



IN THIS ISSUE

Update from the Design Team
Biological Resources Survey Update

NEPA TIMELINE

Key Milestones and Upcoming Events

December 6, 2016

CAG Meeting #6:
Alternative 1 -
Structural Flood
Reduction

January 31, 2017

CAG Meeting #7:
Alternative 2 -
Stormwater Drainage
Improvements

March 2017 (TBD)

CAG Meeting #8:
Alternative 1 -
Structural Flood
Reduction

Get involved!

- ✓ If you would like to become a member of the CAG, please contact Alexis Taylor at rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov. NJDEP welcomes your participation and input into this process!
- ✓ Share information from this newsletter with friends and neighbors.
- ✓ Educate your friends and colleagues on the Proposed Project and NEPA process.
- ✓ Continue to build interest in the Proposed Project.
- ✓ Subscribe to receive email updates on the Proposed Project at www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov

Please visit www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov to obtain current Proposed Project information and data, including confirmation of the above meeting dates.

NEWS January 2017

Update from the Design Team

Over the course of the last several months, the project design team has been busy conducting site-specific surveys, analyzing data, performing advanced modeling, and developing and screening an array of concepts that will ultimately result in the formalization of three final alternatives for analysis within the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Throughout this analytical process, the design team has provided regular updates to, as well as solicited input and comment from, the Citizen Advisory Group (CAG). CAG Meeting #6, held on December 6, 2016, reviewed the progress the design team has made to date on Alternative 1, the Structural Flood Reduction Alternative. Alternative 2, the Stormwater Drainage Improvement Alternative, was the focus of CAG Meeting #7, held on January 31, 2017. Additional progress on the design of Alternative 1 will be the subject of CAG Meeting #8, to be held in March 2017. Alternative 3, the Hybrid Alternative, as a combination of elements of Alternatives 1 and 2, is being developed concurrently.



December's CAG Meeting

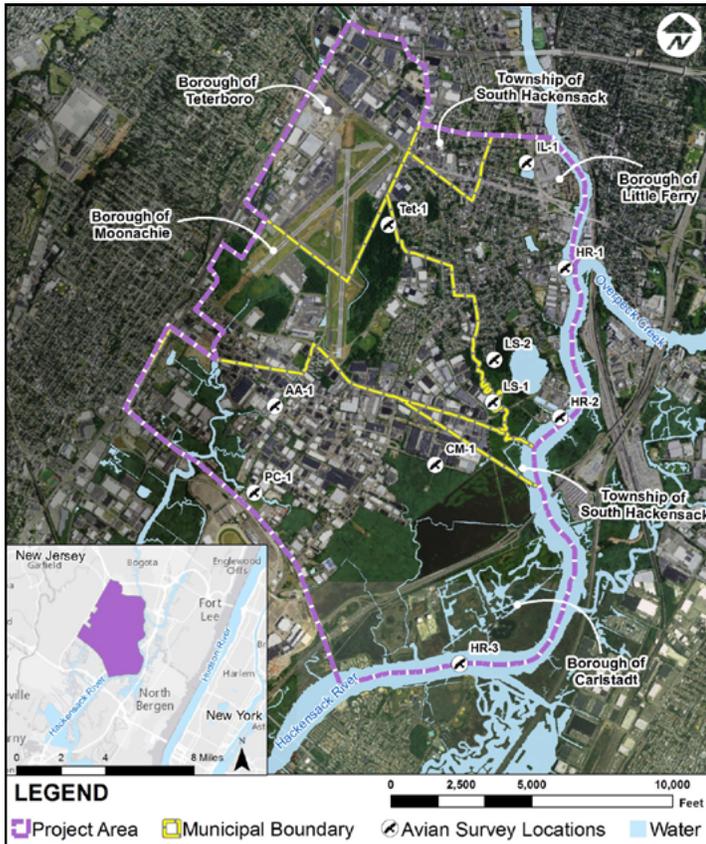
During the January CAG Meeting, the design team reported on recent efforts that have screened 31 potential stormwater drainage improvement concepts (Alternative 2) to develop seven (7) buildable concepts that would reduce flooding from stormwater, while minimizing impacts to the human, built, and natural environments. Data regarding the Project Area's existing environment, as collected to support the development of the EIS, is being used by the design team, in part, to screen these various concepts, thereby integrating environmental considerations (amongst other considerations) into the design process. For Alternative 2, further screening will reduce the number to five (5) concepts that will be carried forward to the 30 percent design level, allowing further refinement and analysis. The current screening included high level evaluations of each concept with respect to flood risk reduction potential, effects to the built human and natural environments, and construction feasibility.

