetings. The NJDEP team brings issues to the attention of ESC members as part of our regular agenda. CAG members are also encouraged to communicate with their respective Mayors who are also part of the ESC. Whenever feasible, NJDEP will facilitate direct communication between members of the ESC and CAG. We will strive to establish ongoing, inclusive, and meaningful two-way communication between HUD/NJDEP and stakeholders, agencies, and the general public by having regular meetings and soliciting feedback.

**Comment 7: Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) members should have the authority to request community meetings and listening sessions.**

The Draft COP provides that community meetings and listening sessions will take place at key project milestones or at the request of ESC members. Since CAG members are more likely to be aware of the public’s desire to provide input or their need for more information, CAG members, in addition to ESC members, should have the ability to request NJDEP to hold community meetings and listening sessions.

**Response 7:** It will be important for the CAG to meet at important milestones; conduct the necessary public outreach; and ensure meaningful public input into each phase of the Proposed Project as it moves forward. The CAG may choose to meet more frequently as determined by its members. ESC members are encouraged to make suggestions and share concerns with the NJDEP RBD project team

### **III. Transparency and Communication with the Public**

**Comment 8: NJDEP should dedicate appropriate personnel to maintain regular**

**communication with stakeholders, and provide timely responses to requests for information.**

The Draft COP provides that the Outreach Sub-Committee (OSC) will consist of appointees from each municipality and representatives of the NJDEP RBD Project Team and “will be tasked with establishing a comprehensive communication plan that describes how stakeholders will be engaged in the project development.” NJDEP should ensure that the OSC has adequate resources and support to maintain regular communication with the CAG and the larger public and to respond to interested parties. NJDEP should consider outlining more specific criteria and/or content for the comprehensive communication plan. Useful tools that should be incorporated in the communication plan include those identified by NJDEP in its “ongoing outreach” section: press releases, an electronic email (listserv) for citizens and stakeholders to sign-up and receive information and notification of status updates, fact sheets and newsletters, social media, and public meeting announcements and project flyers.

**Response 8:** Please reference the project’s Guidance for Public Involvement (GPI) for the requested ‘outline of specific criteria and content for the comprehensive communication plan’. The GPI establishes the guidelines for project-specific outreach options to engage stakeholders during the NEPA process, in line with objectives set forth within the NJDEP COP.

The GPI provides: the following branding and outreach strategy will be implemented to maximize the opportunity for successful two-way communications with stakeholders. What follows is outlined in the GPI:

- **Project Branding.** To assist the public in identifying project-related materials that will be produced and disseminated during this NEPA process, a banner and readily recognizable “look and feel” may be established at the onset of the NEPA process and used on project materials, including meeting announcements, posters, handouts, PowerPoints, and online. Likewise, clear, concise, and cogent key messages will be developed for use in written and verbal communications to ensure project team members are accurately conveying consistent information.
- **Project Website and E-mail.** The NJDEP is committed to keeping the public informed of progress on the development and implementation of the RBD projects. Accordingly, the NJDEP has established a website for the RBD Meadowlands Flood Protection Project at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov). The NJDEP has also established an email address at [rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov](mailto:rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov) for the public to ask questions and submit comments. The Proposed Project website will have outreach material and notifications regarding regional CAG and public meetings in English, as well as Spanish, Korean, and other languages, if and as requested and deemed appropriate. The Proposed Project website also will include information on the NEPA process, Proposed Project activities and progress, public participation opportunities, and Proposed Project contact information. Documents posted on the Proposed Project website will be downloadable (in .pdf format when possible) for information and/or review.
- **NJDEP Project Mailing List and Listserv.** A mailing list could be developed for the purpose of publicizing public meeting opportunities, Proposed Project website updates, and for keeping interested parties apprised of developments throughout the NEPA process. The list would be comprised of area residents, businesses, civic associations, community groups, schools, health care facilities, and the like. The list of known and invited stakeholders, including members of the ESC, OSC, and CAG (see **Figure 5**), and the overall initial mailing list, is presented within

Appendix A of the NJDEP COP. This mailing list will be updated regularly throughout the process as additional interested parties are identified, such as via the various public meetings that will be held. The Proposed Project Listserv would serve the same purpose as the mailing list. Interested parties may sign up to receive Listserv emails through the Proposed Project website at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov)