In conjunction with the design team efforts, the Preliminary Draft EIS is being written, including the incorporation of recently collected survey data on biological resources within the Project Area.



Biological Resources Survey Update

To support development of the EIS and provide valuable input into the design process, the Rebuild By Design Meadowlands (RBDM) project team is conducting a robust scientific study, including site-specific surveys, of biological resources in the Project Area. The habitats within the five municipalities that comprise the Project Area include urban habitats (i.e., residential, commercial, and industrial), large tracts of wetlands, wooded areas, and open waters associated with the Hackensack River.



Avian Survey Location Map

In order to identify the current status of biological resources, as well as to support and expand upon available data, scientists are conducting multi-season habitat, plant, fish, and wildlife surveys throughout the Project Area. These studies commenced in September 2016 and will continue through the summer of 2017. The studies include: habitat mapping; wetland delineations; ecological evaluations; and amphibian, avian (bird), benthic invertebrate, fish, reptile, and mammal surveys. To date, over 1,000 person hours have been devoted to this effort, canvassing the entire Project Area. Active surveys are conducted both during the day and at night

References:

- Kane, R., and D. Githens. 1997. Hackensack River Migratory Bird Report, with Recommendations for Conservation. Bernardsville, New Jersey: New Jersey Audubon Society.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2007. The Hackensack Meadowlands Initiative Preliminary Conservation Planning for the Hackensack Meadowlands Hudson and Bergen Counties, New Jersey. Pleasantville, New Jersey.

to capture appropriate wildlife activity periods. In addition to the active surveys, passive techniques, such as wildlife cameras and audio recorders, are also being employed. Now five months into the survey effort, the team has mapped habitat at over 400 individual sites, including urban habitats, and has identified hundreds of species.



Field Scientists Performing Wildlife Surveys

As part of the biological survey effort, ornithologists from the RBDM Project Team have been conducting bird surveys at 10 fixed locations within the Project Area that include representative commercial, suburban, forested, and wetland habitats (see map), as well as overwintering and nesting surveys. These surveys are conducted by biologists on land and by boat, with the intent of collecting data from the range of habitats present within the Project Area. The ongoing survey of the Project Area has resulted in approximately 110 bird species identified thus far, with over 20,000 individual birds sighted.

As the weather warms and migratory bird populations return to the Meadowlands, these surveys will intensify. Over the next three months, all of the fish and wildlife surveys will continue. Moreover, as the Proposed Project's three alternatives become better defined, additional, more intensive fish and wildlife surveys will be conducted within areas where Proposed Project elements may be constructed. Ultimately, these data, coupled with data from past studies, will be presented in the EIS and used to conduct a meaningful, site-specific analysis of potential effects to biological resources.

Did You Know?

The Meadowlands are a key stopping point for birds traveling along the North Atlantic Flyway, an important migratory corridor along the eastern sea board. In the landmark studies conducted by Richard Kane and others of the New Jersey Audubon Society, approximately 80 species of birds were documented nesting in the Meadowlands District (Kane and Githens 1997), while over 330 bird species have been identified in the Meadowlands District (USFWS 2007).

The New Jersey Sports and Exhibition Authority maintains a checklist of Meadowlands birds at: <http://www.meadowlands-bird-list.pdf>