- **Updates/Newsletters.** Updates will be produced and posted on the Project website at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov) to educate the public about the EIS process, provide information on the NEPA analysis as it progresses, announce public participation opportunities, and provide study contact information. These updates will be written in straightforward language and graphics will be used to assist in communicating the appropriate information. The NEPA monthly updates will begin at the publication of the NOI and announce the public scoping meeting; the NEPA monthly updates will terminate upon signature of the Record of Decision (ROD). Monthly updates will be distributed to the individuals who have signed up for Project Listserv email notifications through the Project website at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov)
- **Meeting Announcements.** Meeting flyers will be used to publicize public meetings. These flyers will be emailed to the listserv mailing list, distributed in bulk to libraries and community centers, posted on the Project website, and published in local newspapers. Meeting flyers will be made available in English, Spanish, and Korean. The NJDEP may send announcements to each local Mayor's office and local Chamber of Commerce for posting on municipal websites.
- **Media Relations.** Press releases and/or press advisories may be issued by the NJDEP in advance of public meetings and to announce the availability of Proposed Project materials. It is anticipated that there will be press releases to announce the Public Scoping Meeting, the availability of the Draft EIS and the conduct of the Public Hearing, and the availability of the Final EIS. The NJDEP also may conduct a Public Meeting on the Final EIS. Per HUD regulations and at a minimum, the NJDEP will post a public notice in the local media at least 15 days prior to the date of both the Public Scoping Meeting and the Draft EIS Public Hearing. NJDEP will be responsible for coordinating all media engagements and follow-up. Local publications being considered include the *Star Ledger*, *The Record*, *The Herald*, *Latinos Unidos de Nueva Jersey*, and *Korea Central Daily News*; these publications directly reach the communities involved.
- **Social Media.** To further public outreach efforts during the NEPA process, the NJDEP may use social media (e.g., the NJDEP Facebook portal). These media could be used to publicize meetings and drive traffic to the Project website.
- **Meeting Materials.** Relevant and concise handouts, posters, and other streamlined data will be available as appropriate at all public meetings for attendees. Public meeting presentations will be available as handouts, as appropriate, and on the Project website for review by those unable to attend meetings.

**Comment 9: NJDEP should promote access to project documents and other stakeholder materials.**

NJDEP should continue to make project documents and stakeholder materials (schedules, agendas, presentations) available on its website, thus allowing open access to all members of



the public. NJDEP should consider emailing the entire Rebuild By Design – New Meadowlands listserv, in addition to members of the CAG, when it adds significant new documents to its website. NJDEP should also continue to make important documents and materials available in several languages, including English, Korean, and Spanish.

**Response 9:** We have made it our practice to provide all outreach documents and materials related to this project available in English, Korean and Spanish, as requested. It is NJDEP's practice and intent to follow the suggestions provided in this comment when practicable. We will continue to post stakeholder presentations, materials throughout the course of this project along with meeting summaries from our CAG on the project website within 10 days of distribution. We will also adopt the suggested practice to inform the listserv when we add significant new documents to our website when practicable.

**Comment 10: NJDEP should promote transparency by identifying the key decision-makers and individual stakeholders.**

Appendix A of the Draft COP is a list of identified project stakeholders. While this list is helpful and promotes transparency, it would also be helpful if NJDEP would identify, either in the Final COP or on its website, the key decision-makers at NJDEP and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In addition, it would promote transparency if NJDEP were to include on its website a list of the members of the Executive Steering Committee, Outreach Sub-Committee, and the Citizen Advisory Group.

**Response 10:** The ESC will be chaired by the NJDEP Commissioner and/or his delegates and will also include representatives from HUD, the NJDEP RBD Project Team members, the Meadowlands Commission, and most importantly the mayors and/or their designees from the municipalities affected by the project. Other entities may be incorporated into the ESC as needed. NJDEP will maintain a list of all members of the ESC and will make it available to the public. The NJDEP will not publish the names of individual CAG members as they are private citizens.

The ESC is an advisory board. All final project decisions will rest with the Commissioner of NJDEP as the sub-recipient of CDBG-DR/RBD funds and the agency responsible for implementation of the RBD project.

**Comment 11:** Please add wetland mitigation bankers to your list of Key Stakeholders. This project is likely to have significant impacts to wetlands of the Meadowlands and require significant wetland mitigation. The project also has the potential to affect wetland mitigation banks directly or indirectly and affect future locations of potential wetland mitigation banks or sites.

**Response 11:** Wetland Mitigation bankers have been added to our stakeholder list. Any impacts to wetlands or future mitigation would be identified through the project's environmental analysis and review.

**Comment 12:** I would like to see a list of ESC members posted on the Web site and updated with additions/deletions. Individual contact information need not be included, but a general e-mail box for the ESC should be set up.

**Response 12:** The ESC members will be listed on the website as an Appendix B to the COP. While a separate email address will not be created for contacting the ESC, the NJDEP RBD project team will facilitate communication and make it clear that anyone wishing to send a message to the ESC can do so through [RBD-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov](mailto:RBD-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov)

**Comment 13:** I would like to see a list of OSC members posted on the Web site and updated with additions/deletions. Individual contact information need not be included, but a general e-mail box for the ESC should be set up.

**Response 13:** The OSC is no longer an active subcommittee of the ESC as its task of recommending members for the CAG has been fulfilled.

**Comment 14:** What methods will the OSC use to identify these stakeholders, and how does one interact if one believes that there is a missing constituency?

**Response 14:** The OSC played an initial role in identifying known stakeholders and recommending them as members of the CAG. Since then, more and more stakeholders have identified themselves or been recommended to NJDEP project team by other members of the CAG. NJDEP is open to additional recommendations of individual stakeholders or constituencies that can be added to the Citizen Advisory Group. Please email recommendations to: [rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov](mailto:rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov)

**Comment 15:** What is the process for this communication?

**Response 15:** This comment was offered in reference to a paragraph describing the process by which issues raised by the CAG will be brought up to the ESC. The NJDEP project team holds monthly meetings with the ESC, during these meetings a portion of the agenda is dedicated to updates on communications, stakeholders and outreach efforts. The NJDEP provides opportunity in the ESC agenda to address any issues raised by the CAG.

**Comment 16:** It would be very helpful to have a physical location, need not be large, with a NJDEP presence, both literature/photographs/etc. and a person available at preset, regular times for local residents and interested individuals to be able to ask questions. A presence at large community events (e.g., Matt Fenton Run), representation at local group meetings (e.g., senior bingo) could be part of this, but a stable central location is important, even more so when the RIC (recovery information center) closes as scheduled at the end of June.

**Response 16:** Relevant and concise handouts, posters, and other streamlined data will be available as appropriate at all public meetings for attendees. Public meeting presentations will be available as handouts, as appropriate, and on the Project website for review by those unable to attend meetings. To date additional physical copies have been provided to all participants who wish to maintain a physical repository of materials. With the close of the RIC in late June, other possibilities for a physical repository will be investigated within the project area. Unfortunately, NJDEP cannot commit to staffing a remote location during regular hours but will ensure that all inquiries received via mail or email will be responded to in a timely manner.

Documents posted on the Proposed Project website will be downloadable (in .pdf format when possible) for information and/or review. Additionally, CAG meetings can identify additional opportunities and methods to further share information with constituents.

**Comment 17:** Please see this document:

<http://wetlandswatch.org/WetlandScience/SeaLevelRise/CRSGuide.aspx>, pages 159–169, for a “local government guide to the Community Rating System”. It is critical for residents that the project is designed to increase municipalities’ ratings, which lowers flood-insurance costs for everyone (possibly even neighboring residents, as flood protection benefits, like water itself, do not recognize political borders)

**Response 17:** One of the stated goals of the project is to contribute to on-going efforts to reduce FEMA flood insurance rates. The NFIP’s Community Rating System allows municipalities to reduce their flood insurance rates through implementation of comprehensive floodplain management. The Proposed Project would propose concepts and alternatives that are consistent with the local municipalities’ overall effort to reduce FEMA Flood Insurance Rates.

**Comment 18:** The commenter suggested the following be included as part of the NJDEP’s outreach efforts throughout the review of the COP. Matt Fenton Run, July 4 fireworks, Family Fun Day fireworks. **Comment:** high schools attended by towns’ residents: Wood-Ridge, Ridgefield Park, Hackensack high school, Bergen Tech, East Rutherford. **Comment:** bingo, senior meetings. **Comment:** Sens. Menendez and Booker, Sustainable Bergen, Bergen County OEM, Bergen Grassroots, North Jersey Public Policy Network, Family Success Center, Bergen County Audobon Society, North Jersey Sierra Club, Sen. Loretta Weinberg, NJ Transit, Little Ferry VFW, South Bergen Rotary Club (Moonachie), Chambers of Commerce (Hackensack Regional CoC?), local houses of worship

**Response 18:** This comment was offered in response to some specific outreach opportunities. They will be considered and taken into account as part of NJDEP’s ongoing outreach efforts.

**Comment 19:** We would like to request Korean as well, also Italian would be helpful. (Bergen County regularly translates its materials into Korean; perhaps they could be helpful with this?)

**Response 19:** The Project website has embedded the option to of Google Translator to convert all English language items into the list of languages supported by Google Translate. Beyond this, NJDEP will have outreach material posted in English, as well as Spanish, Korean, and other languages as requested.

**Comment 20:** If the EIS process continues after the APA [Action Plan Amendment] is submitted, how do findings from the final EIS, or comments to it, get incorporated into the APA? If the APA does not take the final EIS into account, is it not premature for HUD to review it?

**Response 20:** The State will develop an APA [Action Plan Amendment] in accordance with the requirements of Federal Register Notice, Docket No. FR–5696–N–11 (Oct. 16, 2014), and

specifically Section VI.6.b of that notice. In accordance therewith, the Action Plan Amendment will detail an RBD Project that comports with the selected RBD proposal to the greatest extent practicable and appropriate, and complies with all notice requirements including those pertaining to Benefit-Cost Analysis and certifications. As required by HUD, the Action Plan Amendment will be posted for public comment in English and Spanish for at least 30 days. Comments from the public hearing will be incorporated into the Action Plan Amendment prior to submittal to HUD. HUD then will have 45 days to approve the APA. The EIS process may proceed while the APA is under review by HUD.

**Comment 21:** What about nonwaterfront property owners? The entire town is affected by floodwater, whether normal fluvial flooding or Sandy-type storm surge.

**Response 21:** NJDEP will amend the list in Appendix A to better reflect that the stakeholders include any property owners affected by surge flooding or fluvial flooding.

**Comment 22:** It is likely that opinions will change over time, that there will be questions needing answers, new information will be available as the project evolves, etc. Comments need to be iterative and augmented as new information or needs come to the surface.

**Response 22:** This comment refers to a paragraph in the Moonachie outreach section. In response, the project team is constantly augmenting feedback from stakeholders as part of the data collection, NEPA and feasibility stages. This COP governs that outreach and communication with stakeholders occur throughout the engineering and design phases of the project and will continue to communicate as it evolves. During the Feasibility Study and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) phase of the work, meetings (CAG meetings, public meetings and a public hearing) will be scheduled during major milestones as dictated by the NEPA and stated in HUD's regulation 24 CFR part 58. After the completion of the EIS and issuance of the Record of Decision, it is anticipated that meetings will be scheduled at major milestones. The NJDEP will schedule these meetings with the regional CAG and public throughout the life of the Meadowlands RBD project.

**Comment 23:** I am concerned about the apparent use of boilerplate language in the town CAGs. Also there seems, as a result of this language, to be "siloing" of town members—a business-oriented lunch, a PTO meeting, a Senior Center meeting; all good and necessary, but how is the input from those groups integrated with each other; if there are conflicting opinions between, say, businesses and school parents, how are they resolved? Are the groups to be given opportunities to hear from each other?

**Response 23:** Opportunities for listening sessions will be considered that can be specifically designed with the intent to integrate feedback and provide an opportunity for these groups to hear from one another. NJDEP project team will provide summaries of these meetings, which will be posted to the website and shared with members of the ESC.

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